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**Paine, Thomas.** Thomas Paine (1737–1809) was among the most militant deists in early America. His political writings, such as *Common Sense* (1776) and *The Rights of Man* (1791–92), were greatly influenced by his deistic beliefs. Paine’s thought was influential in both the American and French revolutions. But his importance does not end there. In his work *The Age of Reason* (1794–95) Paine set forth his defense of deism in such a way as to make it readable to all people. Believing that republicanism and egalitarianism were threatened by church leaders, Paine wrote *The Age of Reason* to destroy all claims to supernatural revelation and so discredit the clergy (Morias, 120–22).

**View of God.** “I believe in one God, and no more,” wrote Paine. Like theists, Paine believed that the one God was all-powerful, all-knowing, all-good, infinite, merciful, just, and incomprehensible ( *Complete Works of Thomas Paine*, 5, 26, 27, 201). But unlike Christian theists Paine maintained that the only way to discover such a God is “by the exercise of reason.” He rejected all forms of supernatural revelation, believing them to be unknowable. He claimed that “revelation when applied to religion, means something communicated *immediately* from God to man.” Consequently he disavowed even revelations to other people as having prescriptive authority. What was revealed to a person was revealed to that person only. It is hearsay to anyone else, and, consequently, they are not obliged to believe it (ibid., 26, 7). Hence, although “No man will deny or dispute the power of the Almighty to make such a communication, if he pleases,” such a revelation could only be knowable to the person who received it directly from God (ibid.).

Paine also argued that supernatural revelation ( *see* REVELATION, SPECIAL ) was impossible given the inadequacy of human language to convey it. God’s revelation must be absolutely “unchangeable and universal” (ibid., 25). Human language could not be the means for its communication. The changes in the meaning of words, the necessity of translation to other languages, the errors of translators, copyists, and printers, and the possibility of willful alteration all show that no human language can be the vehicle of the Word of God (ibid., 19; cf. 55, 56). Thus Paine rejected all claims to a verbal or written revelation from God. All such beliefs were “human inventions, set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolize power and profit” (ibid., 6). The “revealed religion” he had the most contempt for was Christianity. He summarized his feelings:

Of all the systems of religion that ever were invented, there is none more derogatory to the Almighty, more unedifying to man, more repugnant to reason, and more contradictory in itself, than this thing called Christianity. Too absurd for belief, too impossible to convince, and too inconsistent for practice, it renders the heart torpid, or produces only atheists and fanatics. As an engine of power, it serves the purpose of despotism; and as a means of wealth, the avarice of priests; but so far as respects the good of man in general, it leads to nothing here or hereafter. [ibid., 150]

“The only religion,” added Paine, “that has not been invented, and that has in it every evidence of divine originality, is pure and simple deism.” In fact, deism “must have been the first, and will probably be the last that man believes” (ibid.).

**Creation.** Paine believed that the universe was brought into existence by God and is sustained in existence by him. God created “millions of worlds” and they were all inhabited by intelligent creatures who “enjoy the same opportunities of knowledge as we do.” One reason God created all these worlds was so that the “devotional gratitude” and “admiration” of his creatures would be called forth in their contemplation of these worlds (ibid., 46, 47).

“THE WORD OF GOD IS THE CREATION WE BEHOLD: And it is in *this word*, which no human invention can counterfeit or alter, that God speaketh universally to man.” ( *see* REVELATION, GENERAL ) The universe reveals all that is necessary to know of God. Through it we can know that God exists, what God is like, and what God expects (ibid., 24, 26, 309; emphasis Paine’s).

The universe reveals the existence of God. It is evident that the things which constituted the universe could not have made themselves ( *see* COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT ). There must be “a first cause eternally existing, of a nature totally different to any material existence we know of, and by the power of which all things exist; and this first cause, man calls God” (ibid., 26; cf. 28). Paine also argued from motion. Since the universe consists of matter that cannot move itself, the origin of the rotation of the planets is impossible unless there exists an external first cause which set them in motion. This First Cause must be God (Aldridge, 6:17). He also argued from design ( *see* TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT ). Since the “work of man’s hands is a proof of the existence of man,” and since a watch is “positive evidence of the existence of a watch-maker,” then “in like manner the creation is evidence to our reason and our senses of the existence of a Creator” ( *Complete Works*, 310). The world also reveals what God is like:

Do we want to contemplate His power? We see it in the immensity of His creation. Do we want to contemplate His wisdom? We see it in the unchangeable order by which the incomprehensible whole is governed. Do we want to contemplate His munificence? We see it in the abundance with which He fills the earth. Do we want to contemplate His mercy? We see it in His not withholding that abundance even from the unthankful. Do we want to contemplate His will, so far as it respects man? The goodness He shows to all, is a lesson for our conduct to each other. [ibid., 201]

Whatever one needs to know, is available to the human mind by consulting “the scripture called the Creation” (ibid.).

**Human Beings.** According to Paine, a human being is a rational, personal, and free being. He maintained a belief in the “equality of man” and in the religious duties of each person to do justly, love mercy, and promote the happiness of fellow creatures” (ibid., 5, 41, 309). Paine adamantly denied that the human race was in rebellion against God and in need of salvation. As he stated it, humanity “stands in the same relative condition with his Maker [that] he ever did stand, since man existed, and . . . it is his greatest consolation to think so” (ibid., 24).

As for immortality, Paine could simply say, “I hope for happiness beyond this life” (*Age of Reason*, 1.3). He added, “I trouble not myself about the manner of future existence. I content myself with believing, even to positive conviction, that the Power that gave me existence is able to continue it, in any form and manner he pleases, either with or without this body. . . . It appears more probable to me that I shall continue to exist hereafter than I should have had existence, as I now have, before that existence began” (ibid., 58).

Paine believed that morally good people would be happy in the afterlife and morally wicked people would be punished. Those who were neither particularly good or bad but indifferent would be “dropped entirely” (*Complete Works*, 5, 56).

**Evil.** Nowhere did Paine attempt to reconcile the presence of evil with the deistic concept of God ( see EVIL, PROBLEM OF ). Indeed, the only evil he even seemed to notice was that caused by social injustice and that brought about by “revealed religion.” The former could be dealt with largely on a political level. The latter, which made up the greatest class of evils, could be best prevented by not admitting “of any other revelation than that which is manifested in the book of creation,” and by considering every other so-called “word of God” as “fable and imposition” (ibid., 37).

**Ethics.** Paine summarized the heart of his ethical beliefs as follows:

the moral goodness and beneficence of God manifested in the creation towards all his creatures; that, seeing, as we daily do, the goodness of God to all men, it is an example calling upon all men to practice the same towards each other; and, consequently, that everything of persecution and revenge between man and man, and everything of cruelty to animals, is a violation of moral duty. [ibid., 56]

If each person was “impressed as fully and as strongly as he ought to be with the belief of a God, his moral life would be regulated by the force of that belief.” Humankind “would stand in awe of God, and of himself, and would not do the thing that would not be concealed from either.” On the other hand, “It is by forgetting God in his works, and running after the books of pretended revelation that man has wandered from the straight path of duty and happiness, and become by turns the victim of doubt and the dupe of delusion” (ibid., 150, 309).

**The Bible and Miracles.** Paine wrote no view on history or destiny. However, he was sure that the Bible was historically unreliable ( see NEW TESTAMENT, HISTORICITY OF ) and filled with errors ( see BIBLE, ALLEGED ERRORS IN ). He ridiculed and considered mythical any biblical stories touching on the supernatural ( see MYTHOLOGY AND THE NEW TESTAMENT ). He contended that the traditional ascriptions of authorship to practically every book in the Bible

were wrong and that most were written quite later than traditionally believed. He argued that the entire New Testament was written ( see NEW TESTAMENT, DATING OF ) “more than three hundred years after the time that Christ is said to have lived” (ibid., 9–12, 15, 19, 20, 21, 53, 61–131, 133).

Paine did not believe that supernatural acts of God had ever occurred in history ( see MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST ). Accepting the laws of nature as prescriptions for how nature “is supposed to act,” he defined a miracle as “something contrary to the operation and effect of those laws.” But he added that “unless we know the whole extent of those laws, and . . . the powers of nature, we are not able to judge whether anything that may appear to us wonderful or miraculous be within, or be beyond, or be contrary to, her natural power of acting.” Hence, our limited knowledge of nature leaves us with “no positive criterion to determine what a miracle is, and mankind, in giving credit to appearances under the idea of there being miracles are subject to be continually imposed upon.” As a consequence of these considerations “nothing can be more inconsistent than to suppose that the Almighty would make use of means such as are called miracles.” It is far more likely (“millions to one”) that the reporter would lie than that nature would change. “We have never seen, in our time, nature go out of her course, but we have good reason to believe that millions of lies have been told in the same time” (ibid., 51–53).

**Evaluation.** The basic elements of Paine’s views are evaluated elsewhere. See the articles BIBLE, ALLEGED ERRORS IN ; BIBLE, EVIDENCE FOR ; DEISM ; HELL ; MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST , and NEW TESTAMENT, HISTORICITY OF .

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**Paley, William.** William Paley (1743–1805), English apologist, entered Cambridge (1759) to study mathematics. After being ordained to the priesthood (1767) he taught at Cambridge for nine years. He rose to be archdeacon of Carlisle. He wrote three major books, *The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy* (1785), *A View of the Evidences of Christianity* (1794), and *Natural Theology; or, Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity* (1802). As late as 1831, while studying for his B.A. examinations at Cambridge, Charles Darwin studied, and was deeply impressed by, Paley’s *Evidences* .

**Paley’s Apologetics.** Paley was a classical apologist ( *see* CLASSICAL APOLOGETICS ). His two books in the area cover the two central areas of traditional apologetics, the existence of God (*Natural Theology*) and the truth of Christianity (*Evidences*).

**Argument for God’s Existence.** Paley offered what has become the classic formulation of the teleological argument. It is based on the watch analogy: If one found a watch in an empty field, one would rightly conclude that it had a maker because of its obvious design. Likewise, when one looks at the even more complex design of the world in which we live, one cannot but conclude that there is a great Designer behind it.

In Paley’s words, “In crossing a heath, suppose I pitched my foot against a *stone* and was asked how the stone came to be there, I might possibly answer that for anything I knew to the contrary it had lain there forever . . .” But “suppose I had found a *watch* upon the ground, and it should be inquired how the watch happened to be in that place, I should hardly think of the answer which I had given before, that for anything I knew the watch might have always been there.” He asks, “why is it not as admissible in the second case as in the first? For this reason, and for no other, namely, that when we come to inspect the watch, we perceive—what we could not discover in the stone—that its several parts are framed and put together for a purpose . . .” (Paley, 3). Paley shows that the contrivances in nature are more incredible than those in a watch. He is careful to root his argument in observation, saying repeatedly, “We observe . . .,” “These observations . . .,” and “Our observer . . .” (Paley, *Evidences* 10, 11, 16, 17, 20, 29).

The reasoning goes: A watch shows that it was put together for an intelligent purpose (to keep time). It has a spring to give it motion. A series of wheels transmits this motion, made of brass so that they do not rust. The spring is made of resilient steel. The front cover is glass so that one can see through it. All this is evidence of intelligent design.

But the world shows greater evidence of design than a watch. It is a greater work of art than a watch. It has an endless variety of means adapted to ends. The human eye alone would suffice to demonstrate intelligent design in nature. Paley ransacked Kiell *Anatomy* for illustrations of adaptations of means to end in nature, including the bones and muscles of human beings and their equivalents in the animal world.

Paley argued that there must be only one Designer, since there is manifest in nature a uniformity of divine purpose in all parts of the world. This intelligent (personal) Creator is also good, as evidenced from the fact that most contrivances are beneficial and by the fact that pleasure is provided as an animal sensation.

Paley added that an infinite regress of causes is not plausible ( *see* INFINITE SERIES ). For “a chain composed of an infinite number of links can no more support itself than a chain composed of a finite number of links.” This is so “because, by increasing the number of links, from ten, for instance, to a hundred, from a hundred to a thousand, etc., we make not the smallest approach; we observe not the smallest tendency toward self-support” (Paley, 9–10).

An updated version of Paley’s argument might go something like this: In crossing a valley, suppose I come upon a round stratified stone and were asked how it came to be such. I might plausibly answer that it was once laid down by water in layers which later solidified by chemical action. One day it broke from a larger section of rock and was subsequently rounded by the natural erosion processes of tumbling in water. I come upon Mount Rushmore with its granite forms of four human faces. Here are obvious signs of intelligent production, not the result of natural processes. Yet why should a natural cause serve for the stone but not for the faces? When we inspect the faces on the mountain we perceive what we could not discover in the stone—that they manifest intelligent contrivance. They convey specifically complex information. The stone, on the other hand, has redundant patterns or strata easily explainable by the observed process of sedimentation. But the faces have sharply defined, complex features. Experience leads us to conclude that such shapes only occur when made by intelligent artisans (see Geisler, *Origin Science*, 159).

**Evidences for the Truth.** Paley was aware that miracles ( *see* MIRACLE ) are essential to the certification of the Christian revelation ( *see* MIRACLES, APOLOGETIC VALUE OF ). He accepted David Hume ’s contention that the credibility of miracles depends on the reliability of witnesses. The witnesses for Christianity, he argued, are known to be reliable since they persisted in their report even under the risk of persecution and the threat of death. He rejected other wonders that could be reduced to false perceptions, exaggeration, or that were important to the self-interest of the one claiming them.

Paley rejected Hume’s contention that universal experience testified against miracles. This, he held, begged the question, since miracles by definition must be an exception to universal occurrence. The real issue is whether there are reliable witnesses.

**Evaluation.** Paley is one of the great apologists of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Indeed, his influence continues. Paley used the core arguments. He stressed the evidence to establish the classic arguments. Two disciples, F. R. Tennant and A. E. Taylor ( *see*

TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT ), carried on his version of the teleological argument. Recently Paley's thought has been the subject of a revival through the development of the anthropic principle.

*Hume's Critique.* It is widely believed that Hume answered Paley's teleological argument in advance. Hume's first objection assumes design in the universe but argues by analogy that finite human designers cooperate to build great works, using trial and error or a long period of time (see Hume). Paley explicitly addressed this point in his argument that the entire world reveals one unified plan—a fact indicative of a single Intelligence.

The second argument of Hume shifted the ground by arguing that the design is only apparent. The adaptation of means to ends may result from chance. He insists that if one grants that the universe of matter in motion is eternal, then in an infinity of chance operations every combination will be realized. Thus, there is no need to posit an intelligent cause (ibid.).

Not only did Paley respond to this objection, but he used Hume's principle of uniformity to disprove Hume's contention that it is reasonable to postulate a natural cause for the manifest contrivances of nature. For Paley argued, following Hume, that "uniform experience" reveals that only an intelligent cause can produce the kinds of effects we see in nature. Paley wrote:

"Wherever we see the marks of contrivance, we are led for its cause to an *intelligent* author. And this transition of the understanding is founded upon *uniform experience*." Intelligence, Paley said, can be distinguished by certain properties, such as an ultimate purpose, intimate relationship of the parts to one another, and complex cooperation of parts to serve a common purpose. ( *Natural Theology* , 37). Uniform experiences (which Hume was even willing to call a "proof") argues against any natural causes of the kinds of effects we see throughout nature. In fact, the only kind of cause known by repeated, uniform experience (which is Hume's basis for knowing a causal connection) is an intelligent cause.

Thus, Hume's argument against design actually boomerangs into an argument for a Designer ( see TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT ).

**Conclusion.** Paley's arguments for God and for Christianity still provide the backbone for much of contemporary apologetics. The only major difference is that we now have much more "meat" to put on the skeleton. With the discovery of evidence for an origin of the universe ( see BIG BANG ), Hume's infinite time has been scientifically eliminated. With the discovery of the anthropic principle it is evident that there is only one supernatural Mind behind the universe from the moment of its inception. Microbiology, with the incredible complexity of the DNA molecule ( see EVOLUTION, CHEMICAL ) adds dimensions of specified complexity and intelligent contrivance to Paley's argument that he never could have imagined.

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**Panentheism.** *Panentheism* is not to be confused with *pantheism*. Pantheism literally means all ("pan") is God ("theism"), but panentheism means "all in God." It is also called *process theology* (since it views God as a changing Being), *bipolar theism* (since it believes God has two poles), *organicism* (since it views all that actually is as a gigantic organism), and *neoclassical theism* (because it believes God is finite and temporal, in contrast to classical theism).

Differences between theism and panentheism can be summarized:

Theism	Panentheism
God is Creator.	God is director.
Creation is ex nihilo.	Creation is ex materia.
God is sovereign over world.	God is working with world.
God is independent of world.	God is dependent on world.
God is unchanging.	God is changing.
God is absolutely perfect.	God is growing more perfect.
God is monopolar.	God is bipolar.
God is actually infinite.	God is actually finite.

Rather than viewing God as the infinite, unchanging sovereign Creator of the world who brought it into existence, panentheists think of God as a finite, changing, director of world affairs who works in cooperation with the world in order to achieve greater perfection in his nature.

Theism views God's relation to the world as a painter to a painting. The painter exists independently of the painting; he brought the painting into existence, and yet his mind is expressed in the painting. By contrast, the panentheist views God's relation to the world the way a mind is related to a body. Indeed, they believe the world is God's "body" (one pole) and the "mind" is the other pole. This is why the term *bipolar* is used. However, like some modern

materialists who believe the mind is dependent on the brain, pantheists believe God is dependent on the world. Yet there is a reciprocal dependence, a sense in which the world is dependent on God.

**Variations on Pantheism.** All pantheists agree that God has two poles, an actual pole (the world) and a potential pole (beyond the world). All agree that God is changing, finite, and temporal in his actual pole. And all agree that his potential pole is unchanging and eternal.

The major difference in how they view God is whether God in his actual pole is one actual entity (event) or a society of actual entities. Alfred North Whitehead (1861–1947) holds the former view, and Charles Hartshorne holds the latter.

Most other differences are primarily methodological. Whitehead’s approach is more empirical, while Hartshorne’s is more rational. Hence, Whitehead has a kind of teleological argument for God, whereas Hartshorne is famous for his ontological argument. Some pantheists, such as John Cobb, reject the disjunction between the two poles in God. He claims that God acts as a unity, not simply in one pole or the other. But all agree that God has two poles which can be diagrammed:

Primordial Nature	Consequent Nature
potential pole	actual pole
eternal	temporal
absolute	relative
unchanging	changing
imperishable	perishable
unlimited	limited
conceptual	physical
abstract	concrete
necessary	contingent
eternal objects	actual entities
unconscious drive	conscious realization

**Representatives of Pantheism.** There were many forerunners of a process view of God. Plato’s (428–348 B.C.) Demiurgos eternally struggled with the chaos to form it into the cosmos. This provided the dualistic ( *see* DUALISM ) background for God’s two “poles.” Even earlier (ca. 500 B.C.), Heraclitus’s flux philosophy asserted that the world is a constantly changing process.

In the modern world, G. W. F. Hegel ’s (1770–1831) progressive unfolding of God in the world process took a significant step toward a Pantheism. In the Cosmic Evolutionism of Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) the universe is viewed as an unfolding and developing process. Henri Bergson (1851–1941) then proposed a creative evolution (1907) of a life force (*elan vital*)

which drives evolution forward in “leaps.” Later he identified this Force with God (1935). Even before this, Samuel Alexander’s *Space, Time and Deity* (1920) pioneered a process view of God’s relation to the temporal universe. The main fountainhead of pantheism, however, is Whitehead. His influence is manifest in Hartshorne, Schubert Ogden, Cobb, and others.

**Basic Beliefs of Pantheism.** Although there are intramural differences among pantheists, their basic worldview has the same essential elements. Elements included are:

*The Nature of God.* All pantheists agree that God has two poles. The consequent or concrete pole is God in reality. It is God as he actually is in his moment-by-moment existence. It is God in the actual particulars of his becoming. In this pole God is finite, relative, dependent, contingent, and in process. God’s other pole is the primordial or abstract one. This is God in abstraction, what is common and constant in God’s character no matter what world exists. The divine abstract pole gives a mere outline of God’s existence without filling it out with concrete or particular content. In this pole God is infinite, absolute, independent, necessary, and immutable.

Pantheists agree that God’s abstract pole is included in his concrete pole. His becoming or process characterizes all of reality. But this reality of God is not to be thought of as being, which is static and uncreative. Creativity pervades all that exists. And God is supremely creative.

God is also viewed as personal. There is disagreement over whether he is one actual entity (as in Whitehead) or an ordered series of actual entities (as in Hartshorne). But almost all pantheists believe that God is personal.

*Nature of the Universe.* The universe is characterized by process, change, or becoming. This is so because it is constituted by a multitude of self-creative creatures that are constantly introducing change and novelty into the universe. Also, the universe is eternal. This does not necessarily mean that the present universe is eternal. Rather it could mean that there have been many universes throughout the infinite past. Some world has existed in some form always and some world in some form will always exist into the infinite future. Lastly, all pantheists reject the traditional theistic understanding of creation out of nothing, that is, *ex nihilo* ( *see* CREATION, VIEWS OF ). Some, including Ogden, accept the phrase *ex nihilo* but reinterpret creation to mean only that the present world or world-state once was not and was created out of a previous world. Others (like Whitehead and Hartshorne) reject even the notion of creation *ex nihilo* and affirm creation *ex materia* (out of preexistent material). Of course, since the material is really God’s physical pole, so creation is also *ex deo*. In fact, the present universe is cocreated by God and man out of the preexisting “stuff.” God, of course, is the prime Transformer or Shaper of each world and of each world-state.

*Relation of God to Universe.* In a pantheistic worldview, God’s consequent pole is the world. This does not mean that God and the world are identical, for God is more than the world, and the individuals that make up the world are distinct from God. It does mean, however, that the world is God’s cosmic body and that those creatures who make up the world are like cells in his body. This is why God cannot exist without some kind of physical universe. He does not need this world, but he must coexist in *some* world. Similarly, the world cannot exist without God. Hence the world and God are mutually dependent. Moreover, the creatures in the universe

contribute value to God's life. The inclusive aim or goal of all creatures is to enrich God's happiness and thus help him fulfill what he lacks.

*Miracles.* An implication of panentheism is that supernatural acts are impossible ( *see* MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST ). Since the world is the body of God there is nothing apart from God that can be broken into or interrupted. Indeed, God is largely a passive recipient of his creatures' activity rather than an active force in the world. God is a cosmic Sympathizer rather than a cosmic Activist ( *see* FINITE GODISM ; KUSHNER, HAROLD ). Consequently miraculous intervention in the world is out of character with the nature of the panentheistic God. Many panentheists reject miracles because the contemporary scientific view of the world rules them out. Ogden takes this stance. This is one reason why he adopts Rudolph Bultmann's program to demythologize the miracle stories recorded in the Bible ( *see* MYTHOLOGY AND THE NEW TESTAMENT ).

*Human Beings.* Panentheists agree that humanity is personal and free. In fact, humanity as a whole is a co-creator with God and of God. He not only helps decide the course of human and world events but also those of God. Human identity is not found in some enduring "I" or self. Rather, like the rest of the world, identity is found only in the events or actual occasions of history in which humanity is becoming. The human being is partially creating himself or herself in every decision and act each moment. The goal is to serve God by contributing value to his ever growing experience.

*Ethics.* Many panentheists believe that there are no absolute values ( *see* MORALITY, ABSOLUTE NATURE OF ). Since God and the world are in great flux, there can be no absolute, unchanging standard of value. On the other hand, such panentheists as Hartshorne contend that there is a universal basis for ethics, namely, beauty, harmony, and intensity. Anything that promotes or builds upon or acts from this basis is good; anything that does not do so is evil. But even granting this universal aesthetic foundation, specific ethical commands or rules are not universal. Though in general one should promote beauty and not ugliness, exactly how this should be done is relative. Therefore, even though there may be an ultimate basis or ground for ethics, values themselves are not absolute but relative.

*Human Destiny.* The destiny of humanity is not to be looked for in an actual heaven or hell or a conscious afterlife ( *see* IMMORTALITY ). Rather, human beings, like all of God's creatures, will live forever only in God's cosmic memory. A person who contributes richly to God's life, will have the satisfaction of knowing that God will fondly remember him or her forever. Those who live without contributing much value to God, who, in other words, live unfaithfully, will not be remembered with much fondness by God.

In panentheism an ongoing evolutionary process helps move events forever forward. God and humanity are also seen as co-creators of history. However, unlike theism, there is no ultimate end of history. There will always be the unsurpassable deity who is constantly growing in perfection. And there will always be some world filled with self-create creatures whose inclusive aim is to enrich the experience of God. History has no beginning and it has no end. There is no ultimate destiny, utopia, eschaton, or end. History, as everything else, has always

been, is coming to be now, and will always be in process. History is not going anywhere, it is just going on.

*Evaluation. Contributions of Panentheism.* Panentheists seek a comprehensive view of reality. They recognize that a piecemeal understanding of things is inadequate. Instead they have sought to develop a coherent and reasonable view of all that exists, a complete worldview.

Panentheism manages to posit an intimate relation between God and the world without destroying that relation, as does pantheism. God is *in* the world but not identical to it. The presence of God in the universe does not destroy the multiplicity that humans experience, but rather preserves it and even bestows upon it purpose and meaning. Granting the existence of a supreme Being, panentheists show that the world must depend upon God for its origin and continuation. Unless God exists, the world could not continue to exist. They insist that there must be an adequate cause to account for the world.

Panentheists seriously relate their worldview to contemporary theories of science. Whatever worldview one holds, science cannot be ignored. Valid human discoveries in any field or discipline must be incorporated into one's worldview. If reality is truly reasonable and noncontradictory, then all of knowledge can be consistently systematized, no matter who discovers it or where it is found. Panentheists take this to heart.

*Criticisms of Panentheism.* Some of the more important criticisms will be noted here.

The idea of a God who is both infinite and finite, necessary and contingent, absolute and relative, is contradictory. A contradiction results when opposites are affirmed of the same thing at the same time and in the same manner or respect. For example, to say that a bucket is both filled with water and not filled with water at the same time and in the same respect is contradictory. Such a thing could never occur, for it is logically impossible.

Hartshorne has responded to the charge of contradiction by pointing out that the metaphysical contraries are not attributed to the same divine pole. Rather those attributes that belong together, such as infinity and necessity, are applied to one pole while the other attributes that belong together, such as finitude and contingency, are applied to a different pole. Infinity and finitude, necessity and contingency, though applied to the same being at the same time, are applied to the appropriate poles in God (Hartshorne, *Man's Vision of God*, 22–24). The Christian theist, H. P. Owen, has responded that there seems to be no real distinction between the two divine poles. Since the abstract pole has no concrete or actual existence, then it must be a mere idea, having mental reality but no existence (Owen, 105). Therefore God must not really be infinite, and necessary, for those attributes are in the potential pole that does not exist in reality. God in reality is only finite and contingent. Or God must be both sides of the metaphysical contraries at the same time and in the same pole. The first option makes panentheism's doctrine of God meaningless, and the second makes it contradictory. In either event the bipolar concept of God is incoherent.

The idea of God as a self-caused being is contradictory. It is difficult to see how any being could cause itself to exist. To think this could occur is to believe that potentials can actualize

themselves. Cups could fill themselves with coffee and steel could make itself into a skyscraper. How could a being exist prior to itself in order to bring itself into existence? This is what a self-caused being would have to do in order to exist. A panentheist might respond that God did not bring himself into existence; he has eternally existed. Rather, the panentheistic version of a self-caused God creates his becoming. That is, God produces changes in himself. God actualizes his own potentials for growth.

But this leads to another problem. If God causes his own becoming and not his own being, then what or who sustains God in existence? How can a being change without there existing an unchanging being that grounds the changing being's existence? Everything cannot be in flux. Whatever changes passes from potentiality to actuality, from what it is not to what is. Such change could not actualize itself or be self-caused, for potentials are not yet the something they have the potential to be.

Nothing cannot produce something. Neither could such changes be uncaused, for there must be a cause for every effect or event ( *see* CAUSALITY, PRINCIPLE OF ). It seems, therefore, that the universe of change, which is the concrete pole of God, must be caused by something that does not change. Something outside of the changing order must sustain the entire order in existence. Therefore there must be a being other than what the process philosopher views as "God" that sustains him in existence. If this is true, then the panentheistic God is not really God, but the Being that grounds him is really God. Such a God is not an immutable-mutable being, as is the process deity, but would have to be simply immutable.

Another aspect of this problem is that the panentheist knows that everything, including God, is relative and changing. How can anyone know that something is changing when there is no stable reference point by which to measure the change? The theist has God and his absolute, unchanging character and will. The panentheist has no such standard. A panentheist could answer that his unchanging measure is the immutable primordial nature of God. But this does not seem adequate. For God's primordial pole is only an abstraction—it has no reality. It can be a conceptual measure, but not an actual one. Besides, a panentheist who says that God is immutable means that God is immutably mutable—He cannot fail to always change and always change for the better (Hartshorne, *Natural Theology*, 110, 276). Hence we seem to be back where we started, with everything changing and nothing that is being changed.

The panentheistic concept of personhood appears to conflict with our experience of ourselves. We, at least, believe ourselves to be personal beings who, to some degree, endure change. Most of us do not believe that we become new persons each moment we exist. In fact, to even say that "I become a new person each moment I exist" assumes that there is something that endures, the "I" to whom the changes occur. Otherwise, what changes? If nothing endures from moment to moment, then can it really be said that anything changes? If there is no sense in which the self is a continuous identity, then it appears that we can only speak of a series of unrelated actual "I" occasions (ibid., 58). And the only thing that can be said to change in that series of "I's" is the series itself, not each individual "I" in the series. This seems to destroy self-identity and to contradict human experience. This problem is particularly acute for Hartshorne. In accord with his view, one goes out of existence every time there is a moment with no conscious "I." That would include periods of sleep or under anesthesia or other moments of lapsed

consciousness. A parent awakening a child from sleep would actually call the young one back into existence.

To say with the panentheist that some world or other must have always existed begs the question. Of course it is impossible that total nothingness could ever be experienced, for no one could be there to experience it. Otherwise it would not be *total* nothingness. But this presupposes that only what can be experienced can be true. Why should this criteria for truth be accepted? Hartshorne implies that it should be accepted because there can be no meaning without experience (ibid.). Thus a concept that cannot be experienced must be meaningless. But if this is so then Hartshorne seems to have won his case by definition. For if there can be no meaning without experience, then total nonbeing, which cannot be experienced, must be meaningless. Hartshorne has established his case by defining meaning in such a way that makes total nonbeing a meaningless concept. He has not proved the meaninglessness of "nothing exists" but only assumed it, which is question-begging.

Even if Hartshorne can establish that total nothingness is not possible, the panentheistic view does not follow. For this would simply be a way of saying that everything cannot be contingent. But this leads naturally to a theistic position ( *see* THEISM ) in which there must be a Necessary Being beyond the contingent world. It is not necessary to conclude that panentheism is true, simply because a total state of nothingness is not possible.

If the proposition "Nothing exists." is logically possible, then the existence of Hartshorne's and Ogden's God is tenuous. Such a God must keep the universe rolling and change universes quickly, or he poofs out of the picture. He is tied as with an umbilical cord to some world. But if it is logically possible that "some world exists" has not always been true, then it is logically possible that "God exists" has at some time been false. But, according to Hartshorne and Ogden, if God is not logically necessary, a necessary being that must always exist no matter what, then the existence of God must be logically impossible. By this rule the God of Hartshorne and Ogden is necessarily false.

Process theology faces a serious dilemma (Gruenler, 75–79). God comprehends the whole universe at one time, yet God is limited to space and time. But anything limited to space and time cannot think any faster than the speed of light, which takes billions of years to cross the universe at about 186,000 miles a second. However, there seems to be no way that a mind which takes this kind of time to think its way around the universe could simultaneously comprehend and direct the whole universe. On the other hand, if God's mind does transcend the universe of space and time and instantly and simultaneously comprehend the whole, then this is not a panentheistic view of God but a theistic view.

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**Pantheism.** *Pantheism* means all ("pan") is God ("theism"). It is the worldview held by most Hindus, many Buddhists, and other New Age religions. It is also the worldview of Christian Science, Unity, and Scientology.

According to pantheism, God "is all in all." God pervades all things, contains all things, subsumes all things, and is found within all things. Nothing exists apart from God, and all things are in some way identified with God. The world is God, and God is the world. But more precisely, in pantheism all is God, and God is all.

Pantheism has a long history in both the East and the West. From the Eastern mysticism of Hindu sages and seers to the rationalism of such Western philosophers as Parmenides, Benedict Spinoza, and G. W. F. Hegel, pantheism has always had advocates.

**Kinds of Pantheism.** There are differing types of belief within pantheism. An *absolute* pantheism is represented by the thought of the fifth-century B.C. Greek philosopher Parmenides and the Vedanta school of Hinduism (see HINDUISM, VEDANTA). Absolute pantheism teaches that there is only one being in the world, God, and that all else that appears to exist actually does not. Another type is *emanational* pantheism, which was set forth by the third century A.D. philosopher, Plotinus. According to this view, everything flows from God in the same way a flower unfolds from a seed. There is also the *developmental* pantheism of Hegel (1770–1831). Hegel viewed the events of history as the unfolding manifestations of Absolute Spirit. The *modal* pantheism of the seventeenth-century rationalist Spinoza argued that there is only one absolute substance in which all finite things are merely modes or moments. The *multilevel* pantheism is

found in some forms of Hinduism, especially as expressed by Radhakrishnan. This view sees various levels of manifestation of God, with the highest level manifesting God as the Absolute One, and lower levels showing him in increasing multiplicity. *Permeational* pantheism is the view popularized by the *Star Wars* movies of George Lucas, in which the Force (Tao) penetrates all things. This belief is found in Zen Buddhism.

**Basic Beliefs.** There are other types of pantheism, but these lay out the worldview's commonalities. Each of these types identifies God with the world, but they vary in the conception of this identity. All pantheists believe that God and the real world are one, but they differ as to how God and the world are united. The following are basic beliefs of a pantheistic worldview.

**Nature of God.** God and reality are ultimately impersonal. Personality, consciousness, and intellect are characteristics of lower manifestations of God, but they are not to be confused with God in his being. In God there is the absolute simplicity of one. There are no parts. Multiplicity may flow from it, but in and of itself it is simple, not multiple.

**Nature of the Universe.** Those pantheists who grant any kind of reality to the universe agree that it was created *ex deo*, "out of God," not *ex nihilo*, "out of nothing," as theism maintains (see CREATION, VIEWS OF). There is only one "Being" or Existent in the universe; everything else is an emanation or manifestation of it (see ONE AND MANY, PROBLEM OF). Of course, absolute pantheists hold that the universe is not even a manifestation. We are all simply part of an elaborate illusion. Creation simply does not exist. God exists. Nothing else.

**God in Relation to the Universe.** In contrast to theists, who view God as beyond and separate from the universe, pantheists believe that God and the universe are one. The theist grants some reality to the universe of multiplicity, while the pantheist does not. Those who deny the existence of the universe, of course, see no real relation between God and the universe. But all pantheists agree that whatever reality exists, it is God.

**Miracles.** An implication of pantheism is that miracles are impossible. For if all is God, and God is all, nothing exists apart from God that could be interrupted or broken into, which is what the nature of a miracle requires. For more discussion of this, see the article on Spinoza. Since pantheists agree that God is simple (has no parts) and is all there is, then God could not perform any miracles, for a miracle implies a God who is in some sense "outside" of the world in which he "intervenes." The only sense in which God "intervenes" in the world is by a regular penetration of it in accordance with repeated higher spiritual laws, such as the law of *karma* (see REINCARNATION). Therefore, the pantheistic worldview rules out miracles (see MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST).

**Human Beings.** Pantheists either believe that the human as a distinct being is absolutely unreal (absolute pantheism) or else that humanity is real but far less real than God. The primary teaching of absolute pantheism is that humans must overcome their ignorance and realize that they *are* God. Those who put a distance between God and humanity teach a dualistic view of the person—a body and a soul. The body holds the human down, keeping him or her from uniting



with God. So each must purge his or her body so the soul can be released to attain oneness with the Absolute One. For all pantheists, the chief goal or end of humanity is to unite with God.

*Ethics.* Pantheists usually strive to live moral lives and to encourage others to do so. Often their writings are filled with exhortations to use good judgment, to be devoted to truth, and to selflessly love others.

However, these exhortations usually apply to a lower level of spiritual attainment. Once a person has achieved union with God, he has no further concern with moral laws. Nonattachment or utter unconcern for one's actions and their results are often taught as a prerequisite to achieving oneness with God. Since God is beyond good and evil, the person must transcend them to reach God. Morality is stressed as only a temporary concern, and underlying this is no absolute basis for right or wrong ( *see* ABSOLUTES, MORAL ). Prabhavananda and Christopher Usherwood admit as much when they say, "Every action, under certain circumstances and for certain people, may be a stepping-stone to spiritual growth—if it is done in the spirit of nonattachment. All good and all evil is relative to the individual point of growth. . . . But, in the highest sense, there can be neither good nor evil" ( *Bhagavad-Gita* , 140).

Thus, for the pantheist, ethical conduct is a means, not an end in itself. It is used only to help one attain a higher level of spirituality. Ultimately reality is neither good nor evil. As Prabhavananda puts it: "If we say, 'I am good,' or 'I am bad,' we are only talking the language of *maya* [the world of illusion] ( *see* ILLUSIONISM ). 'I am Brahman,' is the only true statement regarding ourselves that any of us can make" ( *Spiritual Heritage* , 203).

*History and Human Destiny.* Pantheists hardly ever talk about history, except in modified forms of pantheism usually influenced by Western theism (as in Hegel). They are not concerned with it, for either it does not exist, or it is regarded as an aspect of the world of appearances, a thing to be transcended. History has no ultimate goal or end. Whenever it is granted a kind of reality, it is always (except in Hegel's pantheism) considered to be cyclical. Like the wheel of *samsara* , history forever repeats itself. There are no unique events or final events of history. There is no millennium, utopia, or eschaton.

As to individual human destiny, most pantheists, especially Eastern varieties, believe in reincarnation. After the soul leaves the body it enters into another mortal body to work off its *karma* . Eventually the goal is to leave the body and, in the case of most pantheists, merge with God. This is called *Nirvana* , and it means the loss of individuality. Ultimate salvation in this kind of pantheistic system is *from* one's individuality, not *in* it as Christians believe ( *see* IMMORTALITY ).

*Evaluation. Contributions of Pantheism.* Pantheism attempts to explain all of reality, rather than parts of it. If we are part of a *uni* -verse, than any worldview must seek to embrace that unity. Pantheism does have a holistic view of things. Any comprehensive view of God must include God's immanent presence and activity in the world. A God who will not or cannot relate to humanity will not receive worship from many, nor will many think he deserves it. Pantheism rightly stresses that God is in the world and intimately related to it. He is not transcendently remote and totally removed from the universe.

Pantheism teaches that only God is absolute and necessary. Anything and everything else must be less than absolute and be utterly dependent upon God. Unless God exists, nothing else could exist either. Surely, it is necessary for a worldview to so relate everything to the ultimate.

Finally, the stress pantheism places on not ascribing limitations to God in our language about him is appropriate. If God is unlimited and transcendent, then all limitations must be negated from terms that are applied to him. Without this, verbal idolatry results. The Infinite cannot be encompassed by our finite conceptions.

*Criticisms.* Absolute pantheism is self-defeating. The absolute pantheist claims: "I am God." But God is the changeless Absolute. However, humanity goes through a process of change called enlightenment because he has this awareness. So how could people be God when people change but God does not?

Pantheists attempt to escape this criticism by allowing some reality to humanity, whether it be emanational, modal, or manifestational. But if we are really only modes of God, then why are we oblivious to it? H. P. Owen describes this as a "metaphysical amnesia" that pervades all our lives. If we are being deceived about the consciousness of our own individual existence, how do we know that the pantheist is not also being deceived in claiming to be conscious of reality as ultimately one?

In fact, if the world is really an illusion, how can we distinguish between reality and fantasy at all? Lao-tse puts the question well: "If, when I was asleep I was a man dreaming I was a butterfly, how do I know when I am awake I am not a butterfly dreaming I am a man?" (Guinness, 14). If what we continually perceive to be real is not, how could we ever distinguish between reality and fantasy? Maybe when we cross a busy street, with three lanes of traffic coming toward us, we should not worry, for it's all an illusion anyway. Indeed, should we even look when crossing the street, if we, the traffic, and the street do not really exist? If pantheists would live out their pantheism consistently, there would be no pantheists left.

*Self-Refuting Nature of Pantheism.* Pantheism is self-refuting ( *see* ), at least all forms that claim individuality is an illusion caused by my mind. For according to pantheism, individual minds are themselves aspects of the illusion and can therefore provide no basis for explaining it. If the mind is part of the illusion, it cannot be the ground for explaining the illusion. Hence, if pantheism is true in asserting that my individuality is an illusion, then pantheism is false, since there is then no basis for explaining the illusion ( *see* D.K. Clark, chapter 7).

Pantheism also fails to handle the problem of evil in a satisfactory manner ( *see* EVIL, PROBLEM OF ). To pronounce evil an illusion ( *see* ILLUSIONISM ) or as less than real is not only frustrating and hollow to those experiencing evil, but it seems philosophically inadequate. If evil is not real, then what is the origin of the illusion? Why have people experienced it for so long, and why does it seem so real? Despite the pantheist's claim to the contrary, he or she also experiences pain, suffering, and eventually will die. Even pantheists double-over in pain when they get appendicitis. They jump out of the way of an on-coming truck so as not to get hurt.

If God is all, and all is God, as pantheists maintain, then evil is an illusion and ultimately there are no rights and wrongs. For there are four possibilities regarding good and evil:

1. If God is all-good, then evil must exist apart from God. But this is impossible since God is all—nothing can exist apart from It.
2. If God is all-evil, then good must exist apart from God. This is not possible either, since God is all.
3. God is both all-good and all-evil. This cannot be, for it is self-contradictory to affirm that the same being is both all good and all evil at the same time. Further, most pantheists agree that God is beyond good and evil. Therefore God is neither good nor evil.
4. Good and evil are illusory. They are not real categories.

Option four is what most pantheists believe. But if evil is only an illusion, then ultimately there is no such thing as good and evil thoughts or actions. Hence, what difference would it make whether we praise or curse, counsel or rape, love or murder someone? If there is no final moral difference between those actions, absolute moral responsibilities do not exist. Cruelty and noncruelty are ultimately the same. One critic made the point with this illustration:

One day I was talking to a group of people in the digs of a young South African in Cambridge. Among others, there was present a young Indian who was of Sikh background but a Hindu by religion. He started to speak strongly against Christianity, but did not really understand the problems of his own beliefs. So I said, "Am I not correct in saying that on the basis of your system, cruelty and non-cruelty are ultimately equal, that there is no intrinsic difference between them?" He agreed. . . . The student in whose room we met, who had clearly understood the implications of what the Sikh had admitted, picked up his kettle of boiling water with which he was about to make tea, and stood with it steaming over the Indian's head. The man looked up and asked him what he was doing and he said, with a cold yet gentle finality, "There is no difference between cruelty and non-cruelty." Thereupon the Hindu walked out into the night. [Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There* , 101]

If pantheists are correct that reality is not moral, that good and evil, right and wrong, are inapplicable to what is, then to be right is as meaningless as to be wrong (Schaeffer, *He Is There and He Is Not Silent* ). The foundation for morality is destroyed. Pantheism does not take the problem of evil seriously. As C. S. Lewis put it, "If you do not take the distinctions between good and bad seriously, then it is easy to say that anything you find in this world is a part of God. But, of course, if you think some things really bad, and God really good, then you cannot talk like that" ( *Mere Christianity* , 30).

In this and other ways, the pantheistic concept of God is incoherent. To say God is infinite, yet somehow shares his being ( *ex deo* ) with creation, is to raise the problem of how the finite can be infinite, which is what absolute pantheists say. Otherwise, one must consider the finite world less than real, though existing. We have seen the problems with the first, absolute option.

But the second option makes God both infinite and finite, for it is said to share part of its being with creatures which entails an Infinite Being becoming less than infinite. But how can the Infinite be finite, the Absolute be relative, and the Unchanging changed?

Pantheism's God also is unknowable. The very claim, "God is unknowable in an intellectual way," seems either meaningless or self-defeating. For if the claim itself cannot be understood in an intellectual way, then it is self-defeating. For what is being affirmed is that nothing can be understood about God in an intellectual way. But the pantheist expects us to intellectually know this truth that God cannot be understood in an intellectual way. In other words, the pantheist appears to be making a statement about God to the effect that no such statements can be made about God. But how can one make a positive affirmation about God which claims that only negative affirmations can be made about God? Plotinus admitted that negative knowledge presupposes some positive awareness. Otherwise, one would not know what to negate.

Critics further claim that the denial of many pantheists of the applicability of logic to reality is self-defeating. For to deny that logic applies to reality, it would seem that one must make a logical statement about reality to the effect that no logical statements can be made. For example, when Zen Buddhist D. T. Suzuki says that to comprehend life we must abandon logic (Suzuki, 58), he uses logic in his affirmation and applies it to reality. Indeed, the law of noncontradiction (A cannot both be A and not-A) cannot be denied without using it in the very denial ( *see* FIRST PRINCIPLES ). Therefore, to deny that logic applies to reality, one must not make a logical statement about reality. But then how will the position be defended?

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**Pascal, Blaise.** Blaise Pascal (1623–1662) was a French mathematician, scientist, and philosopher. At age sixteen, he completed an original treatise on conic sections. He contributed to the development of differential calculus, and originated the mathematical theory of probability. Several mathematical propositions and demonstrations have been named in his honor: Pascal's arithmetical triangle, Pascal's law, and Pascal's mystic hexagram.

Pascal's stress on faith brought him in contact with the Jansenists, a splinter Catholic group at odds with the Jesuits. Among the Jansenists he experienced his "first conversion" (1646). Later he experienced his "definitive conversion" when he discovered the "God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not of philosophers and scholars" (Pascal, 311).

After the condemnation of the Jansenist apologist Antoine Arnauld (in 1655), Pascal wrote his eighteen *Lettres provinciales* (1656–57) which attacked the Jesuit theory of grace and morality. His most famous work is *Pensees* (Thoughts), published after his death from notes he began earlier. *Pensees* vindicated Christianity through the presentation of facts and fulfillment of prophecy and by an appeal to the heart (Cross, 1036).

**Faith and Reason.** Although Pascal's opposition to René Descartes and his Cartesian rationalism earned him the undeserved title of fideist ( see FIDEISM ), Pascal actually offered many evidences in support of the Christian Faith. In the tradition of Augustine , in which he was nourished, he believed that only faith could free from sin and put him in a personal relationship with God. There is always an element of risk in faith, but it is a risk worth taking. He confessed that the "heart has its reasons of which reason knows not." However, this does exclude the use of reason in supporting the truths of the Christian Faith.

**Apologetic.** Pascal's rational apologetic for Christianity can be divided into three parts. First, his use of evidence; second, the appeal to fulfilled prophecies; and, third, his famous "wager."

*The Use of Evidence.* Pascal believed "it is a sign of weakness to prove God from nature" (Pascal, no. 466). He adds, "It is a remarkable fact that no canonical author ever used nature to prove God" (ibid., no. 463). However, he listed twelve "proofs" for Christianity:

1. the Christian religion, by the fact of being established so firmly and so gently, though so contrary to nature;
2. the holiness, sublimity, and humility of a Christian soul;
3. the miracles of holy Scripture;
4. Jesus Christ in particular;
5. the apostles in particular;
6. Moses and the prophets in particular;
7. the Jewish people;
8. prophecies;
9. perpetuity: no religion enjoys perpetuity;
10. doctrine, accounting for everything;
11. the holiness of this law, and
12. the order of the world (ibid., no. 482).

Some of these evidences Pascal discusses at great length. The proof from prophecy covers *Pensees* nos. 483–511. He notes their supernatural nature, since they "wrote down these things long before they happened" (ibid., no. 484). He points out their specificity, citing Daniel's prediction of what year the Messiah would die (ibid., no. 485). With regard to messianic prophecy he lists numerous detailed predictions, such as Christ's precursor ( Malachi 3 ), birth ( Isaiah 9 ; Micah 5 ), and his work in Jerusalem to blind the wise and learned, Isaiah 6 , 8 , 29 (ibid., no. 487) ( see PROPHECY, AS PROOF OF THE BIBLE ).

*Pascal's Wager.* In *Pensees* he offered *Pascal's Wager* . Assuming, as Pascal does, that we cannot know for sure by reason alone whether God exists or what lies beyond this life, how then should we live in this life? What are the odds for there being a God and an afterlife? Pascal wrote:

Either God is or he is not. But to which view shall we be inclined? Reason cannot decide this question. Infinite chaos separates us. At the far end of this infinite distance a coin is being spun which will come down heads or tails. How will you wager? Reason cannot make you choose either, reason cannot prove either wrong. . . .

Yes, but you must wager. There is no choice, you are already committed. Which will you choose then? Let us see: since a choice must be made, let us see which offers you the least interest. You have two things to lose: the true and the good; and two things to stake: your reason and your will, your knowledge and your happiness; and your nature has two things to avoid: error and wretchedness. . . . Let us weigh up the gain and the loss involved in calling heads that God exists. Let us assess the two cases: if you win you win everything, if you lose you lose nothing. Do not hesitate then; wager that he does exist. . . .

“I confess, I admit it, but is there really no way of seeing what the cards are?” “Yes. Scripture and the rest, etc.” “Yes, but my hands are tied and my lips are sealed; I am being forced to wager and I am not free; I am being held fast and I am so made that I cannot believe. What do you want me to do then?” “That is true, but at least get it into your head that, if you are unable to believe, it is because of your passions, since reason impels you to believe and yet you cannot do so. Concentrate then not on convincing yourself by multiplying proofs of God’s existence but by diminishing your passions. You want to find faith and you do not know the road. You want to be cured of unbelief and you ask for the remedy: learn from those who were once bound like you and who now wager all they have. These are people who know the road you wish to follow, who have been cured of the affliction of which they began. They behaved just as if they did believe, taking holy water, having masses said, and so on. That will make you believe quite naturally, and will make you more docile.” “But that is what I am afraid of.” “But why? What have you to lose? But to show you that this is the way, the fact is that this diminishes the passions which are your great obstacles. . . .

I tell you that you will gain even in this life, and that at every step you take along this road you will see that your gain is so certain and your risk so negligible that in the end you will realize that you have wagered on something certain and infinite for which you have paid nothing.

According to Pascal’s wager, one cannot lose by wagering that God and immortality exist. Even if one cannot prove God nor an after life, it is a good bet to believe in him. We have nothing to lose. If God does not exist, the life of the believer is a great life anyway. If he does exist, then so much the more. Not only is this life great but the one to come will be even greater. So, believing in God and a life to come is a good bet, both for this life and the one to come.

The wager cannot be avoided. We must either believe in God or not. Since we can’t avoid betting, the odds overwhelmingly favor betting on God.

The game of life must be played. Even those who end their life, must play the game; they only shorten its duration. But assuming there is no God to meet beyond the grave is a big gamble—one not worth taking. But assuming there is a God is a gamble not worth missing. For believing there is a God pays in this life for sure and possibly in the next. But assuming there is no God brings unhappiness in this life and the possibility of more to come. In Pascal’s own words, “That leaves no choice; wherever there is infinity, and where there are not infinite

chances of losing against that of winning, there is no room for hesitation, you must give everything.”

**Evaluation.** *His Approach Is Fideistic* . Pascal, while emphasizing the heart and faith, is not a fideist. In *Pensees* no. 149 he puts into Jesus’ mouth these words:

I do not mean you to believe me submissively and without reason; I do not claim to subdue you by tyranny. Nor do I claim to account for everything. . . . I mean to show you by clearly, by convincing proofs, marks of divinity within me which will convince you of what I am, and establish my authority by miracles and proofs that you cannot reject, so that you will then believe the things I teach, finding no reason to reject them but your own inability to tell whether they are true or not.

This is clearly not fideism.

*His Argument from Prophecy Fails.* Pascal’s views came in for heavy criticism in the eighteenth century. The deist Francois-Marie Voltaire (1694–1778) is typical. As for miracles, Voltaire wrote: “not a single one of the prophecies that Pascal referred to can be honestly applied to Christ; and that his discussion of miracles was pure nonsense” (Torrey, 264). However, as seen in the article PROPHECY, AS PROOF OF THE BIBLE , the deists’ questions can be answered and Pascal’s argument can be vindicated as a defense of Christianity.

*His Views Were Not Enlightened.* Voltaire, in his twenty-fifth philosophical letter, declared that Pascal’s Christian view of the fall, redemption, divine providence, predestination, and grace was neither enlightened nor humanitarian and that he encouraged fanaticism.

As for Pascal’s “Wager,” Voltaire was shocked that he would resort to such a means to prove God. If “the heavens declare the glory of God,” why did Pascal downplay the external evidence for God in nature ( *see* GOD, EVIDENCE FOR )?

Walter Kaufmann of Harvard once quipped that maybe Pascal’s God would “out-Luther Luther.” That is, “God might punish those whose faith is prompted by prudence” (Kaufmann, 177). But this too is hardly a critique of the Wager. At best it would only exclude those who believe in God on such grounds. Further, the argument is based on a flawed view of God’s character. No morally worthy God, to say nothing of a rational one, would punish someone who uses wisdom in thinking about his ultimate destiny.

Atheist George H. Smith argues that one loses too much by making such a wager. “What have we got to lose? Intellectual integrity, self-esteem, and a passionate, rewarding life for starters. In short, everything that makes life worth living. Far from being a safe bet, Pascal’s wager requires the wager of one’s life and happiness” (Smith, 184).

But it is not at all clear that this is the case. Pascal himself was a man of great intellect and great integrity, as even most of his enemies are willing to admit. And certainly it is simply false to hold that Pascal and other thinking Christians do not have a “rewarding life.” Indeed, this is part of Pascal’s wager, namely, that we have nothing to lose, since this life of faith alone—even

if there were no God—is eminently worthwhile. Finally, Smith overlooks the major point Pascal makes: The believer anticipates eternal reward as well. “Everything to gain and really nothing to lose”; unbelief has a difficult time answering Pascal.

One could challenge the premise that believers have nothing to lose. If there is no God, Christians submit to a life of sacrifice for nothing ( 2 Cor. 11:22–28 ; 2 Tim. 3:12 ). They missed some fun by being a believer. But considering that the believer has true joy and peace, forgiveness, and hope, even in suffering ( Romans 5 , James 1 ), this is hardly a telling point.

However, the wager is not a proof of God, but a path of prudence. It merely shows that it is foolish not to believe in God. The question remains as to whether the “wise” path leads to truth.

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### Passover Plot.

**The Passover Plot Hypothesis.** *The Passover Plot* is a book by radical New Testament scholar, H. J. Schonfield, who proposed that Jesus was an innocent messianic pretender who connived to “fulfill” prophecy in order to substantiate his claims (Schonfield, 35–38). According to the plot, Jesus secretly “schemed in faith” (ibid., 173), connived with a young man, Lazarus, and Joseph of Arimathea, to feign death on the cross, revive in the tomb, and demonstrate to his disciples (who were ignorant of the plot) that he was the Messiah. However, the plan went awry when the Roman soldiers pierced Jesus’ side and he died. Nonetheless, the disciples mistook others as Christ some days later and believed he had risen from the dead (Schonfield, 170–72).

**A Challenge to the Passover Plot.** If true, the “Passover Plot” would contradict orthodox Christianity, which is built on the beliefs that Jesus was truly the Messiah who supernaturally

fulfilled Old Testament prophecy, and who died on the cross and rose from the dead three days later ( 1 Cor. 15:1–5 ). Apart from these basic truths there is no historic Christianity ( 1 Cor. 15:12–18 ). Thus, it is incumbent on the evangelical apologist to refute the Passover Plot hypothesis.

At least three basic dimensions of traditional apologetics are called in question by this alleged plot: the character of Christ, the supernatural nature of messianic predictions, and the resurrection of Christ. Each will be addressed in order.

**The Character of Christ.** If the alleged plot is correct, then Jesus was anything but “innocent.” He was a conniving, cunning, and deceptive messianic pretender. He intended to deceive his closest disciples into believing he was the Messiah when he was not. But this thesis is contrary to the character of Christ known from the Gospel records, which have been demonstrated to be reliable ( *see* NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS ; NEW TESTAMENT, HISTORICITY OF ; NEW TESTAMENT, DATING OF ). The Jesus of the Gospels is the perfect exemplar of honesty and integrity ( *see* CHRIST, UNIQUENESS OF ).

**The Nature of Supernatural Prophecy.** Contrary to the “Passover Plot,” messianic prophecy is supernatural ( *see* PROPHECY, AS PROOF OF THE BIBLE ). And in the case of Christ there are many reasons that he could not have manipulated events to make it look like he fulfilled all the predictions about the Old Testament Messiah.

First of all, this was contrary to his honest character as noted above. It assumes he was one of the greatest deceivers of all time. It presupposes that he was not even a good person, to say nothing of the perfect man the Gospels affirm him to be. There are several lines of evidence that combine to demonstrate that this is a completely implausible thesis.

Second, there is no way Jesus could have controlled many events necessary for the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. For example, he had no control over where he would be born ( Mic. 5:2 ), how he would be born of a virgin ( Isa. 7:14 ), when he would die ( Dan. 9:25 ), what tribe ( Gen. 49:10 ) and lineage he would be from ( 2 Sam. 7:12 ), and numerous other things.

Third, there is no way short of being supernatural that Jesus could have manipulated the events and people in his life to respond in exactly the way necessary for it to appear that he was fulfilling all these prophecies, including John’s heralding him ( Matt. 3 ), his accuser’s reactions ( Matt. 27:12 ), how the soldiers cast lots for his garments ( John 19:23 , 24 ), and how they would pierce his side with a spear ( John 19:34 ). Indeed even Schonfield admits that the plot failed when the Romans actually pierced Christ. The fact is that anyone with all this manipulative power would have to be divine—the very thing the Passover hypothesis is attempting to avoid. In short, it takes a bigger miracle to believe the Passover Plot than to accept these prophecies as supernatural.

**The Resurrection of Christ.** *The Passover Plot* offers an implausible scenario as an alternative to the resurrection of Christ. This is true for many reasons. First, it is contrary to the Gospel records, which are demonstrably reliable ( *see* NEW TESTAMENT, HISTORICITY OF ),

having been written by eyewitnesses and contemporaries of the events. Second, it totally overlooks the powerful testimony of the resurrection of Christ ( *see* RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR ), including: (1) a permanently empty tomb; (2) over five hundred eyewitnesses ( 1 Cor. 15:5–7 ); (3) some twelve physical appearances of Christ in the same nail-scarred body ( John 20:27 ); (4) which were spread over a period of forty days ( Acts 1:3 ); (5) during which time Jesus ate with them on at least four occasions and taught them concerning the kingdom of God; (6) and transformed them from scared, skeptical, scattered disciples into the greatest missionary society the world has ever known overnight!

**Conclusion.** The Passover Plot is in fact an implausible scenario that is based on unjustified presuppositions and is contrary to many known facts. For example, it supposes: (1) unjustified late dates for the Gospels ( *see* NEW TESTAMENT, DATING OF ); (2) an antisupernatural bias ( *see* MIRACLE ), (3) a flawed character of Christ ( *see* CHRIST, UNIQUENESS OF ); (4) the incredible naivete of his disciples; (5) mass cases of mistaken identity after his death ( *see* RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR ; RESURRECTION, ALTERNATE THEORIES OF ); (6) a miraculous transformation based on a total mistake.

To put it positively, the alleged plot is contrary to (1) the early dates of the Gospels; (2) the multiplicity of the eyewitnesses' accounts; (3) the verification of history and archaeology ( *see* ARCHAEOLOGY, NEW TESTAMENT ); (4) the known character of Jesus' disciples; (5) the permanently empty tomb; (6) the nature of the resurrection appearances; and (7) the incredible number of eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ—over five hundred. In short, *The Passover Plot* is just another beautiful theory ruined by a brutal gang of facts.

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**Pascal's Wager.** *see* PASCAL, BLAISE .

**Paul's Religion, Alleged Contradictions with Jesus.** *See* BIBLE, ALLEGED ERRORS IN ; MITHRAISM .

**Pentateuch, Mosaic Authorship of.** The Bible attributes the first five books of the Bible, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, or the Pentateuch, to Moses in Exodus 24:4 ; Joshua 1:7–8 ; Ezra 6:18 ; Daniel 9:11 , and Malachi 4:4 . Jesus quoted from the Pentateuch, attributing the source to Moses in Mark 7:10 and Luke 20:37 . Most modern critics

deny Mosaic authorship and organize the writings around a much later, complex set of priestly scribes and editors. The objective has been to avoid the books' accounts of supernatural occurrences and divine authority ( *see* BIBLICAL CRITICISM ; REDACTION CRITICISM, OLD TESTAMENT ; WELLHAUSEN, JULIUS ).

As early as the late seventeenth century, Benedict Spinoza denied that Moses wrote the Pentateuch. Many critical scholars joined him in the nineteenth century. Julius Wellhausen claimed that the first five books were written by various persons he called the Jehovist (J), Elohimist (E), Priestly (P), and Deuteronomist (D). Literary characteristics supposedly distinguished these authors.

Among arguments offered as to why Moses could not have written the first books, seven have been particularly argued:

1. Moses could not have written the account of his own death in Deuteronomy 34 .
2. Certain sections are parenthetical, so must have been edited in (for example, Deut. 2:10–12 ; 2:20–23 ).
3. Moses was not yet alive when the events of Genesis were recorded.
4. Different names for God are used in different sections, reflecting a different author.
5. The style of various sections is from a later period than Moses.
6. The names of some places are not those that would have been used in Moses' day, but rather later.
7. There is reference to Israel being in the promised land, but Moses died before the people entered ( Deuteronomy 34 ).

**Responding to the Arguments.** Conservative scholars have responded that none of these arguments is strong enough to warrant the extraordinary claims and theories that have arisen from them in Old Testament studies. There are stronger reasons for attributing the Pentateuch to Moses.

**The Account of Moses' Death.** Since Moses was a prophet ( Deut. 18:15 ; Acts 3:22 ) who possessed miraculous gifts and abilities ( *see*, for example, Exodus 4 ), there is no reason why he could not have written the account of his death in advance ( *see* MIRACLES, APOLOGETIC VALUE OF ).

However, since there are no signs in the text of this being a prophecy, it may have been written by his successor. Such scholars as R. D. Wilson, Merrill Unger, Douglas Young, R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and R. K. Harrison easily accept that the final chapter of Deuteronomy was likely appended by Joshua or someone else in Moses' inner circle. This, in fact, supports the view of the continuity of the writing prophets, a theory that each successor

prophet writes the last chapter of his predecessor's book. The addition of a chapter on Moses' funeral by another prophet in accordance with the custom of the day in no sense takes away from the belief that Moses was the author of everything up to that final chapter. This certainly doesn't conform to the J-E-P-D scenario.

*Paranetical Sections.* The paranetical sections in Deuteronomy 2 need not be later redactions. Authors often use editorial (e.g., paranetical) material in their own writings. Such an addition was made to the previous sentence in this paragraph. No earlier manuscripts omit them. This section fits into the text. So there is no compelling evidence to suggest that they were the work of a later redactor.

But even if paranetical comments were added into the text, this would not change anything Moses wrote in the rest of the text, nor detract from his claim to authorship of the inspired text. Many evangelical scholars are willing to admit that comments like these could have been made by later scribes to elucidate the meaning of the text. If they are additions, they are uninspired changes that are subject to the same textual debate as Mark 16:9–20 and John 8:1–11. One can argue on the basis of internal and external evidence whether they should be considered part of the inspired text of Scripture. And, like the King James Version rendering of 1 John 5:7 on the Trinity, if there is no good evidence, the text should be rejected. Lacking that kind of evidence, for this passage it seems best to consider it an editorial comment by Moses himself. In neither case is the Mosaic authorship of the inspired text of the Pentateuch brought into question.

*Moses and Genesis.* As to the composition of Genesis, God could have revealed the story of beginnings to Moses, as he did other supernatural revelations (for example, Exodus 20). Moses was on the Mount for 40 days, and God could have revealed to him the history up to his time.

Since there is no clear indication in the text that this is what happened, there is perhaps better reason to think that Moses compiled, rather than composed, the record of Genesis. There is indication that Genesis was a compilation of family documents and oral history that had been carefully passed down. Each section has attached to it a phrase "This is the history of . . ." (NKJV) or "account of" (NIV). These phrases occur throughout the book of Genesis (2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 32; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 19; 36:1; 37:2), tying it together as a series of family records and genealogies. Sometimes the accounts are even called a "book" (5:1 NKJV) or "written" (NIV) account. As leader of the Jewish people, Moses would have had access to these family records of past history and could have compiled them into the form we know as the book of Genesis.

*Different Names for God.* Critics have argued that different names for God in different passages indicate different authors. They point to Genesis 1, where the alleged Elohist (E) author uses *Elohim* for God exclusively. Yet in Genesis 2 the phrase *Yahweh Elohim* ("Lord God") is used. The use of *Yahweh* (or *Jehovah*) is said to indicate the hand of the Jehovist (J).

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nkjv New King James Version  
niv New International Version

But this argument fails. The same kind of thing occurs in the *Qur'an*, which is known to have one source, Muhammad. The name *Allah* is used for God in suras 4, 9, 24, and 33, but *Rab* is used in suras 18, 23, and 25 (Harrison, 517). In the *Qur'an* the names are used in different chapters. In Genesis they are interspersed within the same chapter or section, leading to some incredible dissections of the text. Even J-E-P-D scholars cannot agree where to draw all the lines.

The more natural explanation is that different names of God are used, depending on the subject and aspect of God being discussed. The majestic *Elohim* is an appropriate word when speaking of creation, as in Genesis 1. *Yahweh* the Covenant-maker is more appropriate when God engages people, as in Genesis 2–3.

*Writing Style.* J-E-P-D critics say that the Pentateuch reflects a style of writing and literary forms from a much later period. For example, the Deuteronomist (D) uses seventh-century style and structure. But this contention also cannot be grounded in fact. Archaeological discoveries show that the literary form used in Deuteronomy is, in fact, an ancient one throughout the Near East. Moses follows as a literary device the suzerainty treaties made between kings and their subjects (see Kline).

The argument makes an assumption that is not true in literary history. The critics assume that Moses could not have written in more than one style. As a well-educated Egyptian he had been exposed to suzerainty treaties and every other narrative and artistic writing form then available. Good modern authors change style and form as they change in their own craft and for effect. Sometimes they may use different forms within a single work. A notable example is C. S. Lewis. Bible critics would go crazy if confronted with one author's name over children's stories, in-depth literary critiques, scholarly analysis, allegorical satire, science fiction, biographic narrative, and logic-driven disputations and treatises.

*Late Place Names.* Late names of places are easily explained as later interpolations. For example, this author's birth town was called Van Dyke, Michigan, but today one finds it on the map as Warren. Later copyists may have updated some place names so the people would better understand. In Joshua 14:15 this is almost certainly the case, since a paranetical notation has entered the text which says "(Hebron used to be called Kiriath Arba after Arba, who was the greatest man among the Anakites)."

*Possession of the Land.* Deuteronomy 2:13 refers to Israel in the "land of their possession," which did not take place until after Moses died. Hence, it is argued that Moses could not have written these words.

As Old Testament commentators Kiel and Delitzsch concluded, this reference is to "the land to the east of the Jordan (Gilead and Bashan), which was conquered by the Israelites under Moses and divided among the two tribes and a half, and which is described in chap. iii.20 as the 'possession' which Jehovah had given to these tribes" (Kiel and Delitzsch, 1:293). Also, being a paranetical reference, 2:13 could have been a later, non-Mosaic interpolation into the original text. Whatever evidence this provides for later editing, it does not support J-E-P-D authorship, nor negate Mosaic authorship of the original inspired text.

**Mosaic Authorship of Exodus.** There is strong evidence that Moses wrote Exodus. First, no other known person from that period had the time, interest, and ability to compose such a record. Second, Moses was an eyewitness to the events of Exodus through Deuteronomy and so was uniquely qualified. Indeed, the record is a vivid eyewitness account of spectacular events, such as the crossing of the Red Sea, the receiving of the commandments, and the wanderings.

Third, from the earliest known rabbinical records, these books have unanimously been ascribed to Moses. This is true of the Talmud, as well as the works of such Jewish writers as Philo and Josephus .

Fourth, the author reflects a detailed knowledge of wilderness geography (see, for example, Exodus 14 ). This is highly unlikely for anyone other than Moses, who spent forty years as a shepherd, as well as forty years as a national leader, in the region. The same argument can be used of the detailed reflections of customs and practices of a variety of peoples described throughout the Pentateuch.

The book's internal claim is that "Moses wrote all the words" ( Exod. 24:4 ). If he did not, it is a forgery. Moses' successor, Joshua, claimed that Moses wrote the Law. In fact, when Joshua assumed leadership, he reported that he was exhorted by God: "Do not let this book of the Law depart from your mouth" ( Josh. 1:8 ); he was told to "be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you" ( 1:7 ). After Joshua, a long chain of Old Testament figures attributed the books of the law to Moses, among them Josiah ( 2 Chron. 34:14 ), Ezra ( Ezra 6:18 ), Daniel ( Dan. 9:11 ), and Malachi ( Mal. 4:4 ). Jesus and New Testament writers also attributed the words to Moses. Scripture in other contexts refers to the Pentateuch as the books or law of Moses.

Jesus, quoting from Exodus 20:12 , used the introduction, "for Moses said" ( Mark 7:10 ; cf. Luke 20:37 ). The apostle Paul declared that "Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law" as he cited Exodus 20:11 ( Rom. 10:5 ). So there is confirmation of Jesus, who by miracles was attested to be the Christ, the Son of God ( see CHRIST, DEITY OF ; MIRACLES, APOLOGETIC VIEW OF ). And there is apostolic authority, which was also confirmed ( see MIRACLES IN THE BIBLE ).

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**Pharaoh of the Exodus.** The predominant view of modern biblical scholars is that the Pharaoh of the Exodus was Rameses II ( see BIBLE CRITICISM ). If so, the Exodus took place about 1270 to 1260 B.C . However, the Bible ( Judg. 11:26 ; 1 Kings 6:1 ; Acts 13:19–20 ), dates the Exodus to about 1447 B.C . Given the commonly accepted dating, that would make the Pharaoh of the Exodus Amenhotep II, an identification archaeologists and biblical scholars have traditionally rejected.

**An Early Exodus.** Modern scholarship has raised Rameses II and the mid-thirteenth century to the level of unassailable doctrine, but there is sufficient evidence to challenge conventional wisdom about the Exodus, as well as the traditional dating for many pharaohs. Alternative explanations are providing a better accounting of all the historical data, and making 1447 B.C . look like a credible departure date for the Israelites.

The Bible is very specific in 1 Kings 6:1 that 480 years passed from the Exodus to the fourth year of Solomon's reign, about 967 B.C . This would place the Exodus around 1447. This fits also with Judges 11:26 , which affirms that Israel spent 300 years in the Land up to the time of Jephthah (about 1100). Likewise, Acts 13:20 speaks of 450 years of judges from Moses to Samuel, who lived around 1000. Paul said in Galatians 3:17 there were 430 years from Jacob to Moses. That would be from 1800 to 1450. The same figure is used in Exodus 12:40 . If the Bible is wrong at this point, it is certainly consistent and allows for no thirteenth-century exodus.

**Possible Solutions.** There are at least three ways to reconcile the biblical data with the fifteenth-century date. The first posits the possibility of an early Rameses. The second offers a basis for adjusting the archaeological periods and the third reinterprets the chronology of Egyptian rulers ( see ARCHAEOLOGY, OLD TESTAMENT ). Because these changes would shake up a lot of widely held opinions about ancient history, they have faced much opposition, but the evidence is strong.

The generally accepted date was based on three assumptions:

1. "Rameses" in Exodus 1:11 was named after Rameses the Great
2. There were no building projects in the Nile Delta before 1300.
3. There was no great civilization in Canaan from the nineteenth to the thirteenth centuries.

All of these, if true, would make the conditions described in Exodus impossible before 1300. However, the name *Rameses* runs throughout Egyptian history and the city mentioned in Exodus 1 may have honored an earlier nobleman by that name. Since Rameses the Great is Rameses II, there must have been a Rameses I, about whom nothing is now known. In Genesis 47:11 , the name Rameses is used to describe the area of the Nile Delta where Jacob and his sons settled. This may be the name that Moses normally used to refer to the entire geographical area. Rameses, then, need not refer to a city named after a king at all.



Second, building projects have now been found at Pi-Ramesse (Rameses) and at both possible sites for Pithom dating from the nineteenth to the seventeenth centuries, the era in which the Israelites arrived. These show strong Palestinian influence. Digging done in 1987 shows that there was building at Pi-Ramesse and one of the Pithom sites in the 1400s. So whether Exodus 1:11 refers to the building projects that were going on at the time the Israelites became slaves, or what they were working on at the time of the Exodus, there is evidence building was underway. Surface surveys yielded no signs of civilizations like the Moabites and the Edomites prior to Israel's entrance to the land, but digging deeper has found many sites that fit into the period. Even the man who did the initial research changed his position later. So all three of the arguments for dating the Exodus after 1300 have been proven false. Now if these three assumptions are wrong, then there is no reason to suppose a late date for the Exodus and we can look for evidence to support the Bible's date of about 1447.

*Bimson-Livingston Revision.* John Bimson and David Livingston proposed in 1987, that the date of the shift from the Middle Bronze to Late Bronze ages has been inaccurate and must be moved. At issue is evidence of destroyed cities in Canaan. Most signs of a serious invasion or conquest have been dated to about 1550 B.C.—150 years too early. This date is assigned to these ruins because it is supposed that they were destroyed when the Egyptians drove out the Hyksos, a hostile nation that dominated Egypt for several centuries. Bimson suggests moving the end of the Middle Bronze Age would show that this destruction was done by the Israelites, not the Egyptians.

Can such a change be justified? The Middle Bronze (MB) was characterized by fortified cities; the Late Bronze (LB) had mostly smaller, unwallied settlements. So whatever caused the destruction of these cities gives us our date for the period division. The evidence is sparse and unclear. Also, there is doubt that the Egyptians, just establishing a new government and armies, were in any position to carry out long sieges throughout Canaan. Positive evidence has come from recent digs which have shown that the last phase of the Middle Bronze period needs more time than originally thought, so that its end is closer to 1420.

This corresponds with the Bible, where the cities in Canaan are “great and fortified up to heaven” (Deuteronomy 1:28) just as Moses said. Also, the extent of destruction, with only a few exceptions, matches the biblical description. “In deed, generally speaking, the area in which destruction occurred at the end of [the Middle Bronze period] corresponds with the area of Israelite settlement, while cities that survived lay outside that area.”

Some archaeologists ask where the evidence is of Israelite dominance of the culture in the Late Bronze. We have always held them responsible for the shift from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age in 1200. The problem with that view is that those changes are the same all over the Mediterranean, not just in Palestine. The Hebrews could not be responsible for such widespread change. In fact, as nomads, they probably brought nothing with them, lived in tents for some time, and bought their pottery at the Canaanite markets. Besides, the book of Judges shows that after Israel entered the land, they did not dominate anybody for several hundred years. They were dominated by everyone around them.

Bimson summarizes his proposal in this way:

We have proposed: (1) a return to the Biblical date for the conquest of Canaan (i.e., shortly before 1400 B.C.), and (2) a lowering of the date for the end of the Middle Bronze Age, from 1550 B.C. to shortly before 1400 B.C. The result is that two events previously separated by centuries are brought together: the fall of Canaan's MB II cities becomes the archaeological evidence for the conquest. These twin proposals create an almost perfect match between the archaeological evidence and the Biblical account.

*Velikovsky-Courville Revision.* A third possible solution sees a problem in the traditional view of Egyptian history. The chronology of the whole ancient world is based on the order and dates of the Egyptian kings. Mostly, we know this order from an ancient historian named Manetho, who is quoted by three other historians. There are also monuments that give partial lists. This order has been considered unassailable; however, the only absolutely fixed date is its end, when Alexander the Great conquered Egypt. Velikovsky and Courville assert that 600 extra years in that chronology throw off the dates for events all around the Near East.

Setting aside the idea of Egyptian history as fixed, there are three pieces of evidence where the history of Israel matches up with the history of Egypt. This kind of match, where the same event is recorded in both countries, is called a synchronism. The three places we find synchronisms are the plagues of Moses, the defeat of the Amalekites, and the reign of Ahab.

A very old papyrus written by an Egyptian priest named Ipuwer and, though various interpretations have been given, it tells of two unique events: a series of plagues and the invasion of a foreign power. The plagues match very well with the record of Moses' plagues in Exodus 7–12. It speaks of the river turning to blood (cf. Exod. 7:20), crops consumed (Exod. 9:25), fire (Exod. 9:23–24; 10:15), and darkness (Exod. 10:22). The final plague, which killed Pharaoh's son is referred to also: “Forsooth, the children of princes are dashed against the walls. . . . The prison is ruined. . . . He who places his brother in the ground is everywhere. . . . It is groaning that is throughout the land, mingled with lamentations” (Papyrus 2:13; 3:14; 4:3; 6:13). This parallels the biblical account which says, “the Lord struck all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of the Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon . . . and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was no home where was not someone dead” (Exod. 12:29–30). Immediately following these disasters, there was an invasion of “a foreign tribe” which came out of the desert (Papyrus 3:1). This invasion must have been the Hyksos, who dominated Egypt between the Middle Kingdom and the New Kingdom.

The monolith of el-Arish tells a similar story of darkness and suffering in the land in the days of King Thom. It also relates how the Pharaoh “went out to battle against the friends of Apopi (the god of darkness),” though the army never returned: “His majesty leapt into the so-called Place of the Whirlpool.” The place of the incident is Pi-Kharoti, which may be equivalent to Pi-ha-hiroth, where the Israelites camped by the sea (Exod. 14:9). This is very interesting because the name of the city built by the Israelites is Pi-Thom, “the abode of Thom.” And the king who reigned just before the Hyksos invasion was (in Greek) Timaios. But the Egyptian date for King Thom is about 600 years too early, around 2000 B.C. Either the Egyptian chronology is wrong, or history repeated itself in very unusual ways.

According to Velikovsky, the Hyksos should be identified as the Amalekites, whom the Israelites met before they even reached Sinai ( Exod. 17:8–16 ). They might have reached Egypt within days after the Israelites left. The Egyptians referred to them as Amu and Arabian historians mention some Amalekite pharaohs. But the scriptural parallels are quite convincing. As the false prophet Baalam faced Israel, he blessed them despite his instructions, but when he turned, facing Egypt, “he looked on Amalek . . . and said, ‘Amalek was the first of the nations’ ” ( Num. 24:20 ). Why did he curse Amalek rather than Egypt, unless Egypt was under Amalekite domination? Also, the names of the first and last Amalekite kings in the Bible (Agag I and II, see Num. 24:7 and 1 Sam. 15:8 ) correspond to the first and last Hyksos kings. This would indicate that the Hyksos entered Egypt just after the Exodus and remained in power there until Saul defeated them and released the Egyptians from bondage. This would explain the genial relations that Israel had with Egypt in David and Solomon’s time. In fact, Velikovsky shows striking similarities between the Queen of Sheba and the Egyptian queen Hatshepsut. She is said to have journeyed to the Divine Land and the gifts that she received there are much like those of Solomon to his visitor (see 1 Kings 10:10–22 ). She also built a temple in Egypt that is similar to the temple of Solomon. But according to Egyptian chronology, she lived before the Exodus. Only if this chronology is revised can this parallelism be explained. The invasion of Thutmose III into Palestine might also be equated with the attack of Shishak ( 2 Chron. 12:2–9 ).

The third synchronism is a series of letters (on clay tablets) called the el-Amarna letters. These are correspondence between the rulers in Palestine (Jerusalem, Syria, and Sumur) and the pharaohs Amenhotep III and his son Akhnaton. The Palestinians were concerned about an army approaching from the south called the Habiru, who were causing great destruction. On the basis of such a description, it has traditionally been held that these letters speak of the Israelites entering Canaan. Velikovsky shows that a closer look at these tablets reveals another picture entirely. First, Sumur can be identified as the city of Samaria, which was not built until after Solomon ( 1 Kings 16:24 ). Second, the “king of Hatti” threatens to invade from the north, which seems to be a Hittite invasion. Third, none of the names in the letters match the names of rulers given in the book of Joshua. In other words, the political situation is all wrong for these letters to have come from the time of the Exodus. If we move their date to the time when Ahab ruled from Samaria and was threatened by both the Moabites and the Hittites, then all of the names, places and events can be located in Kings and Chronicles, even to the names of the generals of armies. But this dates Amenhotep III 500 years later than the standard chronology. Either the chronology is wrong or one has to maintain that history repeated itself exactly half a millennium later.

The picture that emerges is a consistent one only if the Israelite history is used to date Egyptian events. Such an interpretation also requires a new chronology for Egyptian history. Courville has shown that the lists of Egyptian kings should not be understood as completely consecutive. He shows that some of the “kings” listed were not pharaohs, but local rulers or high officials. Among those mentioned are Joseph (Yufni) and Moses’ adopted father Chenephres, who was a prince only by marriage.

Recognition that “kings” of the Thirteenth Dynasty were actually princes over local regions or subrulers provides us with insight into what Manetho regarded as comprising a dynasty. It was evidently not outside his thinking to give the names of the main line of kings as composing one dynasty and then to return on the time scale to pick up a line of secondary rulers as a distinct

dynasty. By labeling these secondary rulers as kings the ancient historian caused an erroneous and grossly expanded chronology of Egypt. Working out this new chronology places the Exodus about 1440 B.C . and makes the other periods of Israelite history fall in line with the Egyptian kings mentioned.

**Conclusion.** The evidence is strong for a fifteenth-century date for the Exodus. This is at odds with the generally accepted date for Egyptian kings. But it may be that the conventional wisdom for Bronze Age dating, and certainly the chronology of Egyptian rulers may need to be drastically changed. More research and excavations will be needed to learn what theories come closest to describing the flow of events in Egypt and Canaan, but it appears that Bible dating is more accurate than had been suspected, even more accurate than the knowledge collected in the field of study.

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**Pharaoh, Hardening of.** In Exodus 4:21 God declares: “I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, so that he will not let the people go.” But if God hardened Pharaoh’s heart, then Pharaoh cannot be held morally responsible for his actions, since he did not do it of his own free will, but out of constraint (cf. 2 Cor. 9:7 ; 1 Peter 5:2 ). There appears to be a serious problem here for God’s love and justice ( *see* EVIL, PROBLEM OF ). If God loves everyone, then why did he harden Pharaoh’s heart so he would reject God’s will? If God is just, why blame Pharaoh for his sin when it was God who hardened his heart to sin?

**Proposed Solutions.** There are two basic responses to this problem from differing theologies.

*The Hard Determinist’s Response.* Calvinists or hard determinists ( *see* DETERMINISM ) emphasize God’s sovereignty and claim he has the right to harden or soften any heart as he chooses. As for the justice of God, the answer is Paul’s in Romans 9:20 : “But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’ ” God’s salvific love is given to the elect. Again, citing Paul, they insist that “God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden” ( Rom. 9:18–19 ). The strong Calvinist’s answer to the problem, then, is that Pharaoh was a hardened unbeliever to begin with, and God merely hardened him by withdrawing common grace that softens the effects of the fall in the unbelieving heart. He allowed Pharaoh to intensify his

rebellion, as an unbeliever will do without divine restraint. God did this for the purpose of showing his power and glory. Pharaoh would not have truly repented without positive intervention from God's saving power.

This position is based on an unacceptable voluntaristic view ( *see* VOLUNTARISM ), wherein God can will either of two opposite actions. This seems to make God arbitrary about what is good. Contrary to the determinist, God is all-loving ( John 3:16 ; Rom. 5:6-8 ; 2 Cor. 5:14-15 ; 1 John 2:1 ) and does not will that any should perish ( 2 Peter 3:9 ). Regardless of what the determinist says, God's justice is impugned if he hardens people in sin against their will. Free choice and compulsion are contradictory. As Paul noted about giving, "Each man should give what he has *decided* in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" ( 2 Cor. 9:7 ). Peter added that leaders of the church in serving God should work, "not because you must, but because you are willing" ( 1 Peter 5:2 ).

*The Response of Soft Determinists.* Others respond to the problem of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart by pointing out that God did not harden Pharaoh's heart contrary to Pharaoh's free choice. The Scripture makes it clear that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. It declares that pharaoh's heart "grew hard" ( Exod. 7:13 ), that he "hardened his heart" ( Exod. 8:15 ), and that "Pharaoh's heart grew hard" the more God worked on it ( 8:19 ). Again, when God sent the plague of the flies, "Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also" ( 8:32 ). This same or like phrase is repeated several times ( *see also* 9:7 , 34 , 35 ). In fact, with the exception of God's prediction of what would happen ( Exod. 4:21 ), the fact is that Pharaoh hardened his own heart first ( 7:13 ; 8:15 , etc. ), and God hardened it later ( cf. 9:12 ; 10:1 , 20 , 27 ).

Scholars have pointed out that different Hebrew words for "harden" are used in this passage (Forster, 1555-68). *Qashah* , meaning "stubbornness" is used twice, once where God is the agent and once where Pharaoh is ( 7:3 ; 13:15 ). In both cases it is used of the overall process, not a particular act. *Kabed* , meaning "heavy" or "insensitive" is used many times, not only of Pharaoh's heart, but of the plagues. God sent a "heavy" swarm of flies, hailstones, and swarm of locusts. *Chazaq* , meaning "strength" or "encouragement" is used of Pharaoh's heart. When Pharaoh is the agent of hardening *kabed* is used. When God is the agent, *chazaq* is used. "Although Pharaoh is making his own moral decision, God is going to give him the strength to carry it out," writes Roger Forster (72). On this understanding there is nothing morally sinister about God "hardening," Pharaoh, and it is an understanding with which moderate Calvinists and Arminians could concur.

The sense in which God hardened his heart is similar to the way the sun hardens clay and also melts wax. If Pharaoh had been receptive to God's warnings, his heart would not have been hardened by God. But when God gave Pharaoh a reprieve from the plagues, he took advantage of the situation. "But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and did not heed them [Moses and Aaron], as the Lord had said" ( Exod. 8:15 ).

The question can be summarized as follows: does God harden hearts?

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<b>God does not harden hearts</b>	<b>God hardens hearts</b>
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initially	subsequently
directly	indirectly
against free choice	through free choice
as to their cause	as to their effect

**Conclusion.** If God is hardening Pharaoh's heart (or anyone else's) in accordance with their own inclination and choice, then God cannot be charged with being unjust, unloving, or acting contrary to their God-given free choice. And the Scriptures are clear that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. So, what God did was in accord with Pharaoh's own free choice ( *see* FREE WILL ). Events can be determined by God in his foreknowledge, yet free from the standpoint of human choice. Jesus hit this balance when he said in Matthew 18:7 : "Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come."

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**Philo Judaeus.** Philo Judaeus (ca. 20 B.C.—A.D . 50) was a Jewish philosopher and exegete from Alexandria, Egypt. Because of his affinity to Platonic philosophy, he is known as the Hebrew Plato. His numerous writings include *Against Flaccus*, *Procurator of Egypt* ; *Legum Allegoriae* ; *On Providence* ; *On the Eternality of the World* ; *Questions and Solutions in Genesis and Exodus* ; *The Contemplative Life* ( *De Vita Contemplativa* ), and *The Life of Moses* .

Philo had a considerable influence on Christian leaders of the "Alexandrian School," such as Clement of Alexandria and Justin Martyr. His allegorical method of interpreting Scripture also influenced Origen , Ambrose, Augustine, and others. Other elements of his philosophy made an impact on later Christian thinking, including his use of proofs for God's existence, his Logos doctrine, and his views of the unknowability of God, negative language about God, *ex nihilo* creation ( *see* CREATION, VIEWS OF ), and particular providence.

**Philo's Philosophy.** Philo attempted to interpret Scripture in terms of Greek philosophy. His approach was eclectic and innovative.

*Concept of God.* Philo taught that human beings can know God, whether directly from divine revelation or indirectly through human reason. Various forms of proof for God included Plato's argument for a *Demiurgos* in *Timaeus* and Aristotle's cosmological argument for an Unmoved Mover. Philo applies the Unmoved Mover to the existence of the world, not just motion. He even adopted the stoic argument for a Mind (God) within nature to show there was a transcendent God beyond nature.

Philo believed such arguments could only show the existence of God, not his nature. For him God was ineffable and unnamed. Only negative knowledge was possible. Positive terms can only describe God's activity, not his essence.

*Mysticism and Allegorism.* Since God cannot be known in a positive way, Philo, as other Platonists ( *see* PLATO ) and neo-Platonists ( *see* Plotinus), resorted to mysticism. Even God's revelation in Scripture yielded no positive knowledge of God's nature, and could not be taken literally when it spoke of God. Only an allegorical interpretation could yield the true meaning.

*Creation and Providence.* As a Jewish theist ( *see* THEISM ), Philo believed in *ex nihilo* creation ( *see* CREATION, VIEWS OF ). As a Platonist he held that matter existed before creation. In a creative attempt to reconcile these views he posited that there were two creative acts of God, one by which he brought matter into existence, and the other by which he created the world out of preexisting matter.

Since God is all-powerful, he is able to intervene miraculously in the laws of nature he established. However, he does so purposefully. Contrary to Greek philosophy, God has not only general providence over the world but special and particular providence.

*Logos.* In interacting with Greek philosophy, Philo borrowed certain Platonic concepts to express his own theistic views. His concept of the *Logos* is a case in point. In *De Opificio* he describes the *Logos* as a cosmological principle, saying,

God, assuming, as God would assume, that a beautiful copy could never come into existence without a beautiful model . . . when He willed to create this visible world, first blocked out the intelligible world, in order that using an incorporeal and godlike model he might make the corporeal world a younger image of the older. . . . When a city is being founded . . . sometimes there comes forward a man trained as an architect, and after surveying the favorable features of the site he first makes an outline in his mind of almost all the parts of the city that is to be built. . . . Then, receiving an impression of each of them in his soul, as if in wax, he models a city of the mind. Looking to this model he proceeds to construct the city of stone and wood, making the corporeal substance resemble each of the incorporeal ideas. In like manner we must think of God. [Dodd, 67]

The similarities and differences between Philo's *Logos* and that of John 1 are instructive ( *see* LOGOS THEORY ). For both the *Logos* is the image of God, the medium of creation, and the means of God's governance of creation. Only in John, however, is the *Logos* truly personal, who became a truly incarnate human being and yet is identical with God in nature ( John 1:1-14 ). C. H. Dodd notes as a decisive difference that John "conceives of the *Logos* as incarnate, and of . . .

actually living and dying on earth as a man. This means that the *Logos* , which in Philo is never personal . . . is in the gospel fully personal, standing in personal relations both with God and with men, and having a place in history." Further, "the *Logos* of Philo is not the object of faith and love. The incarnate *Logos* of the fourth Gospel is both lover and beloved" (Dodd, 73).

*Evaluation.* Philo is to be criticized for his purely negative theology ( *see* ANALOGY, PRINCIPLE OF ), his mysticism , his allegorical method of interpretation, and his excessive attraction to Greek philosophy, which led him into errors. His Logos doctrine was wrongly applied to Christ ( *see* LOGOS THEORY ) by later writers.

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#### Plato.

*Life and Works of Plato.* Plato was born in 428 B.C ., the year of Pericles' death. He became a disciple of Socrates at the age of sixteen. Plato was twenty-nine when his mentor died.

His writing career is divided into four periods. In the first period he wrote *Apology*, *Crito*, *Protagoras*, and *Republic* (Bk I). In the second period he composed *Cratylus*, *Gorgias*, and *Lysis* . Between the second and third period he founded his Academy. In this third period he produced *Meno*, *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, *Symposium*, and the rest of the *Republic* . Before his last period of writing his most famous pupil, Aristotle was born when Plato was forty-three. In his fourth and final period of literary composition Plato wrote *Parmenides*, *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Philebus*, *Timaeus*, *Critias*, and *Laws*.

Alexander the Great was born when Plato was seventy-two (in 347 B.C .). Just fourteen years later (in 333 B.C .) Alexander began to conquer the world and spread with it the Greek language and culture that has dominated so much of thought since that time.

**Plato's Epistemology.** Plato believed in innate ideas. Indeed, he believed these were the ideas the mind beheld in the world of pure Forms before birth. The ideas were irreducibly simple, eternal forms ( *eidōs* ) that flowed from the one absolute Form, the Good ( *Agathos* ). Since they were beheld by the soul in a preincarnate state, all that was necessary was to recollect them. This was accomplished by a dialectical method dialogue illustrated in *Meno* when even a slave boy was able to do Euclidean geometry by simply being asked the right questions. Of course, if someone does not get it right in this life, there is another reincarnation.

When one reasoned back to the foundation of thought he found absolute first principles ( *see* ) of knowledge that served as the foundation of all knowledge. Skepticism, agnosticism ( *see* ), and relativism ( *see* TRUTH, ABSOLUTE NATURE OF ) are self-defeating ( *see* SELF-REFUTING STATEMENTS ).

**Plato's Metaphysics.** Plato believed the universe is eternal, an eternal process by which the Creator ( *Demiurgos* ) beheld the Good (the *Agathos* ) and overflowed with Forms ( *Eidos* ) which informed the material world ( *Chaos* ) forever, forming it into a cosmos. Creation, then, is an eternal process of *ex materia* creation ( *see* CREATION, VIEWS OF ). Thus, reality is a basic dualism of Form and matter, both being co-eternal.

As Plato set forth in the famous cave analogy in his *Republic*, the physical world is a world of shadows. The real world is the spiritual world of pure Forms. Each physical thing is structured or shaped by these Forms or universals, as opposed to nominalism ( *see* ), which denies the reality of universals or essences. For example, all human beings share in the one Form or Essence of humanness. And humanness exists as a pure Form in the real world, the spiritual one behind this material world. And each of these pure Forms come from the Form that contains all Forms in its absolutely perfect nature.

**Plato's View of God.** For Plato God was not the absolute Form ( *Agathos* ) but the Former (the *Demiurgos* ). His argument for a Demiurgos (World Former) took the following form: (1) The cosmos would be a chaos without forms. Pure stuff without structure is shapeless. (2) Chaos (formless) is evil, and cosmos (form) is good. (3) All forms of good in the world come from a Good Former beyond the world (chaos cannot form itself into cosmos). (4) The Former cannot make good forms without a Form of Good after which to pattern them. (5) The Form after which changing forms are formed must be an unchanging Form. Only the unchanging can be basis of the changing. Only the Intelligible (Ideal) can be basis for Ideas. (6) Therefore, there is both a Former ( *Demiurgos* ) and the Form (Good) after which all things are formed.

To complete his Triad of ultimates, Plato offered an argument for a First Mover (or World Soul). Just as the Form is needed to explain the source of pure Forms, and the Former is necessary to account for the existence of formed things, even so a First Mover is needed to explain the existence of motion in the world. Plato's reasoning takes this shape: (1) Things move. This is known by observation. (2) But whatever moves is either moved by another or else is self-moved. (3) Self-movers (souls) are prior to non-self-movers. For what does not move itself is moved by what does. (4) Self-movers are eternal; otherwise there would be no motion, since something inert cannot move itself. Plato adds that (5) there must be two self-movers in the universe, one to account for the regular motion (good) and another to explain the irregular

motion (evil). (6) The one who accounts for the good motion is the best, because it is the Supreme Mover, which he calls World Soul. (7) Hence, there is a Supreme Mover (Soul).

**The Influence of Plato on Later Thought.** Alfred North Whitehead said Western philosophy is a series of footnotes on Plato. This is largely true. Specific influences are manifest in Plotinus, St. Augustine, gnosticism, asceticism, mysticism, innatism, dualism, allegorism, and panentheism. Since Plato held a form of Finite Godism, John Stewart Mill, William James, Brightman, Peter Bertocci, Whitehead, and Charles Hartshorne were also influenced by Plato. Likewise, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Adolph Harnack, and other liberals and humanists ( *see* HUMANISM, SECULAR ) who hold to man's inherent perfectibility stem from Plato, who believed that to know the good is to do the good. Salvation is by education.

**An Evaluation of Plato's Views.** Plato's views have numerous enduring values. An incomplete list would include at least the following:

**Positive Dimensions.** There are numerous positive values in Plato's thought, many of which have been helpful in expressing and defending the Christian faith. Among these are the following.

**Foundationalism.** Plato's defense of first principles has been a great help to Christian apologists in arguing against agnosticism and conventionalism.

**Truth as correspondence.** Like other classical philosophers, Plato defined truth as correspondence, thus lending support to the Christian conviction that metaphysical truth is what corresponds to reality. Truth is objective and not merely subjective ( *see* TRUTH, NATURE OF ).

**Epistemological absolutism.** Not only was truth objective for Plato, but it was absolute. Plato's arguments are still used by Christian apologists to defend their belief in absolute truth.

**Moral absolutism.** Plato also believed in absolute values. This too is in accord with the Christian apologetic task of defending moral absolutes ( *see* ABSOLUTES, MORAL ).

**Ethical essentialism.** Not only did Plato believe in moral absolutes but he held that they are anchored in the unchanging nature of the Form (the Good).

**Universals.** Contrary to nominalism, Plato argued, as do orthodox Christians, that there are universals and essences. Indeed, it is part of Christian belief that God has one essence and three persons and that Christ has two essences or natures united in one person ( *see* CHRIST, DEITY OF ).

**Proofs for God.** Plato's proofs for God were a forerunner of later Christian forms of the cosmological argument ( *see* ) or the argument from perfection ( *see* GOD, EVIDENCE FOR ) used by Augustine, Anselm, and Thomas Aquinas.

**Immortality.** Plato defended what all orthodox Christians believe, namely, that human beings have a spiritual dimension to their makeup that is immortal ( *see* IMMORTALITY ).

*A life beyond this one.* Another dimension of Plato's thought acceptable to Christians is his belief in a spiritual world beyond this one to which people eventually go after death. Plato posited both a heaven and a hell .

*Innate intellectual capacity.* Most Christian apologists believe there is an innate, God-given, capacity of the human mind. We are not born absolutely blank but with certain rational capacities and abilities given by God. These are manifest in the universality of first principles such as the law of non-contradiction.

*Negative Dimensions.* Despite the many positive features of the Platonic system, many of Plato's ideas have been a continual nemesis to Christianity. A few of these are noteworthy.

*Metaphysical dualism.* Unlike Christianity, which holds to a monarchical creation *ex nihilo* (out of nothing), Plato affirmed a dualism of creation *ex materia*, out of preexisting matter ( *see* CREATION, VIEWS OF ). Thus, for Plato the material universe is eternal, not temporal as Christians believe and offer good evidence to support ( *see* KALAM COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT ; BIG BANG THEORY ).

*Finite Godism.* Unlike the theistic God of Christianity who is infinite in power and perfection, Plato's God was finite. But there is ample evidence to show that God is infinite.

*Anthropological dualism.* One of Plato's most enduring but troublesome legacies among Christians is his dualistic view of human beings. According to Plato, man is a soul and only has a body. In fact, humans are imprisoned in their bodies. From this both asceticism (denial of the body) and otherworldliness result, neither of which are endorsed by Christianity.

*Allegorism.* Because Plato believed that matter was less real and less good than spirit, he downplayed the literal understanding of things. In the field of interpretation this leads to looking for a deeper, more spiritual or mystical understanding of a text. From this both neoplatonism ( *see* PLOTINUS ) and medieval allegorism developed ( *see* ORIGEN ), a problem still beleaguering the Christian church.

*Innatism of ideas.* While Plato correctly pointed to an innate dimension of the human mind, many Christians, following Aquinas reject Plato's belief in innate ideas. Some great Christian thinkers, like Augustine, even went so far as to affirm Plato's concomitant idea of recollection of these ideas from a previous existence, only later to have to retract the view.

*Reincarnation.* Plato's concept of reincarnation, like that of Eastern views, has been condemned by the Christian church and is refuted by good evidence, both biblical and rational ( *see* REINCARNTATION ).

*Humanistic optimism.* In some respects Plato is the father of Western humanism ( *see* HUMANISM, SECULAR ). His belief that human beings are perfectible by education is both contrary to the teaching of Scripture and universal human experience.

*Pluralistic dilemma.* Like other philosophers following Parmenides, Plato never solved the problem of the one and the many ( *see* MONISM ). He ended up with many irresolvably simple Forms that could not differ from one another in any real way ( *see* PLURALISM, METAPHYSICAL ).

*Theological inadequacy.* Some Christians have seen more Christian truth in Plato than there is to see. Plato's Triad of the Form, the Former, and the World Soul is by no means the Christian Trinity , as some have claimed. For one thing, two of them (the Form and the World Soul) are not even persons in any significant sense of the term. For another thing, they do not all share one and the same nature.

Further, Plato and the other Greek philosophers never got their God and their highest metaphysical principle together, as did Christians ( *see* Gilson). In Plato, for example, the Good is the highest metaphysical principle, but the Good is not identified with God. Rather, the Demiurgos, who is inferior to the Good, is God in Plato's system.

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### Platonic View of God. *See* COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT .

**Plotinus.** Plotinus (ca. 204–270) was born in Egypt, and in his late twenties he began to study philosophy at Alexandria. Eventually he studied under Ammonius Saccas, the teacher of Origen , for eleven years. Plotinus did not begin to write until he had taught philosophy in Rome for ten years. His work has been extremely influential in both philosophical and religious thought. He followed the worldview of emanational pantheism.

*God and the World.* Contrary to vedanta pantheism ( *see* HINDUISM, VEDANTA ), Plotinus held that being or reality is multiple or many. He counted three levels or planes of being. But prior to and beyond being is the One.

The One is absolutely simple, that is, it has no parts; and it is absolutely necessary, that is, it must exist. The One has not just "happened," but it exists by necessity. This absolute Unity must exist, because multiplicity presupposes a prior unity. We can only know what is many if we

know the One. “Unity must precede Reality and be its author” ( *Enneads* , 6.6.13; all further citations are from this source.). The One, therefore, is the absolute source of being. The One is beyond and prior to being.

*The Indescribable and Unknowable.* Plotinus argues that the One transcends all of which it is the source, which is everything in reality: “Certainly this Absolute is none of the things of which it is the source—its nature is that nothing can be affirmed of it—not existence, not essence, not life—since it is That which transcends all these.” Even its own name, the One, it transcends: “And this name, the One, contains really no more than the negation of plurality. . . . If we are led to think positively of the One, name and thing, there would be more truth in silence” (3.8.101).

If the One is truly indescribable, why does Plotinus attempt to describe it? His writing, he says, is a call to vision, which urges on toward the One.

We can know something about the One through its offspring, *being* (6.9.5). Though we cannot speak or know the One, we can speak or know *of* the One in terms of what has come *from* the One. We must keep in mind, however, that our words and thoughts are only pointers, not truly descriptive but only evocative.

*Levels of Reality. Nous.* The first level of reality is *Nous* (“Mind”). *Nous* is the Divine Mind; it is God but not the highest God. It is pure Being. Of the emanations from the One, *Nous* is the first (5.1.4, 8). When the One emanates outward, and this emanation looks backward upon its source, there arises the simple duality of Knower and Known (6.7.37). This simple duality is *Nous* . *Nous* in turn gives rise to further emanations by bending inward upon itself. It produces particular intellects or forms that turn outward, producing the world soul, which in turn produces the species of individual souls (6.2.22; 6.7.15). The One, *Nous*, and World Soul form, not a Trinity but an emanational triad. From this tri-level God flow all other things. Creation is *ex deo* , both emanationally and necessarily ( *see* CREATION, VIEWS OF ).

*World Soul.* The second level of reality, the *World Soul* , is a middle position between *Nous* and the corporeal world. It reflects the *Nous* and organizes the corporeal. The *World Soul* is even more multiple than *Nous* , for it is further from the absolute Unity of the One. The *World Soul* emanates forth when *Nous* reflects upon itself (6.2.22). The *World Soul* animates the universe in all its multiplicity, giving it a unity or wholeness (3.1.4, 5).

*Matter.* The third level of reality is *matter* , the most multiple of all. Since the entire emanational process is a necessary unfolding from unity to multiplicity, it is necessary that the last stage is one step away from complete nonexistence. Plotinus describes matter as non-being, but adds that this should not be understood to mean nonexistence. Rather, matter is an image of being, or something further removed than even an image. The further removed something is from the Source of being, the One, the less unity and being it has (6.9.1). Since matter is the most multiple, it “has no residue of good in it” (1.8.7). Since the absolute Unity is absolutely good, each further degree of multiplicity is less good and capable of greater evil (1.8.5). Matter has no good in it, but it does have the capacity for good. Matter is not pure evil itself. It is simply privated of all good (1.8.3), having only the mere capacity for good left in it.

That which is beyond and prior to being, the One, eternally and necessarily unfolds itself as a seed unfolds into a flower. This produces *Nous* , or what Plotinus calls “One-Many.” *Nous* is the One becoming self-conscious, that is, discovering itself. Now when *Nous* reflects inward upon itself it produces knowing beings, and when it reflects outward it produces world soul, or what Plotinus calls “One-and-Many.” From World Soul all else flows, including matter or the “many.”

The One flows outward from unity to multiplicity. And for Plotinus there is also a return flow back to unity. Just as there is a necessity for the many to unfold from the One, there is a need for the Many to return to the One. The process is like the stretching of a gigantic elastic band. It can be stretched so far before it snaps back to the source.

*Human Beings.* Plotinus believes that human beings are a soul that has a body. The true self is the eternal soul ( *see* IMMORTALITY ), which is temporarily coupled with a material shell. Through this attachment with matter, the soul becomes contaminated (1.2.4). If a person does not strive toward the ultimate good and unity, and instead is concerned only with matter, the self will become absolutely evil (1.8.13). To be saved and attain ultimate perfection, the person must turn from matter and toward the One. Salvation consists in overcoming the body-soul dualism. This normally requires many cycles of reincarnation. To escape the cycle, a person must turn to the inner by asceticism and meditation.

*Destiny.* The first step toward deliverance begins in the realm of sense, where some unity has been imposed by the Absolute above (1.6.2–3). By looking at the “beauties of the realm of sense, images and shadow-pictures, fugitives that have entered into Matter,” one comes to realize that “there are earlier and loftier beauties than these” (1.6.3–4). These objects of sense point us to the source (6.9.11). We are not to stop with them but ascend beyond them. So the first step is from the sensible world to the intellectual world of *Nous* .

As the first step involved a move from the external, the second step continues the ascent from the internal, the soul, toward the eternal, *Nous* . This movement is from the lower soul to a higher soul, and then to *Nous* , which is above the soul. Human mind must identify with Mind. Knower and known must become one. This is done through meditation. Even now, however, ultimate Unity has not yet been attained.

The third and last step leads to the highest possible union—oneness with the One. It can be attained only by a mystical ( *see* MYSTICISM ) union that puts away all multiplicity, even intellect and reason. Says Plotinus, “One wishing to contemplate what transcends the intellectual attains by putting away all that is of the intellect.” The way journeys past knowing, even the highest objects of knowledge, to the intuitional and mystical. In this last stage, everything is absolute unity again. What emanated out has returned. All that flowed from God has and must return (5.5.6; 6.9.4).

*Evaluation.* Despite positive features in his system (such as God’s transcendence and human immortality), Plotinus’ views are subject to the same criticisms as other forms of pantheism. A few of his essential premises need special evaluation.

*The One and Nonbeing.* For Plotinus, the Ultimate (One) is beyond being. But the one must be either in the realm of being or nonbeing. There is nothing in between something and nothing. Since the One is not in the realm of being, it must be nonbeing or nothing. But nothing cannot produce something. Yet Plotinus contends that the One produced all being. This is the ultimate metaphysical absurdity.

*Effect and Cause.* In the Plotinian system the effect turns out to be greater than the cause. For the one produced being but has no being. Mind emerges from the One, but the One as such has no mind. However, water cannot rise higher than its source. An effect cannot be greater than its cause ( *see* CAUSALITY, PRINCIPLE OF ; ANALOGY, PRINCIPLE OF ).

Following from the principle of causality is the principle of analogy. Since the cause cannot produce what it does not possess, the effect must resemble its cause. Of course, it cannot be identical, since one is producer and the other the produced. One is superior. But, since only being produces being, there must be some actual similarity between cause and effect. The infinite, uncaused Cause of all other being is Being, though it is not finite, nor is it caused. For Plotinus the One does not share any characteristics with its offspring. It is totally “other.” This violates the principle of analogy ( *see* FIRST PRINCIPLES ).

*Knowledge of the Ultimate.* Plotinus could ascertain no knowledge of the One. It is beyond being and beyond description. All statements about it are negative or equivocal. However, even Plotinus admitted that we cannot know something is “not that” unless we know what “that” is. Negative knowledge presupposes positive knowledge (6.7.29; 6.9.4).

**Summary.** Plotinus’ emanational pantheism begins in unity, which gives rise to increased multiplicity until being almost reaches the point of nonexistence. Then all returns toward increasingly greater unity, until the greatest unity is reached in the absolute unity of the One. Here one becomes one with the One and all with the All.

If words cannot express the Ultimate, Plotinus himself wrote hundreds of pages describing his view of the ultimate. Only absolute verbal and mental mutism is consistent for a mystic ( *see* MYSTICISM ). Even evocative language or pointers will not suffice. Unless it points to something we can understand, we still have no understanding.

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**Pluralism, Metaphysical.** Pluralism affirms that reality is found in many, as opposed to one ( *see* ONE AND MANY, PROBLEM OF ). It stands in contrast to monism, which claims that reality is one. Pantheism is a form of monism, and theism is a form of pluralism. Monists hold a univocal or equivocal notion of being ( *see* PLOTINUS ). Theists hold an analogical view of being ( *see* ANALOGY, PRINCIPLE OF ).

**Pluralism, Religious.** To better understand religious pluralism, several terms related to religion need to be distinguished: *pluralism* , *relativism* , *inclusivism* , and *exclusivism* :

- *Religious pluralism* is the belief that every religion is true. Each provides a genuine encounter with the Ultimate. One may be better than the others, but all are adequate.
- *Relativism* ( *see* TRUTH, ABSOLUTE ) claims that there are no criteria by which one can tell which religion is true or best. There is no objective truth in religion, and each religion is true to the one holding it.
- *Inclusivism* claims that one religion is explicitly true, while all others are implicitly true.
- *Exclusivism* is the belief that only one religion is true, and the others opposed to it are false.

Christianity is exclusivistic; it claims to be the one and only true religion ( *see* CHRIST, UNIQUENESS OF ). This places Christians at odds with the modern movements to study comparative religion and work at interfaith communing. Asks Alister McGrath, “How can Christianity’s claims to truth be taken seriously when there are so many rival alternatives and when ‘truth’ itself has become a devalued notion? No one can lay claim to possession of the truth. It is all a question of perspective. All claims to truth are equally valid. There is no universal or privileged vantage point that allows anyone to decide what is right and what is wrong” (“Challenge of Pluralism,” 365).

**Equality among World Religions.** Pluralist John Hick argues, “I have not found that the people of the other world religions are, in general, on a different moral and spiritual level from Christians.” For “The basic ideal of love and concern for others and of treating them as you would wish them to treat you is, in fact, taught by all the great religious tradition” (Hick, “A Pluralist’s View,” 39). Hick offers as proof the fact that statements similar to the “Golden Rule” of Christianity can be found in other religions (ibid., 39–40).

It is debatable whether practitioners in non-Christian religions can really display what Galatians 5:22–23 calls “the fruit of the Spirit”: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Certainly non-Christians do loving things and feel the heart emotion of attachment that we call love. And others are gentle, good, kind, and self-controlled. But are they able to manifest *agape* love? One can lead a philanthropic life and even die in a stand for personal beliefs, yet not show God-founded holistic true love (see 1 Cor. 13:3 ). Christians are to have a qualitatively different kind of love for one another and especially for God. While God’s common grace enables evil people to do good (see Matt. 7:11 ), only the



supernatural love of God can motivate a person to express true *agape* (cf. John 15:13 ; Rom. 5:6-8 ; 1 John 4:7 ).

Before one conclude too quickly that William James demonstrated the equality of all forms of saintliness in *Varieties of Religious Experiences* , Jonathan Edwards' *A Treatise on Religious Affections* should be perused. Edwards argues forcefully that manifestations of Christian godliness are unique, a difference in the highest level of Christian and non-Christian piety.

Even if one could demonstrate a kind of moral equality of practice among most adherents of the great religions, this would not in itself prove moral equality among the religions. A person perfectly practicing a lesser moral code may appear to be more moral than a person imperfectly living according to a higher ethical standard. In order to make a fair comparison one must compare the highest moral teachings of the various religions. For another thing, one must compare the best examples of the adherents to each. A close comparison of the attitudes, goals, and motivations, as well as the actions, of Mother Teresa and Mohandas Gandhi would demonstrate the superiority of Christian compassion for the needy. On the modern religious scene, one must also sort out what is inherent to the moral system of another religion and what has become incorporated into it as the result of Christian missionary activity. Hinduism as a system did not generate social compassion in Gandhi. Gandhi was a student of Christianity who seriously considered conversion. He proclaimed his admiration for Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. The social compassion found in some forms of current Hinduism is a foreign import from Christianity, the influence of those like Gandhi who had been touched by Christian principles. Even then it fell short of the full-orbed Christian compassion of Mother Teresa.

Finding a moral principle akin to the Golden Rule (cf. Matt. 7:12 ) is not enough to show moral equality. This is a manifestation of general revelation, the law written by God in the hearts of all ( Rom. 2:12-15 ). When it was lived out at moments of national spirituality, Christian morality has produced dynamic social compassion, while Eastern religions have produced stagnant societies and Islam has brought intolerant ones (Pinnock in Okhlan, 61).

Hick's analysis begs the question. Only by assuming that the moral common denominator of all religions is the standard by which they should all be judged does he arrive at the not-surprising conclusion that they are all equal. But one had to negate the superior aspects of Christian morality or teaching in order to show that Christianity is not superior. Hick seems to acknowledge this tacitly when he confessed that the "Acceptance of some form of the pluralistic view prompts each to de-emphasize and eventually winnow out that aspect of its self-understanding that entails a claim to unique superiority among the religions of the world" (ibid., 51).

Further, the moral manifestation of a belief does not settle the truth question. For example, the fact that there are outwardly moral Mormons does not prove that Joseph Smith was a true prophet. Indeed, there is strong evidence that he is not a true prophet (see Tanner). Among evidence to the contrary are his demonstrably false prophecies ( *see* MIRACLE ; PROPHECY AS PROOF OF BIBLE ). There is evidence for whether something is true other than the lifestyle of its adherents. Truth is what corresponds to reality ( *see* TRUTH, NATURE OF ) and, hence, a religion

is true if its central tenets correspond to the real world, not merely whether its followers live a good life or even a better one than adherents of another religion.

Fifth, in the final analysis the moral superiority of Christianity does not rest on our imperfection as Christians but on Christ's unique perfection as our exemplar. It is not based on our fallible moral character but on his impeccable character ( John 8:46 ; 2 Cor. 5:21 ; Heb. 4:15 ; 1 John 3:3 ). In this context, there is clearly a moral superiority of Christianity over all other religions.

***Redemptive Equality of Religions.*** As for the Christian claim of a superior mode of salvation, Hick believes this either begs the question or is not evident in practice. "If we define salvation as being forgiven and accepted by God because of Jesus' death on the cross, then it becomes a tautology that Christianity alone knows and is able to preach the source of salvation." And "if we define salvation as an actual human change, a gradual transformation from natural self-centeredness (with all the human evils that flow from this) to a radically new orientation centered in God and manifest in the 'fruit of the Spirit,' then it seems clear that salvation is taking place within all of the world religions—and taking place, so far as we can tell, to more or less the same extent" (ibid., 43). Further, what is common to all world religions is an adequate response to the Ultimate. "But they seem to constitute more or less equally authentic human awareness of and response to the Ultimate, the Real, the final ground and source of everything" (ibid., 45). There are, of course, "a plurality of religious traditions constituting different, but apparently more or less equally salvific, human responses to the Ultimate. These are the great world faiths" (ibid., 47).

Hick's analysis of salvation beliefs is based on the assumption that all religions have a proper relation to what is really Ultimate. This begs the question. Maybe some are not connected at all to what is really Ultimate (i.e., the true God). Or, perhaps they are not properly related to what is really Ultimate (God).

Hick wrongly assumes that all religions are merely a human response to the Ultimate. But this assumes an antisupernatural view of religion. In fact, it assumes an Eastern pantheistic view of the Ultimate as what transcends all particular cultural manifestations in the various world religions.

This denial of the truth of any particular religion is itself a form of exclusivism. It favors the particular view known as pantheism in order to deny the particularity of a view known as Christian theism. To assume this kind of pantheistic position as a basis for one's analysis of all religions, including nonpantheistic ones, simply begs the question. Or to put it another way, the pluralist who denies that any particular religion is any more true than others is making a particular truth claim.

The pluralist view often degenerates to the position that whatever is sincerely believed is true. This means that it matters not whether one is a passionate nazi, satanist, or member of the Flat Earth Society. Any view would be truth. Sincerity is clearly not a test of truth. Many people have been sincerely wrong about many things.

Finally, this implies that all truth claims are a matter of “both-and,” rather than either-or. By this reasoning there could be square circles, wise fools, and educated illiterates. Mutually exclusive propositions cannot both be true. Opposing truth claims of various religions cannot both be true ( *see* LOGIC ; FIRST PRINCIPLES ). For example, Hindu pantheism and Christian theism affirm mutually exclusive worldviews. Islam denies and Christianity proclaims Jesus’ death on the cross and resurrection from the dead three days later. One or the other must be wrong.

**The Uniqueness of Christ.** As for the Christian dogma about the uniqueness of Christ ( *see* CHRIST, UNIQUENESS OF ) to be God incarnate in human flesh, Hick contends that there are two main problems: First, Jesus did not teach this uniqueness himself. Second, the concept that Jesus was both God and human lacks coherence.

Hick rejects apparent statements about the uniqueness of Christ in the Gospels because he sees New Testament scholars doing the same thing. “Among mainline New Testament scholars there is today a general consensus that these are not pronouncements of the historical Jesus but words put in his mouth some sixty or seventy years later by a Christian writer expressing the theology that had developed in his part of the expanding church” ( *ibid.*, 52–53). Hick cites a list of biblical writers who allegedly agreed that “Jesus did not claim deity for himself” ( *ibid.*).

Hick is misinformed on both points. The historical reliability of the Gospels is now beyond serious dispute ( *see* ACTS, HISTORICITY OF ; NEW TESTAMENT, DATING OF ; NEW TESTAMENT, HISTORICITY OF ). Claims that Jesus’ statements were edited many years later to fit a religious program simply do not square with the facts. The Gospels were available in the forms we now know within the lifetimes of eyewitnesses and contemporaries of the events. Recent evidence seems to be pushing dates earlier. John, thought to be the last Gospel written, was by a participant of the events ( John 21 : 24 ). Luke was written by a contemporary disciple who knew the eyewitnesses ( Luke 1:1–4 ). The Gospels are reporting, not creating, the words and deeds of Jesus. There is firm support for his unique claims to be God incarnate ( *see* CHRIST, DEITY OF ).

Hick’s second allegation is that “it has not proved possible, after some fifteen centuries of intermittent effort, to give any clear meaning to the idea that Jesus had two complete natures, one human and the other divine?” ( *ibid.*, 55). Hick asks, “Is it really possible for infinite knowledge to be housed in a finite human brain” ( *ibid.*, 55). Again, “Do we really want to claim that Jesus was literally omnipotent but pretended not to be, as in Mark 6:5 ?” And “while he was good, loving, wise, just, and merciful, there is an obvious problem about how a finite human being could have these qualities in an infinite degree. . . . A finite being cannot have infinite attributes” ( *ibid.*, 56).

Hick falls short of claiming that the incarnation involves an outright logical contradiction, though his language could imply that. If it is not a logical contradiction, there is no demonstrated incoherence in the view. Indeed, Hick himself admits that “It is logically permissible to believe anything that is not self-contradictory” ( *Metaphor of God Incarnate*, 104). As for the claim that it is difficult to show just how this is so, on the same grounds one would have to reject both much of our common experience as well as modern science (which has difficulty explaining just how light can be both waves and particles).

Second, Hick appears to be misinformed about the orthodox view of the two natures of Christ. His objections assume an unorthodox view known as the monophysite heresy, which confuses the two natures of Christ. His question: “is it really possible for infinite knowledge to be housed in a finite human brain?” ( *ibid.*, 55) reveals this confusion. The orthodox view does not claim that there was infinite knowledge in the finite brain of Christ. Rather, it affirms that there were two distinct natures of Christ, one infinite and the other finite. The person of Christ did not have infinite knowledge. He had infinite knowledge only in his infinite nature. As God, he knew all things. As human, Jesus grew in knowledge ( Luke 2:52 ). The same thing applies to Jesus’ other attributes. As God, He was omnipotent. As human, he was not ( *see* CHRIST, DEITY OF ).

**Allegations of Intolerance.** Another charge is that exclusivism is intolerant. This is directed at the exclusivists’ view that one religious view is true and those opposed to it are false. This, to the pluralists, seems a bit of bigotry. Why should only one view have a franchise on the truth?

By this reasoning, pluralists are also “intolerant.” They claim their views are true, to the exclusion of opposing views (including exclusivism). And they certainly would not tolerate the position that pluralistic and opposing nonpluralistic views are both true.

If the charge of intolerance is leveled because of the manner in which some exclusivists express their views, nonpluralists have no monopoly on rudeness, intimidation, and poorly thought-out statements. As is demonstrated in the “politically correct” movement on university campuses, pluralists can be as intolerant as anyone else. In fact, there might be more exclusivists than pluralists who act with respect and restraint. However, it should be noted that the very concept of tolerance implies a real disagreement. One does not tolerate that with which he or she agrees. Tolerance presupposes a self-confident view of truth.

**Narrow-Mindedness.** The tolerance issue is closely related to a favorite allegation of pluralists that nonpluralists are narrow-minded. They claim that their view is true, and everyone else is in error. This seems presumptuous. Why should only exclusivists be in possession of the truth?

The response is that pluralists (P) and exclusivists (E) make an equal claim to truth and error. Both claim that their view is true and whatever opposes it is false. For example, if E is true, then all non-E is false. Likewise, if P is true then all non-P is false. Both views are “narrow.” All truth is narrow. After all, 2 plus 3 has only one true answer—5. That is the way truth is.

**Intellectual Imperialism.** Another charge is that exclusivists are guilty of intellectual imperialism. Exclusivists are totalitarian with regard to truth. They should be more open to input from many sources, not just to one. Some postmodern pluralists go so far as to claim that the very ideas of truth and meaning smack of fascism (cited in McGrath, “Challenge of Pluralism,” 364).

This allegation has a certain appeal, especially to those of a particular political mind set, but it is without merit with regard to determining what is true. The way this allegation is often made is as a form of the *ad hominem* logical fallacy. It attacks the person rather than the position.

This objection also makes an unjustified presumption that truth should be more democratic. But truth is not decided by majority vote. Truth is what corresponds to reality ( *see* TRUTH, NATURE OF ), whether the majority believe it or not. Do pluralists really believe that all views are equally true and good and should be settled on by majority rule? Is fascism or Marxism as good as democracy? Was nazism as good as any other government? Should we have tolerated the burning of widows at Hindu funerals of their husbands?

**Presuppositions of Pluralism. There Are Transreligious Moral Criteria.** To make the moral equality argument work, one must assume a set of moral criteria not unique to any particular religion by which all can be evaluated. Pluralists generally deny that there is any universally binding moral law. If there were such absolute moral laws there would need to be an absolute Moral Law Giver. But only theistic type religions accept this criteria, and some of them reject the absolute perfect nature of God (for example, Finite Godists). If there is a moral law common to all religions, then it is not unique to one, and no religion can be judged inferior for lacking it.

Finally, if there are no such universal moral laws, then there is no way to judge morally all religions from any standard beyond them. And it is not fair to take the standards of one religion and apply them to another, claiming that the other falls short.

**Phenomena Can Be Explained.** Beneath the pluralist's attack on exclusivism is a naturalistic presupposition. All religious phenomena can be explained naturalistically. No supernatural explanations are allowed. But this presumptive naturalism is without justification. Miracles cannot be ruled out *a priori* ( *see* MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST ). Neither, as David Hume claimed, are miracles incredible. Nor are miracles without evidence. Indeed, there is substantial evidence for the greatest "miracle" of all, the *ex nihilo* creation of the world out of nothing ( *see* BIG BANG and KALAM COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT ). There is also abundant evidence that the resurrection of Christ occurred ( *see* RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR ).

**The World Is "Religiously Ambiguous."** Hick believes that "the universe, as presently accessible to us, is capable of being interpreted intellectually and experientially in both religious and naturalistic ways" ( *Interpretation of Religion*, 129; *see* Geivett, 77). We cannot know the truth about God; what is real cannot be differentiated from what is false.

It is a self-defeating claim that we know that we cannot know the real. Simply because we do not know reality exhaustively does not mean we cannot know it truly ( *see* AGNOSTICISM ; REALISM ). As Geivett notes, "to the extent that God is known at all, he is known truly." The very notion of an undifferentiated Real is implausible, if not self-defeating. Hick's claim that the Real can be symbolized by the concept of *sunyata* in Buddhism is a case in point. For if the Real is so undifferentiated, then how can any symbol represent it? Neither can the Real be manifested in various traditions, as Hick claims. In order for something to be manifested, at least some of its characteristics must be revealed. But the Real, if totally undifferentiated, has no discernible characteristics. Hence, it could not be manifested in our experience in any meaningful way. There is a kind of mystical epistemology presumed in this "God is Unknowable" approach ( *see* MYSTICISM ). It rather imperiously decrees how God can and cannot reveal himself (Geivett, 77).

**Dialogue Is the Only Way to Truth.** Another seriously flawed presupposition is the position that pluralistic interreligious dialogue is the only valid way to discover truth. No genuine religious dialogue is possible if one assumes his religion is true in advance of the dialogue. This is sure proof that he is not "open" to truth. True dialogue assumes one is tolerant, open, humble, willing to listen and learn, and engage in a shared search for truth and a self-sacrificing, other-oriented love ( *ibid.*, 239).

However, true dialogue is possible without adopting a pluralistic position on truth. One can have the attitude of humility, openness, and tolerance without sacrificing convictions about truth. Even the pluralist is not willing to give up a commitment to pluralism as a condition for such dialogue. This violates the pluralist's own imperative. In fact, the call to dialogue is usually a disingenuous attempt at evangelism on behalf of the worldview of the one calling for dialogue.

**Hick's View Is Religiously Neutral.** Hick feigns religious neutrality, but it does not exist. His alleged pluralism is patterned after Hinduism's conception of the Transcendent. And it is antagonistic to the core principles of Christianity. It does not really encourage genuine dialogue between the traditions. Indeed, it renders virtually vacuous the concept of being "in a given religious tradition." After all, according to pluralists, every tradition is essentially the same. So, to accept pluralism is to reject one's own tradition and accept the pluralist's tradition.

**A Relativistic View of Truth Is Correct.** Beneath the pluralists' assertion that all major religions have equal claim to the truth is a relativistic view of truth ( *see* TRUTH, NATURE OF ). But the denial of absolute truth is self-defeating. It claims that relativism is true for everyone, everywhere, and always. But what is true for everyone, everywhere, and always is an absolute truth. Therefore, the relativist claims that relativism is absolutely true.

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**Polygamy.** First Kings 11:3 says Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines. Other men God highly praised in the Bible had multiple wives (and/or concubines), particularly Abraham and David. And yet the Scriptures repeatedly warn against having multiple wives ( Deut. 17:17 ) and violating the principle of monogamy—one man for one wife (cf. 1 Cor. 7:2 ; 1 Tim. 2:2 ). This seems to many critics to be a contradiction ( see BIBLE, ALLEGED ERRORS ).

**The Problem of Polygamy.** Monogamy is God's ideal standard for the human race. Polygamy was never commanded by God; it was only tolerated.

From the beginning, God set the pattern by creating a monogamous marriage relationship with one man and one woman, Adam and Eve ( Gen. 1:27 ). It is evident in the subsequent statement that "a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife [singular], and they will become one flesh" ( Gen. 2:24 ). Polygamy was never established by God for any people under any circumstances.

Following from this God-established example, this was the general practice ( Gen. 4:1 ) until interrupted by sin. The first recorded polygamist, Lamech, was a wicked man ( Gen. 4:23 ).

Christ reaffirmed God's original intention in Matthew 19:4, noting that God created one "male and [one] female" and joined them in marriage.

The Law of Moses prohibits polygamy, commanding, "You shall not multiply wives" ( Deut. 17:17 ).

The warning against intermarriage with unbelievers was repeated in the very passage where it numbers Solomon's wives ( 1 Kings 11:2 ). By implication, polygamy can be seen in that statement. Because of both their number and their idolatry, Solomon's wives did irreparable damage to the house of David and to Israel.

The New Testament stresses that "Each man [should] have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband" ( 1 Cor. 7:2 ). This emphatically excludes polygamy. Paul insisted that a

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church leader should be "the husband of one wife" ( 1 Tim. 3:2, 12 ). Whatever else this may entail, it certainly implies a monogamous relation.

Monogamous marriage prefigures the relation between Christ and his "bride" (singular), the church ( Eph. 5:31–32 ).

God's judgment on polygamy is evident by example and implication:

1. Polygamy is first mentioned in the context of a society in rebellion against God where the murderer "Lamech took for himself two wives" ( Gen. 4:19, 23 ).
2. God repeatedly warned polygamists of the consequences of their actions "lest his heart turn away" from God ( Deut. 17:17 ; cf. 1 Kings 11:2 ).
3. God never commanded polygamy—like divorce, he only permitted it because of the hardness of their hearts ( Deut. 24:1 ; Matt. 19:8 ).
4. Every polygamist in the Bible, including David and Solomon ( 1 Chron. 14:3 ), paid dearly for his sins.
5. God hates polygamy, as he hates divorce, since it destroys his ideal for the family (cf. Mal. 2:16 ).

**Conclusion.** Though the Bible records instances of polygamy, this does not mean God approved of it. Monogamy is taught in the Bible by *precedent*, since God gave the first man only one wife; by the equal *proportion* of males and females God brings into the world; by *precept* of Old and New Testament commands; by *punishment*, since God punished those who violated his standard ( 1 Kings 11:2 ); and by the prophetic *picture* of Christ and his pure bride, the church ( Eph. 5:31–32 ).

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**Polytheism.** Polytheism is the worldview that many finite gods exist in the world. There are differing versions of polytheism. In some forms, all the gods are more or less equal. Each has a personal sphere or domain. In others, the gods form a hierarchy. Henotheism has a chief god, such as Zeus. In some forms, such as the Greek and Roman pantheons, the number of gods is

limited. Mormonism supports an indefinite number of gods. Some forms of polytheism stand alone, unconnected with any other worldview. In Hinduism, however, polytheism and pantheism go hand-in-hand with one impersonal Brahman and 330 million-plus personal manifestations of the one impersonal ultimate Reality.

**The Rise of Polytheism.** The fortunes of polytheism, at least in the West, are inversely related to the health of theism (belief in one God). Greek polytheism declined with the rise of Plato and Aristotle's philosophical theism. Roman polytheism all but died with the rise of Christianity in the West. Augustine's *City of God* narrates the Christian response to Roman polytheism. Polytheism has experienced a revival with the decline of Judeo-Christian views in the broader culture. This has been accompanied with a rise in witchcraft that also embraces polytheism. Margo Adler's book, *Drawing Down the Moon*, chronicles this movement.

David L. Miller, author of *The New Polytheism: Rebirth of the Gods and Goddesses*, argues that polytheism is alive and well in contemporary society. He urges people in Western society to get in tune with the gods in order to liberate themselves to be the kind of people they really are. All citations in this article are to Miller's book.

**Basic Beliefs. Rejection of Monotheism.** The establishment of polytheism necessitates the demolition of monotheism. God must be rejected before the gods can be accepted.

Monotheism is the belief in one God above and beyond the world. Monotheistic thinking gathers all human "explanation systems, whether theological, sociological, political, historical, philosophical, or psychological" under one all-embracing system. This system operates "according to fixed concepts and categories" that are controlled by an either/or kind of logic. Something is "either true or false, either this or that, either beautiful or ugly, either good or evil." But this kind of thinking, says Miller, a people in a time when experience becomes self-consciously pluralistic, radically both/and." This is what Western society is today—radically pluralistic ( see PLURALISM, RELIGIOUS ). The contemporary Westerner lives in a world where truth and morality are relative. "Life often feels anarchistic: no horizons, fences, boundaries, and no center to prove one securely close to home" (7, 9). The contemporary situation is so pluralistic that its modern interpreters "have had to rely on a strange set of words" in their attempt to explain it. Charles Baudouin speaks of *polyphonic meaning* and being. In speaking of the nature of thinking required for contemporary understanding, Philip Wheelwright points to *plurisignificative knowing* and communicating. Norman O. Brown talks about *polymorphous reality* as a key to our history, and Ray Hart names the deepest aspect of our literature articulations of reality with the phrase *polysemous functioning of imaginal discourse*. If we try to make sense of our society Michael Novak suggests it will help to think of America as a pluralistic community of radically unmeltable ethnics. Concerning government and political science, Robert Dahl speaks of "*polyarchy*" (3).

This "poly" kind of thinking betrays the fact that "we have suffered a death of God" ( see ATHEISM ). No longer is there "a single center holding things together." God is dead, as Friedrich Nietzsche so boldly declared. Western civilization has buried the monotheistic way of thinking and speaking about God, being, and reality (37). Released from the "tyrannical imperialism of

monotheism," people can discover new dimensions and diversity. There is a new potential for imaginative hopes and desires, laws and pleasures (4).

Significantly, Miller avoids using references to deities in defining what he means by *polytheism*. Polytheism is "a specific religious situation, . . . characterized by plurality, and plurality that manifests itself in many forms." Socially speaking, it is a "situation" in which pluralism intermingles various values, social patterns, and moral principles. Sometimes these values and patterns work together, but more often they are incompatible and each worldview vies to dominate the "normal social order" (4).

Philosophically, polytheism is experienced when no single "truth" guides people to "a single grammar, a single logic, or a single symbol-system" (ibid.). Polytheism mediates the worldview warfare by introducing "relativism, indeterminacy, plural logic systems, irrational numbers; substances that do not have substances, such as quarks; double explanations for light; and black holes in the middle of actual realities" (5).

Behind this peace-making role, however, polytheism works by seeking to absorb other religious ideas into itself. It remains the worship of multiple gods and goddesses. In the curious popular form, these deities are not worshiped all at the same time. Rather, only one god or goddess at a time can be worshiped. In this, polytheism gives a nod to monotheism, the worship of one God. "Polytheistic religion is actually a polytheistic theology, a system of symbolizing reality in a plural way in order to account for all experience, but that the religious practice is composed of consecutive monotheisms." And this "implies that our experience of social, intellectual, and psychological worlds is religious—that is, it is so profound and far-reaching that only a theological explanation can account for it fully" (6).

At one time polytheism reigned in Western culture. But when Greek culture collapsed, polytheism died and was replaced by monotheism. Although polytheism remained "in the underground or countercultural tradition of the West" throughout the 2000-year reign of monotheistic thought, it did not have any significant effect. With the death of monotheism, says Miller, polytheism may be resurrected again to its proper place. (11).

Miller believes human beings are naturally polytheistic in consciousness, giving polytheism "advantages" over monotheism. "Only a polytheistic consciousness will account realistically for our lives" (81). People are freed from the idea that they must "get it all together"; polytheism allows an irrationalism in which one may avoid a fully constructed view. Polytheism puts people in touch with the richness and diversity of life. Monotheism encourages thought about what lies behind life, rather than thought about life itself (27, 28).

*The World.* Miller suggests that the new polytheism gives "a new function for the old Gods and Goddesses" (81) through three aspects. First, the new polytheism "is a modern sensibility." It is not just that "our contemporary society is pluralistic, nor that our roles are many, nor that our morality is relativistic, nor even that our political ideology is fragmented." These are manifestations of something more fundamental. "The more basic feeling is that the Gods and Goddesses are reemerging in our lives" (64).

Second, the new polytheism rethinks old religious and conceptual ways of thinking. Western thought is rooted in the early Greeks, who were largely polytheistic, so the ideas, concepts, and categories deep in the Western psyche fit the thought or logic of mythic tales (40).

Third, the new polytheism helps confused moderns put into order the “many potencies, many structures of meaning and being, all given to us in the reality of our everyday lives” (64, 65).

Given the death of monotheism and the rebirth of polytheism—even a new polytheism—who or what are the gods and goddesses of this polytheism? Miller maintains that the gods are powers or forces. These forces transcend the personal, the historical, and the social. They are not affected by events or desires. Yet they are immanent in the world as potencies in individuals, in societies, and in nature (6, 60). Miller believes these powers provide a structure of reality that informs human social, intellectual, and personal behavior. (6, 7). These powers are “the Gods and Goddesses of ancient Greece—not Egypt, not the Ancient Near East, not Hindu India, not Ancient China or Japan. Greece is the locus of our polytheism simply because, willy-nilly, we are Occidental men and women” (80, 81).

Do these many different gods act harmoniously? Miller says no. They often act in “contention.” Life may even be characterized as “a war of the Powers”:

Man—his self, his society, and his natural environment—is the arena of an eternal Trojan War. Our moods, emotions, unusual behaviors, dreams, and fantasies tell us those rough moments when the war is no longer a cold war or a border skirmish, but an all-out guerilla conflict. These indicators also tell us, by feeling and intuition, when one God has absented himself and another has not yet rushed into the vacuum. We know the war well. [60]

If modern people acknowledge these gods, new life will be infused into old ways of seeing and thinking. There would be a fresh philosophical structure through which to speak and think about our “deepest experience” (62).

Miller suggests how this new function of the gods and goddesses could work. The tremendous growth in technology can be thought about and informed by the stories of Prometheus, Hephaestus and Asclepius. “Prometheus steals the fire and ends trapped on a rock, gnawed at by the power he has himself supplanted by his knowledge. Hephaestus is the divine smith, the technologist supreme, who is the bastard of his mother and at a total loss for sensuousness and feeling. . . . Asclepius is the technologist of the feelings; he is the psychotherapist whom technology and its civilization will make into the high priest of mental health culture” (66).

The story of the goddess Hera, who “tried to socialize Mount Olympus,” is relieved when “computers and statistical procedures come to be revered as true wisdom” and “consultants and experts must attend every decision in business and government” (67). The work of the “ever-present God Pan (“All”) is seen in the irrational that is always just below the surface of the human experience, breaking out into violence or mysticism (68).

At one time the view of the world was framed around the ideas of the second-century A.D. Alexandrian astronomer Ptolemy. The earth was thought to be “an immovable sphere at the center of the universe, around which nine concentric spheres revolve.” Thus, all that existed was “organized around a single center,” the earth, with the end of the universe imagined to be “fixed and secure.” This monotheistic view of the world collapsed with Copernicus (and subsequent scientists). Now the universe has no known center and its horizons are neither fixed nor secure. Instead, it is seen as an “infinitely expanding universe whose center is . . . unknown” (9).

*Humankind.* Men and women are “the playground” of the gods (55). The gods parade “through our thoughts without our control and even against our will.” We do not possess the gods, but they possess us (34). They “live through our psychic structures” and “manifest themselves always in our behaviors.” We do not grab the gods, but the “gods grab us, and we play out their stories” (59).

Psychologically, polytheism is experienced in the separate “selves” of personhood. Each self has an autonomy, a life of its own that comes and goes without regard to the will (5). No one can be gripped by more than one God at a time. In this sense Miller and the modern polytheists are monotheistic, or henotheistic. Each person worships one God at a time, the one in control of personhood, out of a large pantheon of gods. However, the story of the one god who is in temporary domination may involve marriages with other gods, parentage by still others, offspring and maiden goddesses. So the conception is always ultimately polytheistic. To think differently is to partake of the self-deception that has been perpetrated by monotheistic thinking (30, cf. 28).

The purpose of humankind is to incarnate the gods, to become aware of their presence, to acknowledge and celebrate them (55). This can occur only when we begin to see our world through polytheistic, mythological glasses (63, 83).

*Values.* All values are relative ( *see* MORALITY, ABSOLUTE NATURE OF ). Truth and falsehood, life and death, beauty and ugliness, good and evil, are all mixed together (29). Monotheistic thinking separates values into either/or concepts and categories (7). But this way of thinking does not adequately account for the many sides of human experience. What does is the polytheistic both/and sort of thinking, which recognizes the relativity of all values.

*Evaluation. Some Positive Values of Polytheism.* Polytheism is a reminder of separate realities, though it doesn’t adequately decipher them. There is a widespread and growing recognition that humanity is not alone in the universe. Reported contacts with UFO beings or extraterrestrials persist. Even many scientists believe that there are intelligent beings in space. Even many nonpolytheistic religions recognize the existence of super human beings, such as angels and demons. If there is a divine reality, it follows that we should seek to discover our relationship to that reality and how we should respond to it. The emphasis that polytheists place on human beings getting “tuned in” to the divine reality and adjusting their behavior accordingly is commendable.

Polytheists are often praised for positing an analogy between man and the gods. If divine beings exist, and if they had something to do with the creation of humankind, then it would seem

that human nature would in some way reflect deity. A cause cannot give characteristics to others it does not possess itself. As a painting displays some truths about its painter (e.g., the level of skill, the breadth of imagination, or the care taken) so human beings should display some truth about their Creator(s). Hence, if a person is a creation of some divine reality, some human characteristics should resemble the Maker(s). Thus, it would appear reasonable to conclude that there is some analogy between humanity and the gods ( *see* ANALOGY, PRINCIPLE OF ).

Polytheists recognize that there are various forces in the world, some uncontrollable. Many scholars today have concluded that behind most myths, be they religious or not, lie true stories of human encounters with forces that press in. These may be forces of nature (e.g., wind, rain, earthquakes, tornadoes, or floods), forces prevalent in culture (e.g., greed, hope, love, or a desire for power), or forces believed to lie behind the universe (e.g., gods, angels, demons). Polytheists, through various story forms, have managed to vividly relate human encounter to such forces ( *see* SATAN, REALITY OF ).

*Criticisms of Polytheism.* While polytheists have some insights into the nature of reality, nonetheless, their worldview is false. Ultimate reality does not consist of many finite gods. There is good evidence that there is only one God, not many ( *see* COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT ; GOD, EVIDENCE FOR ; GOD, NATURE OF ; THEISM ). This God is Creator of all else. Hence, there are not many divine beings.

If the natural elements, say heaven and earth, had given birth to the gods, then the gods would not be ultimate beings. Whatever is derived from something else is dependent on that something, at least for its origin. How could a being that received its existence from another be above its maker? This would be like a cookie claiming to be greater than its cook, or a computer declaring itself above its creator. Similarly, if nature created the gods, then nature is ultimate. And if, as Paul Tillich thought, worship involves an ultimate commitment to an ultimate, then nature, not the gods, should be worshiped. This would be true regarding whatever was believed to have given birth to the gods or to have preceded them. If the gods are derivative beings, then they are not worthy of ultimate commitment. Why worship something that has no ultimate worth?

Also, as Plotinus noted, all plurality presupposes a prior unity. Many are just a multiple imitation of the One. Thus, many gods are not self-explanatory. What is their basis of unity? And who superintends conflict between them? This is not a polyverse but a universe. If ultimately there is a personal Power behind the universe, it must be a unity.

The anthropic principle reveals that the entire universe was one—with one purpose and Purposer—from the very beginning. From the moment of the big bang the entire universe was fine-tuned for the emergence of human life. This bespeaks of one intelligent Creator. The idea of an eternal universe posited by polytheism has other serious philosophical and scientific objections. One philosophical argument stems from the impossibility of an actual infinite series of events in time. An eternal universe would be a beginningless series of events in time. But how could such a series possibly exist? To illustrate, suppose there were a library with an infinite number of books on its shelves. Imagine that each book is numbered. Since there is an infinite number of books, every book is numbered and every possible number must be printed on the

books in the library. From this it would follow that no new book could be added to the library, for there would be no number left to assign. All the numbers have been used up. But this seems absurd, for all objects in reality can be numbered. Further, it would be easy to add to the library, since one could make a new book by tearing a page out of each of the first fifty books, adding a title page, binding them together and putting the finished product on the shelf. Hence, the idea of an actual infinite series of books appears to be impossible. Therefore, the polytheistic belief in an eternal universe would appear to be impossible (see Craig, *passim*).

A scientific argument against the idea of an eternal universe can be derived from the modern notion that the universe is expanding. Astronomer Edwin Hubble concluded that the universe is expanding in all directions. If true, it would follow that at some point in the past the universe was only a single point from which it has been expanding. This single point would be one of “infinite density.” However, no object could be infinitely dense, for if it contained any mass at all it would not be infinitely dense but finitely dense. Hence, a totally shrunken or contracted universe is really no universe at all. The concept of an expanding universe requires a point at which no universe existed. If this is so, then the universe must have begun from nothing ( *see* CREATION, VIEWS OF ).

Polytheistic gods are within that universe, not beyond it. But the evidence is that the universe came into existence. If the universe is not eternal but came to exist from nothing ( *see* CREATION, EX NIHILLO ), then the gods posited by polytheism would not be eternal; they would have come into existence. But if they came into existence, then they are not gods but creatures made by some eternal Cause (God). But if the gods of polytheism derive their existence from another, then this other is really the supreme God of monotheism. Thus, polytheism collapses into monotheism. Therefore, if the gods exist, they would ultimately be dependent on a Cause beyond them and beyond the universe. But this conclusion coincides with the claims of theism, not those of polytheism.

The polytheistic analogy between humankind and the gods has been criticized as too anthropomorphic (interpreting what is not human on the basis of human characteristics). Certainly the creature should bear some resemblance to the Creator. But to apply human imperfections to deity renders the divine reality as less than worthy of respect and worship. Gods of polytheism appear to be made in human image, rather than we being made in their image. This tends to give credence to the view that polytheism is a human invention or superstition rather than a depiction of what actually is.

**Conclusion.** As a worldview, polytheism lacks rational and evidential support. The many spiritual beings that exist are limited and imperfect. Hence, they imply an unlimited and perfect Creator. Polytheism does not account for either ultimate causality or ultimate unity, which is needed to explain a diverse, changing universe.

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**Positivism.** *See* COMTE, AUGUSTE ; LOGICAL POSITIVISM .

**Postmodernism.** *See* DERRIDA, JACQUES .

**Practical Presuppositionalism.** *See* PRESUPPOSITIONAL APOLOGETICS ; SCHAEFFER, FRANCIS .

**Pragmatism.** *Pragmatism* is an indigenous American philosophy, springing from William James (1842–1910), which stresses the practical results of a theory. John Dewey (1859–1952) is called a pragmatist, but his position might more technically be called *instrumentalism* .

For a pragmatist, an idea is said to be true if it works. A course of action is right if it brings desired results.

The roots of pragmatism are found in the ideas of Charles Sanders Pierce, who used a pragmatic method to clarify (though not to verify) ideas. There are also similarities between pragmatism and utilitarianism, which holds that the right course of action is the one that brings the greatest good. Dewey, as an instrumentalist, stressed practical results of ideas, especially in education.

The pragmatic view has been severely criticized, because something is not true simply because it works. Lying may “work” to avoid a negative result or achieve a desired objective at the expense of another person, but that doesn’t make the lies true. Something can be known to be contrary to facts, yet still followed, because it seems the most practical course of action under the circumstances. Neither is something right because it works. Cheating “works,” but it is not right.

The ethical philosophy also confuses cause with effect. An idea is not true because it works; it works because it is true. And how does one judge that it has “worked”? Only practical knowledge is considered true knowledge. An eternal perspective does not enter the discussion. Pragmatists recognize only the methods of science to test truth. This absolutizes the scientific method. However, for ethical concerns there are no objective criteria, as there are in science. The success of the result can only be determined by a subjective, personal, and short-sighted perspective.

A pragmatic view of truth also undermines trust. What judge would allow someone to take a courtroom oath to tell, as one philosopher quipped, “the expedient, the whole expedient, and nothing but the expedient” ( *see* TRUTH, NATURE OF )?

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**Predestination.** *See* DETERMINISM ; FREE WILL .

**Presuppositional Apologetics.** Presuppositional apologetics is the apologetic system that defends Christianity from the departure point of certain basic presuppositions. The apologist presupposes the truth of Christianity and then reasons from that point. One basic presupposition is that the non-Christian also has presuppositions that color everything he or she hears about God. Another is that in some fashion the person encountered is, as Augustine said, “doing business” with God and, as Romans 1 puts it so damningly, suppressing knowledge of the truth. It is the apologist’s role to present the truth of Christianity and the falsehood of any worldview opposed to Christ ( *see* PLURALISM, RELIGIOUS ).

**Differences from Other Methods.** Presuppositional apologetics is opposed to evidentialism and classical apologetics ( *see* APOLOGETICS, CLASSICAL ). Presuppositional apologetics differs from classical apologetics in that presuppositional apologetics rejects the validity of traditional proofs for the existence of God ( *see* GOD, EVIDENCE FOR ). Further, the presuppositional apologist differs with both classical and historical apologetics in its use of historical evidence. The historical apologist, in agreement with the classical apologist, argues in favor of beginning with reason and evidence to demonstrate the truth of Christianity. The presuppositionalist, on the other hand, insists that one must begin with presuppositions or worldviews. The historical apologist believes that the historical facts “speak for themselves.” They are “self-interpreting” in their historical context. The pure presuppositionalist, on the other hand, insists that no facts are self-interpreting, that all facts are interpreted and can be properly understood only within the context of an overall worldview.

**Several Kinds of Presuppositionalism.** Depending on how one is defined, there are three or four basic kinds of presuppositionalism: (1) *revelational presuppositionalism* ( *see* VAN TIL, CORNELIUS ); (2) *rational presuppositionalism* ( *see* CLARK, GORDON ); and (3) *systematic consistency* ( *see* CARNELL, EDWARD JOHN ). Some view Francis Schaeffer’s apologetic as an example of a fourth variation that might be called *practical presuppositionalism* . Each approach differs in the way in which a worldview is judged for truth.



*Revelational Presuppositionalism.* According to revelational presuppositionalism, one must begin any rational understanding of truth by presupposing the truth of the Christian faith. One must posit that the Triune God ( *see* TRINITY ) has revealed himself in Holy Scriptures, the divinely authoritative Word of God. Without this presupposition one cannot make any sense out of the universe, life, language, history, or anything else. This kind of argument is sometimes viewed as a transcendental argument, that is, an argument that begins by laying down the necessary conditions under which every other kind of knowledge is possible. These necessary conditions posit that the Triune God has revealed himself in Holy Scriptures.

*Rational Presuppositionalism.* This is the apologetics system of the late Gordon Clark and his noted disciple Carl F. H. Henry. Like other presuppositionalists, the rational presuppositionalist begins with the Trinity revealed in the written Word of God. But the test for whether this is true is simply the law of noncontradiction ( *see* FIRST PRINCIPLES ). That is, one knows that Christianity is true and all opposing systems are false because all of them have internal contradictions and only Christianity is internally consistent. Thus, a rational principle, the law of noncontradiction, is used as the test for truth.

*Systematic Consistency.* John Carnell and his disciple, Gordon Lewis, developed a presuppositionalism that has two (or three) tests for the truth of the Christian presupposition. Like rational presuppositionalists, they believe a system must be rationally consistent. But in addition, they hold that the system must comprehensively include all the facts. Later in his life Carnell added a third test—existential relevance. The system must meet life's basic needs. The only system, they believe, that measures up to all three is Christianity. Thus, Christianity is true and all other opposing systems are false.

*Practical Presuppositionalism.* Francis Schaeffer's apologetic approach has also been listed by many as presuppositional. If so, it is a practical presuppositionalism. One of its chief features is that all non-Christian systems are unlivable. Only Christian truth is livable. In this sense, it uses unlivability as a test for the falsity of non-Christian systems and livability as a test for the truth of Christianity.

**Conclusion.** Presuppositional apologetics has been criticized from many quarters. Classical apologetics ( *see* APOLOGETICS, CLASSICAL ) has challenged its rejection of traditional proofs for the existence of God ( *see* GOD, EVIDENCE FOR ). Historical apologetics ( *see* APOLOGETICS, HISTORICAL ) has defended the neutral nature of historical facts. Others have noted the fideistic nature of revelational presuppositionalism and rejected it for this reason ( *see* FIDEISM ). Since each system is critiqued under the article on its chief proponent, attention is directed to the articles on Cornelius Van Til, Gordon Clark, and John Carnell.

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**Princeton School of Apologetics.** The Princeton School of Apologetics refers to the apologetic approach taken by "Old Princeton" scholars who flourished at the turn of the twentieth century. Broadly, it fits into the category of Classical apologetics ( *see* APOLOGETICS, CLASSICAL ), who believe in the validity of general revelation, classical arguments for God's existence ( *see* GOD, EVIDENCE FOR ), and miracles as confirmation of the truth ( *see* MIRACLE ).

The philosophical roots of the Princeton apologetic are found in the empirical realism of Scottish Common Sense Philosophy and Thomas Reid (1710–1796) and the rational empiricism of John Locke (1632–1704). His views were exemplified in the writings of J. Gresham Machen (1881–1937), Charles Hodge (1797–1878), and B. B. Warfield (1851–1921). Later there was a radical break in the tradition when Westminster Seminary was founded by faculty and students who broke with the modernist direction in theology being taken at Princeton Seminary. Cornelius Van Til (1895–1987), a disciple of Herman Dooyeweerd (1894–1977), led Princeton into a presuppositional apologetic ( *see* APOLOGETICS, PRESUPPOSITIONAL ).

The spirit, if not always the letter, of the old Princeton school has been carried on by Kenneth Hamilton, Kenneth Kantzer, John Gerstner, and R. C. Sproul. Their general epistemology and apologetic is dependent to a significant degree on the foundation laid by the old Princeton scholars.

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**Principle of Parsimony ("Ockham's Razor").** *See* WILLIAM OF OCKHAM .

**Principle of Sufficient Reason.** *See* SUFFICIENT REASON, PRINCIPLE OF .

**Probability.** *See* CHANCE ; CERTAINTY ; INDUCTIVE METHOD ; LOGIC .

**Process Theology.** *See* PANENTHEISM ; WHITEHEAD, ALFRED NORTH .

**Progressive Revelation.** Sometimes critics of Scripture jump to the conclusion that the Bible is in error ( *see* BIBLE, ALLEGED ERRORS IN ) because God commands something different for one period than for another. The classic example of that is God's command for blood sacrifices to atone for sin under the law of Moses. These are no longer in effect since Christ offered himself as the final atoning sacrifice to which the animal sacrifices looked forward (see Hebrews 7–10 ). Likewise, God commanded that Adam eat only plants ( Gen. 1:29–30 ). But after the flood, Noah was told to eat meat. The Mosaic Law prohibited certain animals as “unclean” to eat ( Leviticus 11 ). But Jesus pronounced that these animals were clean and could be eaten ( Mark 7:19 ; Acts 10:14–15 ; 1 Tim. 4:4 ). These are not contradictions but examples of *progressive revelation* .

The principle of progressive revelation means that God does not reveal everything at once, nor does he always lay down the same conditions for every period. Later revelations will have things in them that go against earlier ones. Hence the Old Testament revealed only hints of the Trinity taught in the New Testament (for example, Matt. 3:16–17 ; 28:18–20 ). The New Testament declares explicitly what was only implicit in the Old Testament ( *see* TRINITY ).

God can change anything that does not involve a contradiction or that does not go against his unchangeable nature ( Mal. 3:6 ; 2 Tim. 2:13 ; Titus 1:2 ; Heb. 6:18 ). God can change nonmoral things without any apparent or stated reason ( *see* ESSENTIALISM, DIVINE ). The change of the command for humans from being herbivorous to omnivorous ( Gen. 1:29–30 ; 9:2–3 ) is one example; changes in the ceremonial laws are another. They are different commands for different times which God had different reasons for enacting, even if not fully known to us ( Deut. 29:29 ).

Sometimes God commands change because of the changing conditions of humanity. Such is the case with permission for divorce “for any cause” in the Old Testament, and a strong prohibition in the New Testament ( Matt. 19:3 ). Jesus said the original law “was because of the hardness of your hearts” ( 19:8 ). God sometimes overlooks certain things because of times of ignorance ( Acts 17:30 ), but later does not.

A major reason for change is that God has an unfolding plan. This plan has stages in which some things are necessary and stages where something else is necessary. Once a prophecy “type” has been fulfilled (the blood of the lamb), when the reality comes, the type is no longer needed. Once the foundation of the church was laid in the apostles ( Eph. 2:20 ), the apostles were no longer needed.

In view of the principle of progressive revelation, the later revelations are not contradictory, but complementary. They do not make mistakes, but reveal more truth. Later revelations do not negate the former; they simply replace them. Since they were not given for all, but only for a specified time, they do not conflict when they change. No two opposing commands are for the same people at the same time.

An example of progressive revelation can be seen in every family with growing children. When they are very small, the parent allows children to eat with their fingers. Later, the parents insist on the use of a spoon. Finally, as the child progresses, the parent commands use of a fork. These commands are temporary, progressive, and appropriate to the situation.

**Proper Basicity.** *Proper basicity* is a view set forth by contemporary American philosopher Alvin Plantinga, claiming that there are certain beliefs for which it is possible but foolish to require justification. These include the concepts “I exist.” and “There is a past.” One is entitled to hold these beliefs without giving any further account. Plantinga includes the belief “God exists.” among the propositions that are “properly basic.” If true, this would undercut natural theology, the need to provide any arguments for God's existence ( *see* GOD, EVIDENCE FOR ), and classical apologetics ( *see* APOLOGETICS, CLASSICAL ). Plantinga claims that belief in God is so central that it would be folly to ask for its foundation. The belief itself is the hub of the believer's worldview ( *see* Plantinga, 187–98).

Plantinga replaces classic foundationalism with these “basic beliefs.” His view is a kind of fideistic foundationalism ( *see* FIDEISM ).

The denial that there are any self-evident foundational principles of thought involves one either in an infinite regress, where no justification is ever given, or else in an arbitrary cut-off point where one simply stops giving a justification (without a justification for doing so; *see* FIRST PRINCIPLES ). Plantinga offers no justification for placing belief that God exists into the category of “properly basic.” An unbeliever can simply ask for his reasons for placing it in this category, at which point it is incumbent on him to provide a rational justification, or else he simply begs the question.

Like other fideists, Plantinga here failed to distinguish between belief *in* and belief *that* God exists. One needs evidence for belief *that* God exists, but not for belief *in* God. It would be an insult to one's wife to demand reasons for loving her. But it is not an insult to demand reasons that it is really she, and not the neighbor's wife, before embracing her. It is unworthy of a person's relationship with God to believe in God for the sake of evidence. If there is an Ultimate Value (i.e., God) in the universe, that Being should be believed in for his own sake. But it is not unworthy to ask for evidence that God exists and is the Ultimate Value before one place's faith in him. Reason demands that we look before we leap (Geisler, 68–69).

#### **Sources**

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**Prophecy, as Proof of the Bible.** One of the strongest evidences that the Bible is inspired by God ( *see* BIBLE, EVIDENCES FOR ) is its predictive prophecy. Unlike any other book, the Bible offers a multitude of specific predictions—some hundreds of years in advance—that have been literally fulfilled or else point to a definite future time when they will come true. In his comprehensive catalogue of prophecies, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecies* , J. Barton Payne lists 1817 predictions in the Bible, 1239 in the Old Testament and 578 in the New (674–75).

The argument from prophecy is the argument *from* omniscience. Limited human beings know the future only if it is told to them by an omniscient Being (Ramm, 81). It is important to note that this is not an argument *to* omniscience. It is sometimes wrongly argued that a forecast

of unusual events is proof that there is an omniscient Being ( *see* God, Nature of). This is not necessarily the case, for the odd does not prove God ( *see* MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST ). No matter what the improbability, an odd event (say, a perfect hand in the card game of bridge, an extremely improbable deal) can, and sometimes does, occur. However, if an omniscient Being is known to exist ( *see* GOD, EVIDENCE FOR ), and highly improbable predictions are made in his name which come to pass without fail, then it is reasonable to assume that they were divinely inspired. Fulfilled prophecy does not prove the existence of God, but it does show that unusual events predicted in his Name that come to pass are evidence of his special activity.

**Predictive Prophecy.** If an omniscient God exists who knows the future, then predictive prophecy is possible ( *see* THEISM ; GOD, NATURE OF ). And if the Bible contains such predictions, then they are a sign of the Bible's divine origin. Not everything called "prophecy" in the Bible is predictive. Prophets *forthold* God's Word as well as *foretold* the future. There are several earmarks of a supernatural prediction, at least one with apologetic value. First, it is more than a vague guess or conjecture (see Ramm, 82). It cannot be a mere reading of the trends. Second, it deals with human contingencies that are normally unpredictable. Scientific predictions are not of the same order, since they deal with projections based on the regularity of nature, for example, the prediction of an eclipse. Third, it is a highly unusual event, not normally expected. Sometimes the miraculous nature of the prophecy is manifest in the length of time in advance the prediction is made, so as to reduce the probability of guessing. At other times it is revealed in the unique fulfillment itself.

**Biblical Predictions. Messianic Predictions.** There are two broad categories of biblical prophecy: messianic and nonmessianic. Payne (ibid., 665–70) lists 191 prophecies concerning the anticipated Jewish Messiah and Savior. Each was literally fulfilled in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus of Nazareth ( *see* NEW TESTAMENT, HISTORICITY OF ; CHRIST, DEITY OF ). A sampling of these prophecies includes:

**Messiah's birth.** God said to Satan after he had enticed Adam and Eve to fall into sin, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" ( Gen. 3:15 ). The New Testament reveals that Jesus was indeed born of a woman in order to crush Satan's power. For "when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law" ( Gal. 4:4 ; cf. Matthew 1 ; Luke 2 ).

Isaiah 7:14 predicted that one named *Immanuel* ("God with us") would be born of a virgin ( *see* VIRGIN BIRTH ): "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." This prediction was made over 700 years in advance ( *see* ISAIAH, DEUTERO ). The New Testament affirms that Christ fulfilled this prediction, saying, "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel'—which means, 'God with us' " ( Matt. 1:22–23 ). The objection that this is not really a prediction of Christ's birth is answered in the article, *Virgin Birth of Christ*.

Micah made the unambiguous prophecy, "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times" ( Micah 5:2 ). Even the unbelieving Jewish

scribes identified this as a prediction of the Messiah and directed the inquiring magi to Bethlehem ( Matt. 2:1–6 ):

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written: 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.' "

**Messiah's ancestry.** God declared in Genesis 12:1–3 that the Messianic blessing for all the world would come from the offspring of Abraham: "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" ( Gen. 12:2–3 ; cf. 22:18 ). Jesus was indeed the seed of Abraham. Matthew begins with "A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham" ( Matt. 1:1 ). Paul adds, "The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say 'and to seeds,' meaning many people, but 'and to your seed,' meaning one person, who is Christ" ( Gal. 3:16 ).

The Redeemer would come through the tribe of Judah: "The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his" ( Gen. 49:10 ). According to the New Testament genealogies this was Jesus' ancestry. Luke declares: "Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph, the son of Heli, . . . the son of Judah, the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham" ( Luke 3:23 , 33–34 ; cf. Matt. 1:1–3 ). Hebrews adds, "For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah" ( Heb. 7:14 ).

The books of Samuel record the prediction that the Messiah would be of the house of David. God said to David: "When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son" ( 2 Sam. 7:14 ). The New Testament repeatedly affirms that Jesus was "the son of David" ( Matt. 1:1 ). Jesus himself claimed to be "the son of David" ( Matt. 22:42–45 ). The Palm Sunday crowd also hailed Christ as "the son of David" ( Matt. 21:9 ).

**Herald of Messiah's coming.** Isaiah predicted that the Messiah would be heralded by a messenger of the Lord who would be "A voice of one calling: 'In the desert prepare the way for the LORD ; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God' " ( 40:3 ). Malachi ( 3:1 ) added: " 'See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,' says the LORD Almighty." These predictions were literally fulfilled in the ministry of John the Baptist. Matthew records: "In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert

of Judea and saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.' ” This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: “A voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him’ ” ( Matt. 3:1–3 ).

Isaiah 11:2 foretold that the Messiah would be anointed by the Holy Spirit for his ministry: “The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.” This literally happened to Jesus at his baptism. Matthew 3:16–17 says, “As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’ ”

Isaiah 61 said that the Messiah would preach the gospel to the poor and brokenhearted. Jesus pointed out his fulfillment of this ministry in the Nazareth synagogue ( Luke 4:17–20 ):

He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Jesus carefully cut off his reading in the middle of a sentence, failing to add the next phrase, “and the day of vengeance of our God.” That refers to his second coming; it was not fulfilled that day in their hearing, as was the rest of the prophecy.

Isaiah 35:5–6 declared that the Messiah would perform miracles to confirm his ministry, asserting: “Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped.” The Gospel record is filled with Jesus’ miracles. “Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness” ( Matt. 9:35 ). Jesus even cited these very things for John the Baptist as his messianic calling card. “Jesus replied, ‘Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor’ ” ( Matt. 11:4–5 ).

*Messiah’s work.* Malachi 3:1 foretold the authority over the temple worship that Jesus showed when he twice drove out the moneychangers—at the beginning and at the end of his ministry: “ ‘See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,’ says the LORD Almighty.”

Matthew 21:12–13 relates that: “Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. ‘It is written,’ he said to them, ‘My house will be called a house of prayer,’ but you are making it a ‘den of robbers.’ ”

Among many psalms applicable to the ministry of Jesus is 118:22 , which foretells Messiah’s rejection by his people: “The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone.” This very verse is cited repeatedly in the New Testament. For example, Peter wrote, “Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone.’ ” ( 1 Peter 2:7 ; cf. Matt. 21:42 ; Mark 12:10 ; Luke 20:17 ; Acts 4:11 ).

*Suffering and death of Christ.* One of the most amazing predictions of Christ in all of Scripture is that of Isaiah 53:2–12 . This precise description of Jesus’ sufferings and death of Christ was all literally fulfilled (see Matt. 26–27 ; Mark 15–16 ; Luke 22–23 ; John 18–19 ). Isaiah predicts twelve aspects of Messiah’s passion, all fulfilled. Jesus . . .

1. was rejected;
2. was a man of sorrow;
3. lived a life of suffering;
4. was despised by others;
5. carried our sorrow;
6. was smitten and afflicted by God;
7. was pierced for our transgressions;
8. was wounded for our sins;
9. suffered like a lamb;
10. died with the wicked;
11. was sinless; and
12. prayed for others.

Further confirmation of the predictive nature of Isaiah 53 is that it was common for Jewish interpreters before the time of Christ to teach that Isaiah here spoke of the Jewish Messiah (see Driver). Only after early Christians began using the text apologetically with great force did it become in rabbinical teaching an expression of the suffering Jewish nation. This view is implausible in the context of Isaiah’s standard references to the Jewish people in the first-person plural (“our” or “we,”) whereas he always refers to the Messiah in third-person singular, as in Isaiah 53 (“he” and “his” and “him”).

Predictions elsewhere about Christ’s death include:

13. the piercing of his hands and feet ( Ps. 22:16 ; cf. Luke 23:33 );
14. the piercing of his side ( Zech. 12:10 ; cf. John 19:34 ); and
15. the casting of lots for his garments ( Ps. 22:18 ; cf. John 19:23–24 ).

While it wasn't recognized until after the fact, one of the most precise predictions in Scripture gives the very year in which the Christ would die. Daniel was speaking of both the exile of Israel and the atonement for sin when he recorded a prayer of confession for the sins of his people ( 9:4–19 ) and a vision in response in which the angel Gabriel gave to Daniel the following foresight ( 9:24–26 ):

Seventy “sevens” are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy. Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One [Messiah], the ruler, comes, there will be seven “sevens,” and sixty-two “sevens.” . . . After the sixty-two “sevens,” the Anointed One will be cut off.

The context indicates that Daniel knew he was speaking of years, since he was meditating on the “number of years” that God had revealed to Jeremiah that Jerusalem would lay waste, namely, “seventy years” (vs. 2). God then told Daniel that it would be 7 x 70 (years) before the Messiah would come and be cut off (die).

Artaxerxes ordered Nehemiah “to restore and rebuild *Jerusalem*” ( Dan. 9:25 ; cf. Nehemiah 2 ) in 445/444 B.C. From that year, rather than the earlier date when Cyrus approved only the rebuilding of the temple ( Ezra 1:3 ), Daniel predicted that it would be 483 years to the time of Christ's death. Taking the widely accepted date of 33 for the crucifixion (see Hoehner), would be 483 years exactly:

Seven sevens plus sixty-two sevens is  $69 \times 7 = 483$

$444 + 33 = 477$

Add six years to compensate for the five days in a solar year not in the lunar year followed by Israel ( $5 \times 477 = 2385$  days or 6+ years).

$477 + 6 = 483$  years

This assumes Daniel's 490 (70 x 7) is not a round number, which is possible. The Bible frequently rounds its numbers ( *see* BIBLE, ALLEGED ERRORS IN ; CHRONOLOGY, PROBLEMS IN THE BIBLE ). In either event, Daniel's prediction takes us to the very time of Christ.

*Psalm 16:10 : Christ's resurrection.* The Old Testament also foretold the resurrection of the Messiah from the dead. Psalm 2:7 declares: “I will proclaim the decree of the LORD : He said to me, ‘You are my Son; today I have become your Father.’ ” In Psalm 16:10 David adds, “because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.”

Both of these passages are cited in the New Testament as predictive of the resurrection of Christ. Peter said explicitly of David's prophecy in Psalm 16 , “But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay” ( Acts 2:30–31 ; cf. 13:35 ). Psalm 2 is cited as a prediction of the resurrection in Acts 13:33–34 (cf. Heb. 1:5 ). Indeed, using these passages, “Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. ‘This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ,’ he said” ( Acts 17:2–3 ). This would scarcely have been possible unless his skeptical Jewish audience did not recognize the predictive nature of passages like Psalms 2 and 16 .

*The ascension of Christ.* In Psalm 110:1 , David even predicted the Ascension of Christ, writing, “The LORD says to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet’ ” (cf. Pss. 2:4–6 ; 68:6 ; used in Eph. 4:8 ). Jesus applied this passage to himself ( Matt. 22:43–44 ). Peter used it as a prediction of the Ascension of Christ: “For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, ‘The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet” ’ ” ( Acts 2:34–45 ).

*Prophecy and the Messiah.* It is important to note unique things about biblical prophecies. Unlike many psychic predictions, many of these were *very specific*, giving, for example, the very name of the tribe, city, and time of Christ's coming. Unlike forecasts found in tabloids at the supermarket checkout counter, *none of these predictions failed*.

Since these prophecies *were written hundreds of years* before Christ was born, the prophets could have been reading the trends of the times or making intelligent guesses. Many predictions were beyond human ability to fake a fulfillment. If he were a mere human being, Christ would have had no control over when ( Dan. 9:24–27 ), where ( Micah 5:2 ), or how he would be born ( Isa. 7:14 ), how he would die ( Psalm 22 ; Isaiah 53 ), do miracles ( Isa. 35:5–6 ), or rise from the dead ( Psalms 2 , 16 ).

It is unlikely that all these events would have converged in the life of one man. Mathematicians (Stoner, 108) have calculated the probability of sixteen predictions being fulfilled in one man (e.g., Jesus) at 1 in 1045. That forty-eight predictions might meet in one person, the probability is 1 in 10157. It is almost impossible to conceive of a number that large.

But it is not just a *logical improbability* that rules out the theory that Jesus engineered his prophecy fulfillments; it is *morally implausible* that an all-powerful and all-knowing God ( *see* GOD, NATURE OF ) would allow his plans for prophetic fulfillment to be ruined by someone who just happened to be in the right place at the right time. God cannot lie ( Titus 1:2 ), nor can he break a promise ( Heb. 6:18 ). So we must conclude that he did not allow his prophetic promises to be thwarted by chance. All the evidence points to Jesus as the divinely appointed fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies. He was God's man, confirmed by God's signs ( Acts 2:22 ).

*Nonmessianic Predictions.* Other biblical prophecies are specific and predictive. The following are examples:

*Daniel 2:37–42 : The Succession of Great World Kingdoms.* An amazing prediction in the Bible is the succession of the world empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome by Daniel. Interpreting the metallic man in the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, he told Nebuchadnezzar: ‘You, O king, are the king of kings. . . . You are that head of gold. After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth. Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others’ ” ( Dan. 2:38–40 ).

So precise and accurate is this prophecy that even negative critics agree that Daniel spoke in order of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Critics try to avoid the supernatural nature of the prophecy by claiming these words were written after the fact, in about 165 B.C . But there is no real substantiation for this claim.

*Cyrus King of Persia.* One of the most specific Old Testament predictions identifies Cyrus of Persia before he was even born. Isaiah 44:28–45:1 : “The LORD . . . who says of Cyrus, ‘He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, “Let it be rebuilt,” and of the temple, “Let its foundations be laid.” ’ This is what the LORD says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armor, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut.”

This prediction was made some 150 years before Cyrus was even born ( *see* ISAIAH, DEUTERO ). Since Isaiah lived between about 740 and 690 B.C . ( 2 Kings 25–21 ) and Cyrus did not make his proclamation for Israel to return from exile until about 536 ( Ezra 1 ), there would have been no human way for him to know what Cyrus would be named or do. The attempt of critics to divide Isaiah and postdate the prophecy is without foundation ( *see* ISAIAH, DEUTERO ) and is a backhanded compliment to the detail and accuracy of the prediction.

*The Return of Israel to the Land.* Given their long exile of some nineteen centuries and the animosity of the occupants of Palestine against them, any prediction of the return, restoration, and rebuilding of the nation of Israel was extremely unlikely. Yet predictions made some centuries and over two and a half millennia in advance about the two restorations of the Jews to their homeland and their restoration as a nation have been literally fulfilled. Regarding the 1948 restoration of Israel, Isaiah predicted that “In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the remnant that is left of his people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam, from Babylonia, from Hamath and from the islands of the sea.”

The first return was under Ezra and Nehemiah in the sixth century B.C . But Israel was sent again into exile in A.D. 70 when the Roman armies destroyed Jerusalem and leveled the temple. For nearly 2000 years the Jewish people remained in exile and the nation did not exist. Then, just as the Bible foretold, they were reestablished after World War II and a bitter struggle with the Arab Palestinians. Millions have returned and rebuilt their country and in the Six-Day War in 1967 Jerusalem again became a united Jewish city. No other nation in history has managed so successfully to keep a culture, identity, and language intact over hundreds of years, let alone

against the genocidal hatred repeatedly encountered by the Jews. This Bible prediction is incredible evidence of the supernatural origin of the Scriptures.

*The Closing of the Golden Gate.* The Golden Gate is the eastern gate of Jerusalem, through which Christ made his triumphal entry on Palm Sunday before his crucifixion ( Matthew 21 ). Ezekiel 44:2 predicted that it would be closed one day, and not reopened until the Messiah returned: “The LORD said to me, ‘This gate is to remain shut. It must not be opened; no one may enter through it. It is to remain shut because the LORD , the God of Israel, has entered through it.’ ”

In 1543 Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent closed the gate and walled it up as Ezekiel had predicted. He had no idea he was fulfilling prophecy. He simply sealed it because the road leading to it was no longer used for traffic. It remains sealed to this day exactly as the Bible predicted, waiting to be reopened when the King returns.

*The Destruction of Tyre.* Tyre, an important sea port in the Eastern Mediterranean, was one of the great cities of the ancient world. It was a heavily fortified and flourishing city. Yet Ezekiel 26:3–14 predicted her doom and entire demolition hundreds of years in advance, declaring: “This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, O Tyre, and I will bring many nations against you, like the sea casting up its waves. They will destroy the walls of Tyre and pull down her towers; I will scrape away her rubble and make her a bare rock. Out in the sea she will become a place to spread fishing nets. . . . They will plunder your wealth and loot your merchandise; they will break down your walls and demolish your fine houses and throw your stones, timber and rubble into the sea. . . . I will make you a bare rock, and you will become a place to spread fishing nets. You will never be rebuilt, for I the LORD have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD .”

This prediction was partially fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city and left it in ruins. However, the stones, dust and timber were not thrown into the sea. Then Alexander the Great attacked the seemingly impregnable Island of Tyre by taking the stones, dust, and timber from the ruined mainland city and building a causeway to the Island. Not only has the city never been rebuilt; today it literally is used as a place “to spread fishing nets.”

*The Doom of Edom (Petra).* Unlike many Old Testament predictions of doom, Edom was not promised any restoration, only “perpetual desolation.” Jeremiah wrote in 49:16–17 : “ ‘The terror you inspire and the pride of your heart have deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rocks, who occupy the heights of the hill. Though you build your nest as high as the eagle’s, from there I will bring you down,’ declares the Lord. ‘Edom will become an object of horror; all who pass by will be appalled and will scoff because of all its wounds.’ ”

Given the virtually impregnable nature of the ancient city carved out of rock and protected by a narrow passage way, this was an incredible prediction. Yet, in A.D. 636 it was conquered by Muslims and stands deserted but for tourist and passers by.

*Flourishing of the Desert in Palestine.* For centuries Palestine lay wasted and desolate. These conditions extended throughout the land. But Ezekiel 36:33–35 predicted that “This is what the

Sovereign LORD says: On the day I cleanse you from all your sins, I will resettle your towns, and the ruins will be rebuilt. The desolate land will be cultivated instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass through it. They will say, 'This land that was laid waste has become like the garden of Eden; the cities that were lying in ruins, desolate and destroyed, are now fortified and inhabited.' ”

Today roads have been built, the land is being cultivated, and Israel's agriculture is flourishing. This renovation began before the turn of the twentieth century and continues a century later. Agricultural crops, including a large orange harvest, are part of the restoration—just as Ezekiel had predicted.

*Increase of Knowledge and Communication.* Another biblical prophecy being fulfilled after thousands of years is that of Daniel's forecast of the increase of knowledge and communication in the last days ( 12:4 ): God said: "But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge."

Never in the history of the world has there been such a burst in knowledge, transportation, and communication as in the late twentieth century. Jet aircraft propulsion and computer microcircuit have caused a transportation and information explosion.

*An Important Conclusion.* A fact often overlooked by critics is that only one real case of fulfilled prophecy would establish Scripture's supernatural origin (cf. Ramm, 86). Even if most biblical predictions could be explained naturally, even one clear case establishes the rest and confirms the prophetic event. Thus, if the critic is to make the case against prophecy, all instances must be naturally explainable.

*Objections to Predictive Prophecy.* Numerous arguments have been advanced to negate argument for the supernatural origin of biblical prophecy. The most important ones will be briefly considered:

*The Language of Prophecy Is Vague.* Critics insist that the language of prophecy is so indefinite that some sort of fulfillment is not difficult to find. Vague predictions are sharpened by their fulfillment.

Not all biblical prophecy is sharp. Some is vague and sharpened by its fulfillment. However, the critic must show that all prophecy is of this nature. But, as shown in the above examples, some prophecies are quite specific. The predictions of when Christ would die ( Dan. 9:24f .), in what city he would be born ( Micah 5:2 ), and how he would suffer and die ( Isaiah 53 ) are hardly vague.

*Other Religious Books Have Prophecies.* It is also protested that prophecies are not unique to the Bible, but are found in other holy books. Hence, it has no value in proving the truth of Christianity over other religions. This argument is similar to David Hume's argument that similar miraculous events are claimed by all religions. Hence, alleged miracles cannot be used to establish the truth of any one religion over another.

This objection is subject to the same criticism as Hume's ( *see* MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST ). First, it is not true that other religions have specific, repeated, and unfulfilling fulfillment of predictions many years in advance of contingent events over which the predictor had no control. These kinds of predictions are unique to the Bible. A discussion of prophecies made by Muhammad in the *Qur'an* , the Bible's closest competitor is found in the article MUHAMMAD, ALLEGED MIRACLES OF , and shows the disparity between the two books.

R. S. Foster says of other holy books and the writings of pagan religions: "No well-accredited prophecy is found in any other book or even oral tradition now extant, or that has ever been extant in the world. The oracles of heathenism are not to be classed as exceptions. There is not a single one of them that meets the tests required to prove supernatural agency, which every Scripture prophecy evinces" (Foster, 111). M'Ilvaine adds, "the history of pagan nations indeed abounds with stories of auguries and oracles and detached predictions. . . . But innumerable distance separates all the pretended oracles of paganism from the dignity of the prophecies of the Bible" (M'Ilvaine, 246-47). After making a careful examination of Hebrew and Pagan prophets, Calvin Stow concluded that there were no credible prophecies in other writings, but that each "is just what we would expect from men of this world, who have no faith in another" (cited in Newman, 17-18).

*Psychics Have Made Predictions Like the Bible's.* Contemporary critics of biblical prophecy nominate psychic predictions for equality with Scripture. However, there is another quantum leap between every psychic and the unerring prophets of Scripture ( *see* MIRACLES, MAGIC AND ). Indeed, one test of a prophet was whether they ever uttered predictions that did not come to pass ( Deut. 18:22 ). Those whose prophecies failed were stoned ( 18:20 )—a practice that no doubt gave pause to any who were not absolutely sure their messages were from God. Amid hundreds of prophecies, biblical prophets are not known to have made a single error. A study of prophecies made by psychics in 1975 and observed until 1981 showed that of the seventy-two predictions, only six were fulfilled in any way. Two of these were vague and two others were hardly surprising—the U.S. and Russia would remain leading powers and there would be no world wars. *The People's Almanac* (1976) did a study of the predictions of twenty-five top psychics. The results: Of the total seventy-two predictions, sixty-six (92 percent) were totally wrong (Kole, 69). An accuracy rate around 8 percent could easily be explained by chance and general knowledge of circumstances. In 1993 the psychics missed every major unexpected news story, including Michael Jordan's retirement, the Midwest flooding, and the Israel-PLO peace treaty. Among their false prophecies were that the Queen of England would become a nun, and Kathy Lee Gifford would replace Jay Leno as host of *The Tonight Show* ( *Charlotte Observer* 12/30/93).

Likewise, the highly reputed "predictions" of Nostradamus were not that amazing at all. Contrary to popular belief, he never predicted either the place or the year of a great California earthquake. Most of his "famous" predictions, such as the rise of Hitler, were vague. As other psychics, he was frequently wrong, a false prophet by biblical standards. More about Nostradamus is related in the article Nostradamus.

*When Were Biblical Prophecies Made?* According to this objection, all biblical prophecies with enough specificity to be unexplainable were made after the events. Daniel's amazing

statements were made quite late, and Isaiah's predictions about Cyrus were edited in after he arrived on the scene. They were recording history, not uttering prophecies. For discussions of the dating of these two books, see DANIEL, DATING OF , and ISAIAH, DEUTERO . Neither these nor other charges of post-dated prophecies have any foundation in fact. And many fulfillments have occurred long after the writings are known to have existed.

*Alleged Fulfillments Misinterpret the Texts.* Critics argue that the alleged fulfillment of Old Testament predictions are frequently misinterpretations of the Old Testament text. For example, Matthew says repeatedly "that it might be fulfilled" (cf. 1:22 ; 2:15 , 17 ). However, when the Old Testament passage is examined in context, it turns out that it was not a real prediction of the event to which Matthew applied it.

A case in point is Matthew 2:15 : "And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'Out of Egypt I called my son.' " When the Old Testament source passage, Hosea 11:1 , is examined, it is discovered that this is not a predictive prophecy about Jesus coming out of Egypt when he was a child but a statement about the children of Israel coming out of Egypt at the exodus.

It is readily admitted that many "prophecies" are not predictive and that the New Testament *applied* certain Old Testament passages to Christ that were not directly predictive of him. Many scholars speak of these Old Testament texts being "topologically fulfilled" in Christ, without being directly predictive. That is, some truth in the passage is appropriately applied to Christ, even though it was not directly predictive of him.

Others speak of a generic meaning in the Old Testament passage which applies both to its Old Testament reference (e.g., Israel) and the New Testament reference (e.g., Christ), both of whom were God's "son." Some scholars describe this as a double-reference view of prophecy. Whatever the case, these kinds of prophetic passages are not directly predictive and have no apologetic value. There are Old Testament passages that are not merely typological but are manifestly predictive, as was shown above. For example, the time and place of Christ's birth and death were told. What the critic cannot show is that all Old Testament "prophecies" are merely typological and nonpredictive.

*Jesus Manipulated Events to Fulfill Prophecy.* Another argument used by critics was popularized by Hugh Schonfield's *Passover Plot* . He argued that Jesus manipulated people and events so as to make it appear that he was the predicted Messiah. This interesting theory is destroyed by the facts. First, numerous miracles ( *see* MIRACLES IN THE BIBLE ) confirmed Jesus to be the Messiah. God would not confirm a fraud to appear to be his Son ( *see* MIRACLES, APOLOGETIC VALUE OF ). Second, there is no evidence that Jesus was a deceiver. To the contrary, his character is impeccable ( *see* CHRIST, UNIQUENESS OF ). Third, Jesus had no control over some predictions over which he had no control, such as, his ancestry ( Gen. 12:3 ; 49:10 ; 2 Sam. 7:12–16 ); birthplace ( Micah 5:2 ), time of death ( Dan. 9:24–27 ); and conditions of his death ( Isaiah 53 ). Fourth, in order to manipulate all the people (including his enemies) and even his disciples in order to make it appear that he was the promised Messiah, Jesus would have needed supernatural powers. But if he had such powers, he must have been the Messiah he claimed to be.

*Only the Successful Prophecies Are Recorded.* This objection affirms that Old Testament prophets were just as fallible as any other prophets. They got some right and some wrong. However, only the ones that succeeded were placed in the Bible. Thus, there is really nothing supernatural about them. After all, if only the successful predictions of Jean Dixon were collected into one volume long after her death, she too would look as supernatural as the biblical prophets.

This objection is based on fallacious premises. First of all, it is the fallacy of the Argument from Ignorance. It presents no evidence that there were other prophecies that failed. It merely *assumes* that there were. The burden of proof is to show that there were. Second, what it admits is sufficient to destroy its contention. If all the prophecies in the Bible are good ones, then we have numerous positive evidence, that the Bible is unfailing in its predictive power—a sure sign of their divine origin and far beyond the best psychics on their best days. Third, the argument is a false analogy, since in the case of the psychics we have numerous known examples of where they were wrong. In the case of the Bible we have none. It also assumes the prophet's contemporaries would have gone along with the misses and accepted the hits as from God. As noted, that is not how it worked.

*Some Biblical Predictions Were Not Fulfilled.* A number of critics have argued that not all the predictions of the Bible were fulfilled. Jonah's prediction that Nineveh would be destroyed in forty days was not ( Jonah 3:4 ). Christ did not return in one generation, as he said he would. Indeed, Christ has not returned and set up a literal kingdom as he promised ( Matthew 24–25 ). Neither has God destroyed the world by fire ( 2 Peter 3:10–13 ) and set up a perfect Paradise ( Revelation 21–22 ).

The alleged unfulfilled prophecies all fall into one of the following categories (see Payne):

Some were conditional. Jonah's warning to Nineveh was conditioned on their continuing rebellion. When they repented ( 3:5–9 ), God relented of the impending doom. As Jesus said to those of his day, "Unless you repent, you too will all perish" ( Luke 13:3 ). Likewise, there is an implied "unless you repent" in every prophet who warns of God's judgment. As Peter said, "The Lord . . . is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" ( 2 Peter 3:9 ). The same is true of Deuteronomy 11:25 where God said to Israel, "No man will be able to stand against you. The LORD your God, as he promised you, will put the terror and fear of you on the whole land, wherever you go." Yet they did suffer defeats, for example, at Ai ( Joshua 7 ). But when this promise is examined, it is clearly conditional—"if you carefully keep all these commandments" (vs. 22 ). When Israel did obey God, they were undefeatable, even against overwhelming odds (cf. Joshua 6 , 8–11 ).

Some simply have not yet been fulfilled. Most of these relate to Jesus' second coming which has not yet occurred. It is simply fallacious to claim the Bible has false prophecies because they have not yet all been fulfilled. As Peter warned ( 2 Peter 3:4–5 , 8–9 ):

First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."



. . . But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. . . . The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

The other alleged unfulfilled prophecies are not errors in the Bible but *errors in the critics'* understanding of the Bible. For example, Jesus did not say he would return to earth in the disciples' lifetime (in Matt. 24:34 ). He never said "I will return in your life time." What he said was, "This generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened." This phrase can mean one of several different things. To make their point, the critics must assume that it can mean only one thing.

Further, "generation" in Greek (*genea*) can mean "race." One interpretation of Jesus' statement is that the Jewish race would not pass away until all things are fulfilled. There were many promises to Israel, including the eternal inheritance of the land of Palestine ( Genesis 12 , 14 , 15 , 17 ) and the Davidic kingdom ( 2 Samuel 7 ), yet the nation was about to be destroyed by the Romans. Jesus could be promising God's preservation of the nation of Israel in order to fulfill his promises to them. Paul speaks of a future of the nation of Israel when they will be reinstated in God's covenantal promises ( Rom. 11:11–26 ). And Jesus' response to his disciples' last question implied that there would yet be a future kingdom for Israel, when they asked: "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" Rather than rebuking them for their misunderstanding, he replied that "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in his own authority" ( Acts 1:6–7 ).

What is more, "generation" could also refer to a generation in its commonly understood sense of the people who will be alive at the time indicated. In this case, "generation" would refer to the group of people who are alive when these things come to pass in the future. The generation alive when these things (the abomination of desolation [vs. 15 ], the great tribulation [vs. 21 ], and the sign of the Son of Man in heaven [vs. 30 ]) begin to come to pass will still be alive when these judgments are completed. Since it is commonly believed that the tribulation is a period of some seven years ( Dan. 9:27 ; cf. Rev. 11:2 ) at the end of the age, then Jesus would be saying that "this generation" alive at the beginning of the tribulation will still be alive at the end of it.

In any event, there is no reason to assume that Jesus made the obviously false assertion that the world would come to an end within the lifetime of his contemporaries.

**Summary.** The Bible is filled with specific predictive prophecies that have been literally fulfilled. The *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecies* calculated that 27 percent of the entire Bible contains predictive prophecy (Payne, 675). This is true of no other book in the world. And it is a sure sign of its divine origin.

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**Pseudepigrapha. See APOCRYPHA, OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS .**

**Punctuated Equilibria. See EVOLUTION, BIOLOGICAL ; MISSING LINKS .**