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God

INTRODUCTION

With the exception of certain mathematicians and physicists, almost all the authors of the great books are represented in this chapter. In sheer quantity of references, as well as in variety, it is the largest chapter. The reason is obvious. More consequences for thought and action follow from the affirmation or denial of God than from answering any other basic question. They follow for those who regard the question as answerable only by faith or only by reason, and even for those who insist upon suspending judgment entirely.

In addition to the primary question of God's existence, there are all the problems of the divine nature and of the relation of the world and man to the gods or God. The solutions of these problems cannot help influencing man's conception of the world in which he lives, the position that he occupies in it, and the life to which he is called.

The whole tenor of human life is certainly affected by whether men regard themselves as the supreme beings in the universe or acknowledge a superior—a superhuman being whom they conceive as an object of fear or love, a force to be defied or a Lord to be obeyed. Among those who acknowledge a divinity, it matters greatly whether the divine is represented merely by the concept of God—the object of philosophical speculation—or by the living God whom men worship in all the acts of piety which comprise the rituals of religion.

The most radical differences in man's conception of his own nature follow from the exclusion of divinity as its source or model on the one hand, and from the various ways in which man is seen as participating in divinity on the other. Many fundamental themes and issues are therefore common to this chapter and to the chapter on MAN.

SOME OF THE TOPICS IN this chapter are primarily philosophical. They belong to the subject matter of rational speculation or poetic imagination in all the great epochs of our culture, regardless of differences in religious belief. Other topics, however, are peculiarly restricted to matters of faith or religion. With respect to such matters, dogmatic differences, or differences in articles of faith, must be explicitly recognized.

The materials here assembled must therefore, in some instances, be divided according to their origin from pagan or from Jewish and Christian sources. Though no great books from the Muslim tradition are included in this set, the fact that Gibbon discusses the Muslim faith and compares its teachings with those of Judaism and Christianity explains the inclusion of Islam in one group of topics. That is the group which deals with the doctrines common to these three religions, as distinguished from the tenets on which Judaism and Christianity differ dogmatically. The existence of certain common beliefs in the western tradition enables us to begin, as it seems advisable to do, with the conception of God that is shared by the living religions of western culture today.

Calvin is, perhaps, more extreme than earlier Christian theologians in maintaining that the idea of God is implanted in the minds of all men everywhere. Early in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* he writes:

> That there exists in the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, some sense of Deity, we hold to be beyond dispute, since God himself, to prevent any man from pretending ignorance, has endued all

men with some idea of his Godhead, the memory of which he constantly renews and occasionally enlarges, that all to a man, being aware that there is a God, and that he is their Maker, may be condemned by their own conscience when they neither worship him nor consecrate their lives to his service. Certainly, if there is any quarter where it may be supposed that God is unknown, the most likely for such an instance to exist is among the dullest tribes farthest removed from civilisation. But, as a heathen [Cicero] tells us, there is no nation so barbarous, no race so brutish, as not to be imbued with the conviction that there is a God. Even those who, in other respects, seem to differ least from the lower animals, constantly retain some sense of religion; so thoroughly has this common conviction possessed the mind, so firmly is it stamped on the breasts of all men. Since, then, there never has been, from the very first, any quarter of the globe, any city, any household even, without religion, this amounts to a tacit confession, that a sense of Deity is inscribed on every heart.

IN OUR CIVILIZATION, what is denied by an atheist who says there is no God? Not idols or images which men may seek to placate. Not philosophical constructions or mythological figures. Certainly not the universe itself, either as an infinite and everlasting whole, or as finite and temporal, but equally mysterious in its ultimate incomprehensibility to the human mind. In our civilization the atheist denies the existence of a supernatural being, the object of religious belief and worship among Jews, Christians, and Muslims. He denies the single, personal God Who created the world out of nothing, Who transcends this created universe and sustains it by His immanent power, Who has made laws for the government of all things and cares for each particular by His providence, and Who created man in His own image, revealed Himself and His will to men, and metes out eternal rewards and punishments to the children of Adam, whom He also helps by His grace.

In this sense of atheism, Nietzsche is the outstanding modern atheist among the authors of the great books. He is the source of the proposition that God is dead. He discusses the Bible that Jews and Christians regard as God's self-revelation, by saying that if God is its author, "he seems incapable of making himself clearly understood." Nietzsche concedes that in the west, "the religious instinct is [still] in vigorous growth"; but adds that theism is rejected "with profound mistrust."

In the religious conception of God, one term must be saved from misinterpretation. The word "personal" should not be read with anthropomorphic imagery, though its meaning does entitle man as well as God to be called a person rather than a thing. "Although the term *person* is not found applied to God in Scripture, either in the Old or New Testament," Aquinas writes, "nevertheless what the term signifies is found to be affirmed of God in many places of Scripture; as that He is the supreme self-subsisting being, and the most perfectly intelligent being."

Boethius had defined a person as "an individual substance of a rational nature," or, as Locke later said, "a thinking intelligent being." In applying the term *person* to God, in the meaning which Boethius had given it, Aquinas comments on the difference in its meaning when it is applied to men. God can be said to have a *rational nature,* he writes, only "if reason be taken to mean, not discursive thought, but, in a general sense, an intelligent nature . . . God cannot be called an *individual*" in the sense in which physical things are, but only in the sense of uniqueness. "*Substance* can be applied to God [only] in the sense of signifying self-subsistence." Aquinas does not conclude from this that "person" is said improperly of God, but rather that when God is called "personal" the meaning is applied "in a more excellent way," for God does not *possess,* God *is,* an intelligence.

We shall use this idea of a personal God, the reality of which the contemporary atheist denies, in order to distinguish divergent conceptions in other doctrines. Then we shall examine more closely what is involved in this idea itself.

IN THE WESTERN tradition, the various pagan religions—reflected especially in the poems and histories of Greek and Roman antiquity—were all polytheistic. The number of their gods, Montaigne estimates, "amounts to thirty-six thousand." Augustine offers one explanation of why there were so many. "The ancients," he writes, "being deceived either by

their own conjectures or by demons, supposed that many gods must be invited to take an interest in human affairs, and assigned to each a separate function and a separate department—to one the body, to another the soul; and in the body itself, to one the head, to another the neck, and each of the other members to one of the gods; and in like manner, in the soul, to one god the natural capacity was assigned, to another education, to another anger, to another lust; and so the various affairs of life were assigned—cattle to one, corn to another, wine to another, oil to another, the woods to another, money to another, navigation to another, wars and victories to another, marriages to another, births and fecundity to another, and other things to other gods."

That polytheism, no less than monotheism, conceives the divine as personal, appears in Plato's *Apology*. When Socrates is accused of atheism, he asks whether the indictment means that he does not "acknowledge the gods which the state acknowledges, but some other new divinities or spiritual agencies in their stead." Meletus answers that he thinks Socrates is a complete atheist who recognizes no gods at all. To this Socrates replies by suggesting that his enemies must be confusing him with Anaxagoras, who had blasphemed against Apollo by calling the sun "a red hot stone." As for himself, he offers evidence to show that he believes in divine or spiritual agencies "new or old, no matter"; and "if I believe in divine beings," he asks, "how can I help believing in spirits or demigods?"

Like the one God of Judaism and Christianity, the many gods of pagan antiquity have immortal life, but they are not without origin. Zeus is the son of Kronos, and he has many offspring, both gods and demigods, who perform different functions and are not of equal station in the Olympian hierarchy. The realm of the divine includes such figures as the Titans and the Cyclops, who are neither gods nor men; and demigods, like Heracles, who are offspring of divine and human mating. These deities exercise superhuman powers, but none is completely omnipotent or omniscient, not even Kronos or Zeus who cannot escape the decrees of Fate. Moreover, with the exception, perhaps, of that of Zeus, the power of one divinity is often challenged and thwarted by another. This aspect of polytheism and its bearing on the intervention of the gods in the affairs of men are discussed in the chapter on FATE.

The extent to which we think of the pagans as idolatrous because they made graven images of their gods in human form, or regard the pagan conceptions of the gods as anthropomorphic, depends on our interpretation of religious symbolism. Plato for one thinks that many of the poets' descriptions of the gods and their activities should be dismissed as unworthy, precisely because they debase the gods to the human level.

According to Gibbon, a Greek or Roman philosopher "who considered the system of polytheism as a composition of human fraud and error, could disguise a smile of contempt under the mask of devotion, without apprehending that either the mockery or the compliance would expose him to the resentment of any invisible, or, as he conceived them, imaginary powers." But the early Christians, he points out, saw the many gods of antiquity "in a much more odious and formidable light" and held them to be "the authors, the patrons, and the objects of idolatry."

Those who take symbols with flat literalism might also attack Christianity as anthropomorphic and idolatrous; in fact they have. The defense of Christianity against this charge does not avail in the case of Roman emperor-worship, which consisted not in the humanization of the divine for the sake of symbolic representation, but in the deification of the merely human for political purposes.

Although there are radical differences, there are also certain fundamental agreements between paganism and Judeo-Christianity regarding the nature of the divine. As we have already noted, the deities are conceived personally, not in terms of impersonal, brute forces. Conceived as beings with intelligence and will, the gods concern themselves with earthly society; they aid or oppose man's plans and efforts; they reward men for fidelity and virtue or punish them for impiety and sin.

Despite all other differences between pa-

ganism and Christianity, these agreements are substantial enough to provide many common threads of theological speculation throughout our tradition, especially with regard to the abiding practical problems of how man shall view himself and his destiny in relation to the divine or the supernatural. We have therefore attempted to place passages from the great books of pagan antiquity under every heading except those which are specifically restricted to the dogmas of Judaism and Christianity—even under headings which are worded monotheistically, since even here there is continuity of thought and expression from Homer and Virgil to Dante and Milton; from Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus to Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, Erasmus, Descartes, and Kant; from Lucretius to Newton and Darwin.

THE DOCTRINES known as deism and pantheism, like unqualified atheism, are as much opposed to the religious beliefs of polytheism as to the faith of Judaism and Christianity.

Of these two, pantheism is much nearer atheism, for it denies the existence of a transcendent supernatural being or beings. God is Nature. God is immanent in the world and, in the extreme form of pantheism, not transcendent in any way. Certain historic doctrines which are often regarded as forms or kinds of pantheism seem to be less extreme than this, for they do not conceive the physical universe as exhausting the infinite being of God. The world, for all its vastness and variety, may only represent an aspect of the divine nature.

According to Spinoza, the attributes of extension and thought, in terms of which we understand the world or nature as being of the divine substance, are merely those aspects of God which are known to us, for the divine substance consists "of infinite attributes, each one of which expresses eternal and infinite essence." In the conception of Plotinus, the whole world represents only a partial emanation from the divine source. Yet thinkers like Plotinus and Spinoza so conceive the relation of the world to God that—as in the strictest pantheism—the religious doctrines of creation, providence, and salvation are either rejected or profoundly altered.

In the ancient world the teaching of the Stoic philosophers expresses a kind of pantheism. "There is one universe made up of all things," Marcus Aurelius writes, "and one God who pervades all things, and one substance, and one law, one common reason in all intelligent animals, and one truth." He speaks of the "common nature," which is apparently divine, and of which "every particular nature is a part, as the nature of the leaf is a part of the nature of the plant." But, although he stresses the oneness and divinity of all things, Aurelius also at times uses language which seems to refer to a god who dwells apart from as well as in the world, as, for example, when he debates whether the gods have any concern with human affairs.

Another type of ancient pantheism appears in the thought of Plotinus, for whom all things have being only insofar as they participate in, even as they emanate from, the power of The One, or Primal Source. "God is sovranly present through all," he writes. "We cannot think of something of God here and something else there, nor of all of God gathered at some one spot: there is an instantaneous presence everywhere, nothing containing and nothing left void, everything therefore fully held by the divine." The relation between The One and every other thing is compared to the number series. "Just as there is, primarily or secondarily, some form or idea from the monad in each of the successive numbers—the latter still participating, though unequally, in the unit—so the series of beings following upon The First bear, each, some form or idea derived from that source. In Number the participation establishes Quantity; in the realm of Being, the trace of The One establishes reality: existence is a trace of The One."

But although The One is in all things, and all things depend upon it for their very existence, The One itself has no need of them. It is in this sense that Plotinus says that "The One is all things and no one of them . . . Holding all—though itself nowhere held—it is omnipresent, for where its presence failed something would elude its hold. At the same time, in the sense that it is nowhere held, it is not present: thus it is both present and not present; not pres-

ent as not being circumscribed by anything; yet as being utterly unattached, not inhibited from presence at any point." Thus all things partake of The One in absolute dependence. But The One, *considered in itself,* is absolutely transcendent. Plotinus even denies it the name of God or Good or Being, saying it is beyond these.

Whether or not Spinoza is a pantheist, has long been debated by his commentators. An explicit, even an extreme form of pantheism would seem to be expressed in the proposition that "whatever is, is in God, and nothing can be or be conceived without God." But while the one and only substance which exists is at once nature and God, Spinoza identifies God only with the nature he calls "*natura naturans.*" God is not reduced to the nature that falls within man's limited experience or understanding—the nature he calls "*natura naturata.*"

"By *natura naturans,*" he explains, "we are to understand that which is in itself and is conceived through itself, or those attributes of substance which express eternal and infinite essence, that is to say, God in so far as He is considered as a free cause. But by *natura naturata* I understand everything which follows from the necessity of the nature of God, or of any one of God's attributes, that is to say, all the modes of God's attributes in so far as they are considered as things which are in God and which without God can neither be nor can be conceived."

God is the infinite and eternal substance of all finite existences, an absolute and unchanging *one* underlying the finite modes in which it variably manifests itself. Though God for Spinoza is transcendent in the sense of vastly exceeding the world known to man, in no sense does God exist apart from the whole of nature. Spinoza's view thus sharply departs from that of an orthodox Jewish or Christian theologian. When the latter says that God is transcendent, he means that God exists apart, infinitely removed from the whole created universe. When the latter speaks of God as being immanent in that universe, he carefully specifies that it is not by His substance, but by the power of His action and knowledge. But Spinoza calls God "the immanent, and not the transitive, cause of all things," for the reason that "outside God there can be no substance, that is to say, outside Him nothing can exist which is in itself."

These divergent conceptions of God's immanence and transcendence—so relevant to the question of who is or is not a pantheist—are further discussed in the chapters on NATURE and WORLD.

UNLIKE PANTHEISM, deism affirms gods or a God, personal intelligences existing apart from this world; but, as in the teaching of Lucretius, deism sometimes goes to the extreme of believing in absentee gods who neither intervene in the order of nature nor concern themselves with human affairs.

"The gods," writes Lucretius,

Must, by their nature, take delight in peace,
Forever calm, serene, forever far
From our affairs, beyond all pain, beyond
All danger, in their own resources strong,
Having no need of us at all, above
Wrath or propitiation.

Such gods neither create the world nor govern it; above all they do not reward or punish man, and so they do not have to be feared or propitiated. According to Lucretius, we should not be

So foolish as to say that for men's sake
The gods were more than willing to prepare
The gorgeous structure of the universe,
Which therefore, as the work of gods, must be
Considered laudable, and as their work
Immortal also—what a sinful thing
(We think) for such a world, established by
The ancient planning of the gods for men,
To be subverted, ever, from its base
By any violence, subject to storms
Of sacrilegious verbiage, overthrown,
Brought low, brought down, destroyed, annihilated,
And so forth, and so on. All nonsense . . .
What could the blessèd, the immortal, gain
From any such munificence as ours? . . .

Divinity seems to have moral significance to Lucretius only insofar as the gods exemplify the happy life; and religion is immoral because its superstitions concerning divine motives and meddling make men servile and miserable.

When the deism of Lucretius is contrasted with the more familiar modern forms of that

doctrine, the influence of Christianity is seen. The modern deist affirms the supremacy of one God, the infinite and eternal Creator of this world, Whose laws are the laws of nature which are laid down from the beginning and which govern all created things. Rousseau speaks of this as "the religion of man" and even identifies it with Christianity—"not the Christianity of today, but that of the Gospel, which is entirely different." He describes this religion as that "which has neither temples, nor altars, nor rites, and is confined to the purely internal cult of the supreme God and the eternal obligations of morality."

Not all deists, certainly not those of the 17th and early 18th centuries, go to the Lucretian extreme of picturing an uninterested and morally neutral God. Many of them believe in an afterlife. But modern deism did tend toward this extreme. By Kant's time it had even ceased to look upon God as a personal intelligence. Kant therefore takes great pains to distinguish deism from theism.

The deist, according to Kant, "admits that we can cognize by pure reason alone the existence of a supreme being, but at the same time maintains that our conception of this being is purely transcendental, and that all we can say of it is, that it possesses all reality, without being able to define it more closely." The theist, on the other hand, "asserts that reason is capable of presenting us, from the analogy with nature, with a more definite conception of this being, and that its operations, as the cause of all things, are the results of intelligence and free will."

Kant even maintains that "we might, in strict rigor, deny to the deist any belief in God at all, and regard him merely as a maintainer of the existence of a primal being or thing—the supreme cause of all other things." In any case, deism seems to be an essentially un-Jewish and un-Christian or anti-Jewish and anti-Christian doctrine, for it denies God's supernatural revelation of Himself; it denies miracles and every other manifestation of supernatural agency in the course of nature or the life of man; it denies the efficacy of prayer and sacrament. In short, it rejects the institutions and practices, as well as the faith and hope, of any religion which claims supernatural foundation and supernatural warrant for its dogmas and rituals. Deism, which "consists simply in the worship of a God considered as great, powerful, and eternal," is, in Pascal's opinion, "almost as far removed from the Christian religion as atheism, which is its exact opposite." Like Pascal, Calvin asks: "What avails it, in short, to know a God with whom we have nothing to do?"

What Pascal and Kant call "deism" and Rousseau "the religion of man," others like Hume call "natural religion." His *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* provide a classic statement of rationalism, which is the same as naturalism, in religion; though, as the chapter on RELIGION indicates, it may be questioned whether the word "religion" can be meaningfully used for a doctrine which claims no knowledge beyond that of the philosopher, and no guidance for human life beyond the precepts of the moralist.

THE SYSTEMATIC exposition of man's knowledge of God is the science of theology. In addition to considering all things—the whole world and human life—in relation to God, theology treats especially of God's existence, essence, and attributes. Throughout the range of its subject matter and problems, theology may be of two sorts: it may be either natural knowledge, obtained by ordinary processes of observation and reasoning; or knowledge which is supernatural in the sense of being based on divine revelation. This is the traditional distinction between natural and sacred or, as it is sometimes called, dogmatic theology. The one belongs to the domain of reason; it is the work of the philosopher. The other belongs to the domain of faith, and is the work of the theologian who seeks to understand his faith.

These distinctions are discussed in the chapters on THEOLOGY, METAPHYSICS, and WISDOM. Here we are concerned with different attitudes toward the problem of man's knowledge of God. The deist, as we have seen, rejects supernatural revelation and faith; theology, like religion, is held to be entirely natural, a work of reason. The agnostic makes the opposite denial. He denies that anything su-

pernatural can be known by reason. It cannot be proved or, for that matter, disproved. The evidences of nature and the light of reason do not permit valid inferences or arguments concerning God or creation, providence or immortality.

It is usually with respect to God's existence that the agnostic most emphatically declares reason's incompetence to demonstrate. He often accompanies the declaration with elaborate criticisms of the arguments which may be offered by others. This is not always the case, however. For example, the great Jewish theologian Moses Maimonides thinks that God's existence can be proved by reason entirely apart from faith; but with regard to the essence or attributes of God, his position seems to be one which might be called agnostic.

When men "ascribe essential attributes to God," Maimonides declares, "these so-called essential attributes should not have any similarity to the attributes of other things, just as there is no similarity between the essence of God and that of other beings." Since the meaning of such positive attributes as *good* or *wise* is derived from our knowledge of things, they do not provide us with any knowledge of God's essence, for no comparison obtains between things and God. Hence Maimonides asserts that "the negative attributes of God are the true attributes." They tell us not what God is, but what God is not.

Even though Maimonides holds that "existence and essence are perfectly identical" in God, he also insists that "we comprehend only the fact that He exists, not His essence . . . All we understand," he goes on to say, in addition to "the fact that He exists," is the fact that "He is a Being to whom none of his creatures is similar." This fact is confirmed in all the negative attributes such as eternal (meaning nontemporal), infinite, or incorporeal; even as it is falsified by all the positive attributes, expressed by such names as "good" or "living" or "knowing," insofar as they imply a comparison between God and creatures. When they cannot be interpreted negatively, they can be tolerated as metaphors, but they must not be taken as expressing an understanding "of the true essence of God," concerning which Maimonides maintains, "there is no possibility of obtaining a knowledge."

Aquinas takes issue with such agnosticism about the divine nature in his discussion of the names of God. Although he says that "we cannot know what God is, but rather what He is not," Aquinas disagrees with Maimonides that all names which express some knowledge of God's essence must be interpreted negatively or treated as metaphors. He denies that "when we say God lives, we mean merely that God is not like an inanimate thing" as "was taught by Rabbi Moses." On the contrary, he holds that "these names signify the divine substance . . . although they fall short of representing Him . . . For these names express God, so far as our intellects know Him. Now since our intellect knows God from creatures, it knows Him as far as creatures represent Him." Therefore, Aquinas concludes, "when we say, *God is good,* the meaning is not, *God is the cause of goodness,* or, *God is not evil:* but the meaning is, *Whatever good we attribute to creatures pre-exists in God,* and in a higher way."

If Maimonides were right that the names which are said positively of both God and creatures are "applied . . . in a purely equivocal sense" (*e.g.,* having literal meaning when said of creatures but being only metaphoric when said of God), then, according to Aquinas, it would follow that "from creatures nothing at all could be known or demonstrated about God." Those who say, on the other hand, that "the things attributed to God and creatures are univocal" (*i.e.,* are said in exactly the same sense), claim to comprehend more than man can know of the divine essence. When the term *wise* "is applied to God," Aquinas writes, "it leaves the thing signified as uncomprehended and as exceeding the signification of the name." Aquinas does not go as far as Erasmus in saying that only God is wise. Instead he declares that "this term *wise* is not applied in the same way to God and to man. The same applies to other terms. Hence no name is predicated univocally of God and creatures" but rather all positive names "are said of God and creatures in an analogous sense."

A further discussion of the names of God

will be found in the chapter on SIGN AND SYMBOL; and the consideration of the analogical, the univocal, and the equivocal will also be found there as well as in the chapter on SAME AND OTHER. We have dealt with these matters here only for the sake of describing that degree of agnosticism, according to which Maimonides, by contrast with Aquinas, is an agnostic. But agnosticism usually goes further and denies that man can have any natural knowledge of God—either of His existence or of His essence.

So understood, agnosticism need not be incompatible with religion, unless a given religion holds, as an article of faith itself, that the existence of God can be *proved by reason.* In fact, the agnostic may be a religious man who accepts divine revelation and regards faith as divinely inspired.

Montaigne's *Apology for Raymond Sebond* illustrates this position. Sebond had written a treatise on natural theology, which to Montaigne seems "bold and courageous, for he undertakes by human and natural reasons to establish and prove against the atheists all the articles of the Christian religion." Though Montaigne says of Sebond's work, "I do not think it is possible to do better in that argument," and though he entertains the conjecture that it may have been "from Saint Thomas Aquinas; for in truth that mind, full of infinite erudition and admirable subtlety, was alone capable of such ideas"; nevertheless, Montaigne does "not think that purely human means are at all capable of this."

According to Montaigne, "it is faith alone that embraces vividly and surely the high mysteries of our religion." In his view, reason by itself is incapable of proving *anything,* much less *anything about God.* "Our human reasons and arguments," he writes, are "the heavy and barren matter; the grace of God is their form; it is that which gives them shape and value." The light and value in Sebond's arguments come from the fact that faith supervenes "to color and illumine" them, and "makes them firm and solid."

Such arguments, Montaigne says, may serve as "a first guide to an apprentice" and may even "make him capable of the grace of God"; but for himself, skeptical of all arguments, the way of faith alone can provide "a certain constancy of opinions . . . Thus I have, by the grace of God, kept myself intact, without agitation or disturbance of conscience, in the ancient beliefs of our religion, in the midst of so many sects and divisions that our century has produced."

Kierkegaard's view of religion also precludes reason. For him, faith is the realm of the absurd, a paradox that says "the individual is higher than the universal" and thereby allows a more personal relationship with God. "The paradox can also be expressed by saying that there is an absolute duty toward God; for in this relationship of duty the individual as an individual stands related absolutely to the absolute."

Far from being religious as Montaigne and Kierkegaard were, the agnostic may be a skeptic about faith as well as reason. He may look upon faith either as superstition or as the exercise of the will to believe with regard to the unknowable and the unintelligible—almost wishful thinking. He may even go so far as to treat religion as if it were pathological.

Freud, for example, regards religion as an illusion to be explained in terms of man's need to create gods in his own image—to find a surrogate for the father, on whom his infantile dependence can be projected. Freud finds confirmation for this in the fact that in the religions of the west, God "is openly called Father. Psychoanalysis," he goes on, "concludes that he really is the father, clothed in the grandeur in which he once appeared to the small child."

Though the grown man "has long ago realized that his father is a being with strictly limited powers and by no means endowed with every desirable attribute," Freud thinks that he nevertheless "looks back to the memory-image of the overrated father of his childhood, exalts it into a Deity, and brings it into the present and into reality. The emotional strength of this memory-image and the lasting nature of his need for protection"—for, as Freud explains, "in relation to the external world he is still a child"—"are the two supports of his belief in God." In this sense, Freud might agree with

Voltaire's remark that "If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him."

AT THE OTHER extreme from agnosticism is, as the name implies, gnosticism. Like deism, it dispenses with faith, but it exceeds traditional deism in the claims it makes for reason's power to penetrate the divine mysteries. Between exclusive reliance on faith and an exaltation of reason to the point where there is no need for God to reveal anything, a middle ground is held by those who acknowledge the contributions of both faith and reason. Those who try to harmonize the two usually distinguish between the spheres proper to each, and formulate some principle according to which they are related to each other in an orderly fashion.

Whatever is purely a matter of faith, Aquinas says, is assented to solely because "it is revealed by God." The articles of Christian faith are typified by "the Trinity of Persons in Almighty God, the mystery of Christ's Incarnation, and the like." With regard to such matters, which Aquinas thinks belong primarily to faith, some auxiliary use can be made of reason, "not, indeed, to prove faith," he explains, but to make clear the things that follow from it. Certain matters, such as God's existence and attributes, he classifies as belonging to "the preambles to faith" because they fall, in his view, within reason's power to demonstrate, unaided by faith. Yet even here he does not assign the affirmation of the truth to reason alone.

Just as "it was necessary for the salvation of man that certain truths which exceed human reason should be made known to him by divine revelation," so even with regard to "those truths about God which human reason can investigate," Aquinas thinks it was also necessary that "man be taught by a divine revelation. For the truth about God, such as reason can know it, would only be known by a few, and that after a long time, and with the admixture of many errors." Because "human reason is very deficient in things concerning God"—"a sign of which is that philosophers . . . have fallen into many errors and have disagreed among themselves"—men would have no knowledge of God "free from doubt and uncertainty" unless all divine truths were "delivered to them by the way of faith, being told to them, as it were, by God Himself Who cannot lie."

In different ways faith supports reason and reason helps faith. On matters which belong to both reason and faith, faith provides a greater certitude. On matters strictly of faith, reason provides some understanding, however remote and inadequate, of the mysteries of religion. "The use of human reason in religion," Francis Bacon writes, "is of two sorts: the former, in the conception and apprehension of the mysteries of God to us revealed; the other, in the inferring and deriving of doctrine and direction thereupon . . . In the former we see God vouchsafeth to descend to our capacity, in the expressing of his mysteries in sort as may be sensible unto us; and doth grift his revelations and holy doctrine upon the notions of our reason and applieth his inspiration to open our understanding, as the form of the key to the ward of the lock. For the latter, there is allowed us an use of reason and argument, secondary and respective, although not original and absolute. For after the articles and principles of religion are placed and exempted from examination of reason, it is then permitted unto us to make derivations and inferences from and according to the analogy of them, for our better direction."

In addition to all discursive knowledge of God, whether it be by faith or by reason, there is the totally incommunicable and intimate acquaintance with the supernatural which the mystic claims for his vision in moments of religious ecstasy or which is promised to the blessed as their heavenly beatitude. When, at the culmination of *Paradiso,* Dante sees God, "my vision," he declares, "was greater than speech can show."

Knowing that his speech will "fall more short . . . than that of an infant who still bathes his tongue at the breast," he tries nevertheless to communicate in words "a single spark of Thy glory for the folk to come." In the presence of God, he writes, his mind, "all rapt, was gazing, fixed, motionless and intent, ever enkindled by its gazing. In that Light one becomes such that it is impossible he should ever consent to turn himself from it for other

sight; for the good, which is the object of the will, is all gathered in it, and outside of it that is defective which is perfect there."

THE ARGUMENTS FOR the existence of the gods or of one God constitute one of the greatest attempts of the human mind to go beyond the sensible or phenomenal world of experience. The attempt has been made in every age and by minds of quite different persuasions in religious belief or philosophical outlook. It is possible, nevertheless, to classify the arguments into two or three main types.

Within the domain of pure or speculative reason there seem to be two ways of approaching the problem of God's existence.

One is in terms of the conception of God as an infinite, perfect, and necessary being, whose nonexistence is therefore inconceivable. According to Anselm, God cannot be conceived in any other way than as "a being than which nothing greater can be conceived." But since "the fool hath said in his heart, there is no God," how shall he be made to know that the God, which exists in his understanding at the moment when he denies His real existence, also really exists outside his understanding? "For it is one thing for an object to be in the understanding, and another to understand that the object exists." Hence Anselm considers the consequence of supposing that God exists in the understanding alone.

"If that, than which nothing greater can be conceived," he argues, "exists in the understanding alone, the very being, than which nothing greater can be conceived, is one than which a greater can be conceived"—for to exist in reality as well as in the understanding is to have *more* being. But this leads to "an irreconcilable contradiction," since "if that, than which nothing greater can be conceived, can be conceived not to exist, it is not that than which nothing greater can be conceived." Therefore Anselm concludes that a being "than which nothing greater can be conceived" must exist "both in the understanding and reality."

Anselm summarizes his argument by saying that "no one who understands what God is, can conceive that God does not exist." Since the nonexistence of God is inconceivable, God must exist. Descartes gives the same argument a slightly different statement in terms of the inseparability of God's essence from God's existence.

"Being accustomed," he writes, "in all other things to make a distinction between existence and essence, I easily persuade myself that the existence can be separated from the essence of God, and that we can thus conceive God as not actually existing. But, nevertheless, when I think of it with more attention, I clearly see that existence can no more be separated from the essence of God than can its having its three angles equal to two right angles be separated from the essence of a rectilinear triangle, or the idea of a mountain from the idea of a valley; and so there is not any less repugnance to our conceiving a God (that is, a Being supremely perfect) to whom existence is lacking (that is to say, to whom a certain perfection is lacking), than to conceive of a mountain which has no valley."

Spinoza defines a "cause of itself" as "that whose essence involves existence; or that whose nature cannot be conceived unless existing." Since in his conception of substance, substance is necessarily infinite, it is also cause of itself. Hence he concludes that "God or substance . . . necessarily exists"; for "if this be denied, conceive if it be possible that God does not exist. Then it follows that His essence does not involve existence. But this is absurd. Therefore God necessarily exists."

This mode of argument, which takes still other forms, is traditionally called the "ontological argument" or the "*a priori* proof" of God's existence. Its critics sometimes deny that it is an argument or proof in any sense at all. Aquinas, for example, interprets Anselm not as providing God's existence, but rather as asserting that God's existence is self-evident. Those who say that the proposition "God does not exist" is self-contradictory, are saying that the opposite proposition "God exists" must be self-evident.

Aquinas does not deny that the proposition "God exists" is intrinsically self-evident. On this point he goes further than Anselm, Descartes, and Spinoza. Where they say God's

essence *involves* His existence, Aquinas asserts that in God essence and existence are *identical.* When Moses asks God, "If they should say to me, What is His name? what shall I say to them?" the Lord says unto Moses, "I AM THAT I AM," and adds, "Say to the children of Israel: HE WHO IS hath sent me to you." This name—HE WHO IS—Aquinas holds to be "the most proper name of God" because it signifies that "the being of God is His very essence."

For this reason he thinks that the proposition "God exists" is self-evident in itself. Its subject and predicate are immediately related. Nevertheless, Aquinas holds that the proposition is not self-evident to us "because we do not know the essence of God." Even supposing, he writes, "that everyone understands this name *God* as signifying something than which nothing greater can be thought, nevertheless, it does not therefore follow that he understands that what the name signifies exists actually, but only that it exists mentally. Nor can it be argued that it actually exists, unless it be admitted that there actually exists something than which nothing greater can be thought; and this precisely is not admitted by those who hold that God does not exist."

The writer of "The First Set of Objections" to Descartes's *Meditations on First Philosophy* maintains that the criticism advanced by Aquinas applies to Descartes as well as to Anselm. Whether stated in terms of the conception of an absolutely perfect being or in terms of essence and existence, the argument is invalid, he thinks, which asserts that God actually exists because His nonexistence is inconceivable. Kant's later criticism of the ontological argument takes a similar course. A proposition may be logically necessary without being true in fact.

"The conception of an absolutely necessary being," he writes, "is a mere idea, the objective reality of which is far from being established by the mere fact that it is a need of reason . . . The unconditioned necessity of a judgment does not form the absolute necessity of a thing." From the fact that "existence belongs necessarily to the object of the conception," we cannot conclude that "the existence of the thing . . . is therefore absolutely necessary—merely," Kant says, "because its existence has been cogitated in the conception . . . Whatever be the content of our conception of an object, it is necessary to go beyond it, if we wish to predicate existence of the object . . . The celebrated ontological or Cartesian argument for the existence of a supreme being is therefore insufficient."

THE SECOND MAIN approach to the problem of God's existence lies in the sort of proof which, Locke thinks, "our own existence and the sensible parts of the universe offer so clearly and cogently to our thoughts." He refrains from criticizing the argument from "the *idea* of a most perfect being," but he does insist that we should not "take some men's having that idea of God in their minds . . . for the only proof of a Deity." He for one prefers to follow the counsel of Saint Paul, that "the invisible things of God are clearly seen from the creation of the world, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead."

We have, according to Locke, an intuitive knowledge of our own existence. We know, he says, that "nonentity cannot produce any real being"; and so "from the consideration of ourselves, and what we infallibly find in our constitution, our reason leads us to the knowledge of this certain and evident truth—*That there is an eternal, most powerful, and most knowing Being.*"

Without labeling it a proof of God's existence, Augustine in his *Confessions* presents a similar argument—from the visible creation. "Earth and the heavens," he says, "are before our eyes. The very fact that they are there proclaims that they were created, for they are subject to change and variation . . . Earth and the heavens also proclaim that they did not create themselves. 'We exist,' they tell us, 'because we were made. And this is proof that we did not make ourselves. For to make ourselves, we should have had to exist before our existence began' . . . It was you, then, O Lord, who made them."

This second approach to the existence of God by reasoning from the facts of experi-

ence or the evidences of nature is called the "*a posteriori* proof." In the tradition of the great books, it has been formulated in many different ways. What is common to all of them is the principle of causality, in terms of which the known existence of certain effects is made the basis for inferring the existence of a unique cause—a first cause, a highest cause, an uncaused cause.

Aristotle, for example, in the last book of his *Physics,* argues from the fact of motion or change to the existence of an unmoved mover. He sums up his elaborate reasoning on this point in the following statement. "We established the fact that everything that is in motion is moved by something, and that the movent [moving cause] is either unmoved or in motion, and that, if it is in motion, it is moved either by itself or by something else and so on throughout the series: and so we proceeded to the position that the first principle that directly causes things that are in motion to be moved is that which moves itself, and the first principle of the whole series is the unmoved." Jumping from the 4th century B.C. to the 20th century, we find Whitehead saying that "in the place of Aristotle's God as Prime Mover, we require God as the Principle of Concretion." Nothing could be more evocative of Whitehead's anti-Aristotelianism.

Aristotle's argument, unlike that of Augustine or Locke, does not presuppose the creation of the world, at least not in the sense of the world's having a beginning. On the contrary, he holds the world and its motions to be as eternal as their unmoved mover. "It is impossible," he writes in the *Metaphysics,* "that movement should either have come into being or cease to be." Precisely because he thinks the world's motions are eternal, Aristotle holds that the prime mover, in addition to being everlasting, must be immutable. This for him means "a principle whose very essence is actuality." Only a substance without any potency, only one which is *purely actual,* can be an absolutely immutable, eternal being.

Whatever has any potentiality in its nature is capable of not existing. If everything were of this sort, nothing that now is "need be, for it is possible for all things to be capable of existing, but not yet to exist." Hence, in still another way, Aristotle seems to reach the conclusion that a purely actual being must exist; and, furthermore, he seems to identify this being with a living and thinking God. "Life also belongs to God," he writes; "for the actuality of thought is life, and God is that actuality; and God's self-dependent actuality is life most good and eternal."

Where Aristotle argues from motion and potentiality to a prime mover and a pure actuality, Newton gives the *a posteriori* proof another statement by arguing from the design of the universe to God as its designer or architect. "The most wise and excellent contrivances of things, and final causes" seem to him the best way of knowing God. "Blind metaphysical necessity, which is certainly the same always and everywhere, could produce no variety in things. All that diversity of natural things which we find suited to different times and places could arise from nothing but the ideas and will of a Being necessarily existing."

In similar fashion Berkeley maintains that "if we attentively consider the constant regularity, order, and concatenation of natural things, the surprising magnificence, beauty, and perfection of the larger, and the exquisite contrivance of the smaller parts of the creation, together with the exact harmony and correspondence of the whole, but, above all, the never enough admired laws of pain and pleasure, and the instincts or natural inclinations, appetites, and passions of animals; I say if we consider all these things, and at the same time attend to the meaning and import of the attributes, one, eternal, infinitely wise, good, and perfect, we shall clearly perceive that they belong to the . . . Spirit, who 'works all in all,' and 'by whom all things consist.' " This seems to him so certain that he adds, "we may even assert that the existence of God is far more evidently perceived than the existence of men."

But, according to Berkeley, all the visible things of nature exist only as ideas in our minds, ideas which, unlike our own memories or imaginations, we do not ourselves produce. "Everything we see, hear, feel, or anywise perceive by sense," he writes, must have some other cause than our own will, and is therefore

"a sign or effect of the power of God." To the "unthinking herd" who claim that "they cannot *see* God," Berkeley replies that "God . . . is intimately present to our minds, producing in them all that variety of ideas or sensations which continually affect us."

The existence of any idea in us is for Berkeley ground for asserting God's existence and power as its cause. But for Descartes *one* idea alone becomes the basis of such an inference. He supplements his *a priori* or ontological argument with what he calls an "*a posteriori* demonstration of God's existence from the mere fact that the idea of God exists in us."

That he is himself imperfect, Descartes knows from the fact that he doubts. Even when doubting leads to knowledge, his knowledge is imperfect, "an infallible token" of which, he says, is the fact that "my knowledge increases little by little." But the idea which he has of God, he declares, is that of an absolutely perfect being, "in whom there is nothing merely potential, but in whom all is present really and actually." On the principle that there cannot be more reality or perfection in the effect than in the cause, Descartes concludes that his own imperfect mind cannot be the cause of the idea of a perfect being. "The idea that I possess of a being more perfect than I," he writes, "must necessarily have been placed in me by a being which is really more perfect."

The radical imperfection of man, and indeed of all creation, offers Augustine still another proof for God's existence, which he attributes to the "Platonists." "They have seen," he writes, "that whatever is changeable is not the most high God, and therefore they have transcended every soul and all changeable spirits in seeking the supreme. They have seen also that, in every changeable thing, the form which makes it that which it is, whatever be its mode or nature, can only *be* through Him who truly *is*, because He is unchangeable. And therefore, whether we consider the whole body of the world, its figure, qualities, and orderly movement, and also all the bodies which are in it; or whether we consider all life, either that which nourishes and maintains, as the life of trees; or that which, besides this, has also sensation, as the life of beasts; or that which adds to all these intelligence, as the life of man; or that which does not need the support of nutriment, but only maintains, feels, understands, as the life of angels—all can only *be* through Him who absolutely *is*. For to Him it is not one thing to *be*, and another to live, as though He could *be*, not living; nor is it to Him one thing to live, and another to understand, as though He could live, not understanding; nor is it to Him one thing to understand, another to be blessed, as though He could understand and not be blessed. But to Him to live, to understand, to be blessed, are to *be*. They have understood, from this unchangeableness and this simplicity, that all things must have been made by Him, and that He could Himself have been made by none."

The variety of arguments we have so far examined seems to fit the "five ways" in which, according to Aquinas, the existence of God can be proved *a posteriori*. "The first and most manifest way is the argument from motion," which Aquinas attributes to Aristotle. "The second way is from the nature of an efficient cause." Berkeley's argument or Locke's would seem, in some respects, to offer a version of this mode of reasoning. "The third way is taken from possibility and necessity," and seems to develop the argument from potentiality in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, and to contain the inference from mutability and contingency which is implicit in the argument attributed to the Platonists by Augustine. "The fourth way is taken from the gradation to be found in things." Proceeding from the existence of the imperfect to absolute perfection, it resembles in principle the reasoning of Descartes concerning the perfection in the cause relative to the perfection in the effect. "The fifth way is taken from the governance of the world"—from the fact that everything acts for an end—and so is like the argument which Newton offers from final causes and the existence of order in the universe.

These "five ways" may or may not be regarded as an exhaustive list of the *a posteriori* proofs. It may even be questioned whether the five ways are logically distinct and independent. Aquinas himself says that "in speculative matters the medium of demonstration, which

demonstrates the conclusion perfectly, is only one; whereas probable means of proof are many." Since he considers the argument for God's existence to be a certain, not a probable proof, it would seem to follow that, in strict logic, only one principle can be involved in that proof.

As already suggested, the principle—common to all the various ways in which such *a posteriori* reasoning is expressed—seems to be the principle of causality. This appears in the argument from the existence of contingent beings, which cannot cause their own being, to the existence of a being which needs no cause of its being, because its very essence is to exist. This may be the one argument for God's existence or, if one among many, it may be the core of all the others. It has the distinction at least of conceiving God as the cause of being, rather than of motion or of hierarchy and order in the world.

According to the statement of Aquinas that "being is the proper effect of God," it establishes God as the *unique* and *direct* cause of the being possessed by every finite thing. This formulation of the proof is more fully examined in the chapter on NECESSITY AND CONTINGENCY; and its relation to the question of whether the world had a beginning or is eternal, and if eternal, whether it is created or uncreated, will be seen in the chapters on CAUSE, ETERNITY, and WORLD.

THE VALIDITY OF the *a posteriori* argument for God's existence—in one form or another—is questioned by those who think that the causal principle cannot be applied beyond experience, or who think that our knowledge of cause and effect is not sufficient to warrant such inferences.

"The existence of any being can only be proved by arguments from its cause or its effect," Hume writes; "and these arguments are founded entirely on experience . . . It is only experience which teaches us the nature and bounds of cause and effect, and enables us to infer the existence of one object from that of another." But Hume doubts "whether it be possible for a cause to be known only by its effect . . . or to be of so singular and particular a nature as to have no parallel and no similarity with any other cause or object, that has ever fallen under our observation . . . If experience and observation and analogy be, indeed, the only guides which we can reasonably follow in inferences of this nature," as Hume thinks is the case, then it follows that "both the effect and the cause must bear a similarity and resemblance to other effects and causes which we know.

"I leave it to your own reflection," he adds, "to pursue the consequences of this principle." One seems obvious enough; namely, that God—a unique and unparalleled cause—cannot be proved by reasoning from our experience of effects and their causes. Hume himself draws this conclusion when he declares that theology, insofar as it is concerned with the existence of a Deity, has "its best and most solid foundation," not in reason or experience, but in "*faith* and divine revelation."

Like Hume, Kant thinks that our notions of cause and effect cannot be applied outside experience or to anything beyond the realm of sensible nature. But he offers an additional reason for denying validity to all *a posteriori* reasoning concerning God's existence. "It imposes upon us," he says, "an old argument in a new dress, and appeals to the agreement of two witnesses, the one with the credentials of pure reason, and the other with those of empiricism; while, in fact, it is only the former who has changed his dress and voice."

The principle of the argument from the contingency of the world or its parts Kant states as follows: "If something exists, an absolutely necessary being must likewise exist." One premise in the argument, namely, that contingent things exist, has its foundation in experience and therefore Kant admits that the reasoning "is not completely *a priori* or ontological." But in order to complete the proof, he thinks it must be shown that an *ens realissimum,* or most perfect being, is the same as an absolutely necessary being, in order for the obtained conclusion (*a necessary being exists*) to be translated into the conclusion desired (*God exists*).

That "an *ens realissimum* must possess the additional attribute of absolute necessity"—

or, in other words, that a perfect being is identical with one which necessarily exists—is, according to Kant, "exactly what was maintained in the ontological argument." Hence he maintains that the argument from contingency is invalid because it cannot avoid including what is for Kant the invalid premise of the ontological argument as "the real ground of its disguised and illusory reasoning."

THE CONTROVERSY concerning the proof of God's existence raises issues in logic, in metaphysics and physics, and in the theory of knowledge. Philosophers are opposed on the question whether a valid demonstration is possible. Those who think it possible differ from one another on the way in which the proof should be constructed. Those who think it impossible do not always go to the opposite extreme of making the affirmation of God's existence a matter of faith; or of denying with the skeptic that we can have any light on the question at all. Pascal and Kant, for example, reject the theoretical arguments as inconclusive or untenable, but they do not think the problem is totally insoluble. They offer instead *practical* grounds or reasons for accepting God's existence.

"The metaphysical proofs of God are so remote from the reasoning of men," Pascal asserts, "and so complicated, that they make little impression." He will "not undertake," he tells us in his *Pensées,* "to prove by natural reasons . . . the existence of God." In his view "there are only three kinds of persons: those who serve God, having found Him; others who are occupied in seeking Him, not having found Him; while the remainder live without seeking Him, and without having found Him." Since he regards the first as "reasonable and happy," the last as "foolish and unhappy," he addresses himself to the middle group whom he regards as "unhappy and reasonable."

He asks them to consider whether God is or is not. "Reason can decide nothing here," he says. If a choice is to be made by reason, it must be in the form of a wager. "Which will you choose then? Let us see. Since you must choose, let us see which interests you least. 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 shun, error and misery. Your reason is no more shocked in choosing one rather than another, since you must of necessity choose. This is one point settled. But your happiness? Let us weigh the gain and the loss in wagering that God is. Let us estimate these two chances. If you gain, you gain all, if you lose, you lose nothing. Wager then, without hesitation, that He is."

We are incapable of knowing either that God is or what God is, according to Pascal, because "if there is a God, He is infinitely incomprehensible" and "has no affinity to us." Nevertheless, proceeding on the practical level of the wager, reason may lead to Christian faith, yet not in such a way as to give adequate reasons for that belief, since Christians "profess a religion for which they cannot give a reason."

Kant also makes the affirmation of God a matter of faith, but for him it is a "purely rational faith, since pure reason . . . is the sole source from which it springs." He defines a *matter of faith* as any object which cannot be known through the speculative use of reason, but which "must be thought *a priori,* either as consequences or as grounds, if pure practical reason is to be used as duty commands . . . Such is the *summum bonum,*" he says, "which has to be realized in the world through freedom . . . This effect which is commanded, *together with the only conditions on which its possibility is conceivable by us,* namely, the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, are *matters of faith* and are of all objects the only ones that can be so called."

For Kant, then, the existence of God is a "postulate of pure practical reason . . . as the necessary condition of the possibility of the *summum bonum.*" The moral law commands us to seek the highest good, with perfect happiness as its concomitant; but Kant thinks that "there is not the slightest ground in the moral law for a necessary connexion between morality and proportionate happiness in a being that belongs to the world as a part of it." Since man is a part of the world or nature, and dependent on it, "he cannot by his will be

a cause of this nature, nor by his own power make it thoroughly harmonize, as far as his happiness is concerned, with his practical principles." The only possible solution lies in "the existence of a cause of all nature, distinct from nature itself, and containing the principle of this connexion, namely, of the exact harmony of happiness with morality." That is why, Kant explains, "it is morally necessary to assume the existence of God."

IN THE TRADITION of the great books, the common ground shared by reason and faith is marked by the convergence of the contributions made by pagan, Jew, and Christian—and by poets, philosophers, and theologians—to the problem of God's existence and the understanding of the divine nature, the essence of God and His attributes.

In the 20th century Barth dissents from traditional discourse about God, as the following quotation from *The Word of God and the Word of Man* reveals:

> *God* is the new, incomparable, unattainable, not only heavenly but more than heavenly interest, who has drawn the regard of the men of the Bible to himself. He desires their *complete* attention, their *entire* obedience. For he must be true to himself; he must be and remain holy. He cannot be grasped, brought under management, and put to use; he cannot serve. He must rule. He must himself grasp, seize, manage, use. He can satisfy no other needs than his own. He is not in another world over against this one; he submerges all of this in the other. He is not a thing among other things, but the *Wholly Other,* the infinite aggregate of all merely relative others. He is not the form of religious history but is the Lord of our life, the eternal Lord of the world. *He* it is of whom the Bible speaks.

Certain attributes of God, such as simplicity, immateriality, eternity, infinity, perfection, and glory, are usually regarded as so many different ways in which the human understanding apprehends the divine nature in itself. Other attributes, such as the divine causality, omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, love, justice, and mercy, are usually taken as ways of considering God's nature in relation to the world or to creatures. But to divide the attributes in this way, as is done in the Outline of Topics, is to make a division which cannot be fully justified except in terms of convenience for our understanding. God's will, for example, no less than God's intellect, can be considered in relation to Himself. God's intellect, no less than God's will, can have the world for its object. So, too, the divine goodness can be considered with reference to things, even as God's love can be considered with reference to Himself.

The difficulties we meet in classifying or ordering the attributes of God confirm the opinion of almost all theologians, that our understanding is inadequate to comprehend the essence of God. The fact that we employ a multiplicity of attributes to represent to ourselves what in itself is an absolute unity is another indication of the same point. The one attribute of *simplicity* would seem to deny us the right to name others, unless we take the plurality of attributes to signify something about man's understanding of God rather than a real complexity in the divine nature.

"He that will attribute to God," Hobbes writes, "nothing but what is warranted by natural reason, must either use such negative attributes, as *infinite, eternal, incomprehensible;* or superlatives, as *most high, most great,* and the like; or indefinite, as *good, just, holy, creator;* and in such sense, as if he meant not to declare what He is (for that were to circumscribe Him within the limits of our fancy), but how much we admire Him, and how ready we would be to obey Him; which is a sign of humility and of a will to honor Him as much as we can: for there is but one name to signify our conception of His nature, and that is, I AM: and but one name of His relation to us, and that is GOD; in which is contained Father, King, and Lord."

Even when they are discussed by the philosophers and reflected on by the poets, certain matters belong especially to theology because they constitute the dogmas of religion—articles of religious faith based solely on divine revelation, not discovered by human inquiry or speculation. That God created the world out of nothing and of His free will; that the world had a beginning and will have an end are, for example, dogmas of traditional Judaism and Christianity. Philosophers may argue about the freedom or necessity of

the creative act, or about the possibility of a beginning or an end to time and the world, but Jewish and Christian theologians find in Sacred Scripture the warrant for believing that which may not be thoroughly intelligible to reason, much less demonstrable by it. What is true of creation applies generally to the religious belief in divine providence and the positive commandments of God, to the gift of grace which God bestows upon men, and to the performance of miracles.

Judaism and Christianity share certain dogmas, though the degree to which Jewish and Christian theologians commonly understand what is apparently the same dogma varies from great similarity of interpretation (as in the case of creation and providence) to differences so great (as, for example, with regard to grace) that there may be some doubt whether the dogma in question is really the same. The line of demarcation between these faiths would seem to be more easily determined than their common ground; yet even here such matters as the resurrection of the body—even when we take differences of interpretation into account—may be regarded as a dogma shared by both.

The basic differences between Jewish and Christian theology center, of course, on the issue between a unitarian and a trinitarian conception of the Godhead, with immediate consequences for disbelief or belief in Christ as the incarnate second person of the Trinity—the Word become flesh. This in turn has consequences for doctrines of salvation, and of the nature and mission of the church, its rituals and its sacraments. Even within Christianity, however, there have been and still are serious doctrinal differences on all these matters. The most fundamental heresies and schisms of early Christianity concerned the understanding of the Trinity and the Incarnation. The great modern schism which divided Christendom arose from issues about the sacraments, the organization and practices of the church, and the conditions of salvation.

It would seem to be just as easy to say what beliefs are common to religious Jews and Christians, as to articulate the faith common to all sects of Christianity. If all varieties of Protestant doctrine are included, little remains in common except belief in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—creator and provider, governor and judge, dispenser of rewards and punishments.

ONE BOOK STANDS OUT from all the rest because, in our tradition, it is—as the use of "Bible" for its proper name implies—*the* book about God and man. For those who have faith, Holy Writ or Sacred Scripture is the revealed Word of God. Its division into Old and New Testaments represents the historic relation of the Jewish and Christian religions.

Without prejudice to the issue between belief and unbelief, or between Jewish and Christian faith, we have attempted to organize the references to specifically religious doctrines concerning God and His creatures according to their origin and foundation in either the Old or in the New Testament, or in both. On certain points, as we have already seen, the line of distinction can be clearly drawn. For example, the doctrines of God's covenant with Israel, of the Chosen People, of the Temple and the Torah, are indisputably drawn from the Old Testament; and from the New Testament come such dogmas as those concerning Christ's divinity and humanity, the Virgin Birth, the Church as the mystical body of Christ, and the seven sacraments.

Under all these topics we have assembled passages from the Bible, interpretations of them by the theologians, and materials from the great books of poetry and history, philosophy and science. Since the criterion of relevance here is the reflection of sacred or religious doctrine in secular literature, the writings of pagan antiquity are necessarily excluded, though they are included in the more philosophical topics of theology, such as the existence and nature of one God.

Despite its length, this chapter by no means exhausts the discussion of God in the great books. The long list of Cross-References, which follows the Reference section of this chapter, indicates the various ways in which the idea of God occurs in the topics of other chapters. The reader will find that list useful not only as an indication of the topics in other

chapters which elaborate on or extend the discussion of matters treated here, but also as a guide to other Introductions in which he is likely to find the conception of God a relevant part of the examination of some other great idea.

THE GREAT IDEAS
From the Syntopicon
GOD
OUTLINE OF TOPICS