



“College Life Class”

The Attributes of God: Immateriality & Immensity

Fall 2021

First Baptist Church, Golden

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God's Immateriality & Immensity

In addition to being eternal, God is also immaterial. Along with being non-temporal, God is also non-spatial. He is absolute Spirit and as such He has no body and is not extended in space.

God's Immateriality

Positively put, God is pure Spirit. Believers are even forbidden to make any physical image of God.

Exodus 20:4

⁴“You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. ⁵You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God,...”

God is not composed of matter, nor is He corporeal (made of body).

Definition of Immateriality (non-material)

What is matter? Regardless of the precise nature of matter, what is commonly understood is matter has certain characteristics--these enable us to understand *what God is not* when He is said to be non-material.

Matter is:

- finite (limited)
- extended in space (having part outside of part)
- occupies space (no two particles can be in the same location)
- subject to the 2nd law of thermodynamics (entropy)
- mass & physical energy, light & physical forces (such as gravity & magnetism) are also part of the physical universe
- In all these senses of the word material, God is not material.
- Much of matter is visible (detectable by physical means); hence, the biblical description of God as “invisible” (Col. 1:15; Heb. 11:3) also implies that He is immaterial.

The biblical basis for God's Immateriality

The fact that God created the material universe implies He is not material.

Gen. 1:1 "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

Ex. 20:4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what" (was created)

Ex. 33:20 "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!"

1 Kings 8:27 "...the highest heaven cannot contain Thee,..."

Luke 24:39 "..., for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."

John 1:18 "No man has seen God at any time,..."

John 4:24 "God is spirit..."

Rom. 1:20 "God's invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature---have been clearly seen..."

Col. 1:15 Jesus "is the image of the invisible God"

1 Tim. 1:17 "to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God..."

Heb. 11:27 Moses "persevered because he saw Him who is invisible"



The theological basis for God's Immateriality

Immutability implies Immateriality

God cannot be material because He cannot change. Matter can and does change; therefore, God cannot be material.

If God were material, He would be subject to the second law, meaning He would be running down. Since God is infinite, eternal, and immutable, He cannot be running down; thus, He cannot be material as the universe is.

Eternality implies Immateriality

God is eternal or nontemporal. What is temporal is also spatial and material, for according to contemporary science, there is no time without space and matter.

So what is non-temporal is also non-spatial and non-material.



God's Immensity

Immensity literally means “not measurable”; that is, God is unlimited in extension (or nonspatial).

God is not in space, nor is He limited by space;

He is present at every point in space, but He is not part of space or limited to it.

Indeed, He transcends all space and time.

The biblical basis for God's Immensity

The biblical basis for God's immensity is found in the verses that speak of His being the Creator, His transcendence, His immateriality, and His being Spirit.

The biblical basis for God's Immensity (cont.)

Verses that speak of God creating the material world

God cannot be in space, time, or matter, since He existed before the material space-time world and brought it into existence.

Gen. 1:1 “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”

John 1:3 “All things came into being by Him , and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.”

Col. 1:16 “For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on the earth, visible and invisible,...all things have been created by Him and for Him.”

Heb. 11: 3 “... the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible”

The biblical basis for God's Immensity (cont.)

Verses that speak of God transcending the material space-time world

God is not only before the material world, but He is beyond it. As transcendent over matter, God cannot be material.

Eph. 4:6 “...One God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.”

Col. 1:17 “And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”

Verses that speak of God as Spirit--immaterial and nonspatial

The Bible describes God as pure Spirit, which is said to be immaterial.

John 4:24 “God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Luke 24:39 “..., for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”

Isa. 31:3 “Now the Egyptians are men, and not God, and their horses are flesh, and not spirit”

Some implications of God's Immensity

Several implications follow from the doctrine of God's immensity.

1. God is not limited by space.
2. God is not extended, with part outside of part.
3. God is not temporal, since space and time go together. God is not material, since in modern physics matter is always found with space and time.
4. If God is spatial, then He would be material also.

If God were spatial, He could not think or move any faster than the speed of light.

And if God is material, then He is subject to the second law of thermodynamics (decay), as all matter is.

In brief, if God is spatial, then He is not God.

Objection to God's Immateriality and Immensity

Objection one--Based on the presupposition that all is matter

Strict materialists deny that anything other than matter exists.

If this is true, then God, as pure Spirit, cannot exist.

Carl Sagan: "The COSMOS is all that was, is, or ever will be."

Grumpy also said this! Therefore, it must be true!!



Traditional materialists claimed that matter is eternal, since, according to the first law of thermodynamics, "Energy can neither be created nor destroyed."

Response to objection one

Much as happened in the last generation to expose the weakness of materialism:

1. Evidence of the **Big Bang** (the expansion of the universe) points to a universe that is not eternal but exploded into being from nothing by a supernatural (non-material) force.

THE BIG BANG THEORY

TIME BEGINS

ONE SECOND

PRESENT DAY

Time	10^{-43} sec.	10^{-32} sec.	10^{-6} sec.	3 min.	300,000 yrs.	1 billion yrs.	15 billion yrs.
Temperature		10^{27} °C	10^{13} °C	10^8 °C	$10,000$ °C	-200 °C	-270 °C

1 The cosmos goes through a superfast "inflation," expanding from the size of an atom to that of a grapefruit in a tiny fraction of a second.

2 Post-inflation, the universe is a seething, hot soup of electrons, quarks and other particles.

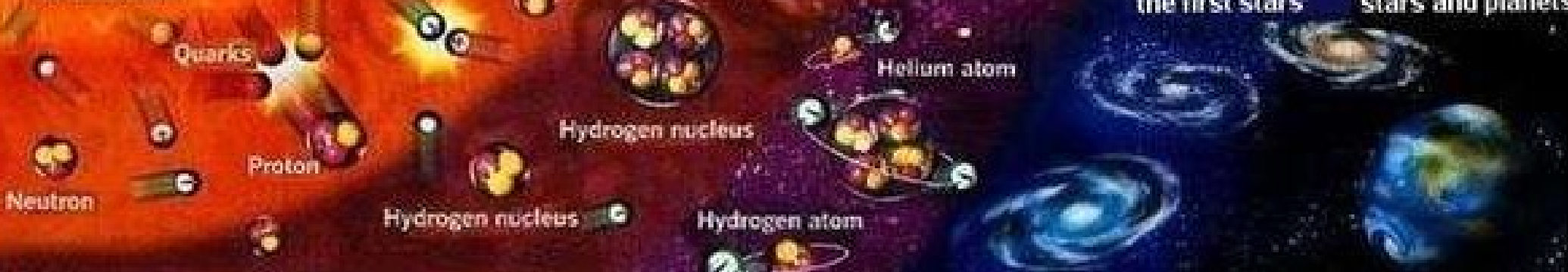
3 A rapidly cooling cosmos permits quarks to clump into protons and neutrons.

4 Still too hot to form into atoms, charged electrons and protons prevent light from shining: the universe is a superhot fog.

5 Electrons combine with protons and neutrons to form atoms, mostly hydrogen and helium. Light can finally shine.

6 Gravity makes hydrogen and helium gas coalesce to form the giant clouds that will become galaxies; smaller clumps of gas collapse to form the first stars.

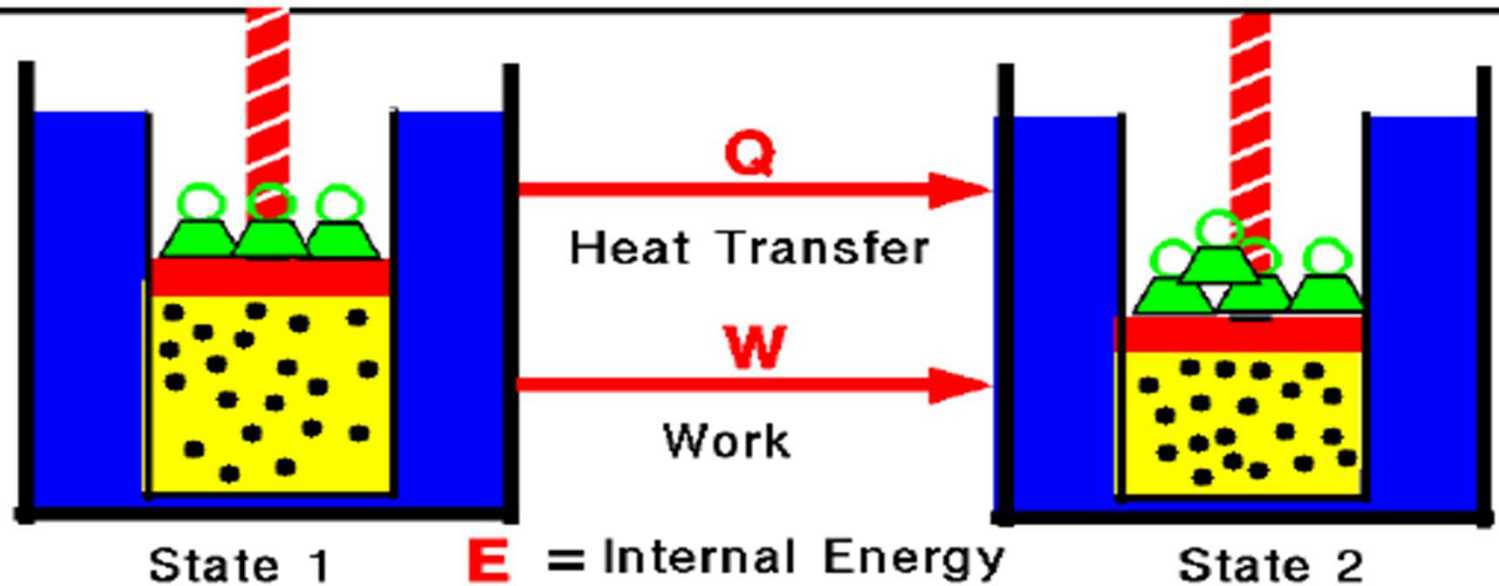
7 As galaxies cluster together under gravity, the first stars die and spew heavy elements into space; those will eventually turn into new stars and planets.





First Law of Thermodynamics

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$$E_2 - E_1 = Q - W$$

Any thermodynamic system in an equilibrium state possesses a state variable called the internal energy (E). Between any two equilibrium states, the change in internal energy is equal to the difference of the heat transfer into the system and work done by the system.

Objection one--Based on the presupposition that all is matter

Response to objection one

2. The *Anthropic principle* implies that the universe was *fine-tuned* from its inception for the emergence of human life and reveals a design imposed upon matter that is not intrinsic to it---reflecting a super-intelligent Mind behind the matter.

- Distance Earth is from the Sun (Habitable zone)
- Orbiting main sequence G2 dwarf star spectral type
- Protected by gas giant planets
- Nearly circular orbit
- Nitrogen:Oxygen ratio of atmosphere
- Orbited by large moon – stabilizes Earth's axis
- Magnetic field
- Plate tectonics
- Ratio of liquid water and continents
- Terrestrial planet
- Moderate rate of rotation

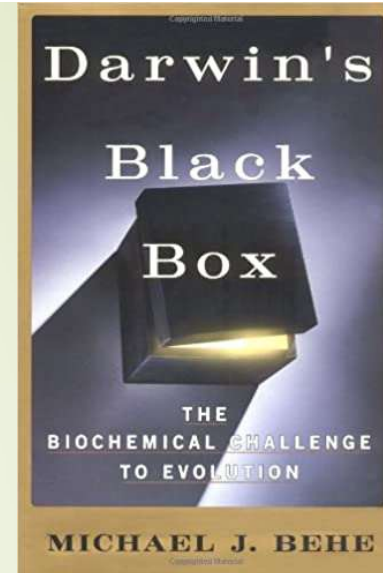
Objections to God's Immateriality and Immensity (cont.)


Objection one--Based on the presupposition that all is matter

Response to objection one

Much as happened in the last generation to expose the weakness of materialism:

3. In microbiology, *irreducible complexity* has been observed indicating that at the molecular structure of cells infers complexity that has to be there from the beginning and not derived over small steps directed by chance and natural selection (Darwinism).





God's spirituality (immateriality) means that God exists as a being that is not made of any matter, has no parts or dimensions, is unable to be perceived by our bodily senses, and is more excellent than any other kind of existence.

Why is God spirit? All that we can say is that this is the greatest, most excellent way to exist! This is a form of existence far superior to anything we know.

God has given us spirits in which we worship Him (John 4:24 "God is spirit"; 1 Cor. 14:14 "For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays,";

Phil. 3:3 "we...who worship in the spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus"), in which we are united with the Lord's Spirit (1 Cor. 6:17 "But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him"), with which the Holy Spirit joins to bear witness to our adoption in God's family (Rom. 8: 16), and in which we pass into the Lord's presence when we die (Luke 23:46; Phil. 1:23-24).

Therefore, there is clearly some communication from God to us of a spiritual nature that is something like His own nature, though certainly not in all respects.



References:

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Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 1994, Zondervan Publishing House.