



Developed and Taught by Mark Dattoli

APPENDIX 4

◀ Do Protestants & Catholics Worship the Same God? ▶

◀ APPENDIX 4: A Different God? ▶

Roman Catholic View	Protestant View
God the Father	
1. needs priests to serve as intermediaries	invites men to come boldly before the throne of grace
2. needs Catholic priests to forgive sins	forgives sin
3. communicates truth through tradition	warned against the traditions of men in His Word
4. needs Mary to distribute grace to men	offers grace to all who turn to him
5. can be judgmental and fearful to approach, needing Mary as the female face of God	Is a loving father who shows compassion
6. God's Word is for the church to interpret	God's Word is to bring life, to be studied and meditated on by all
Jesus Christ	
7. perpetual victim	ever lives, victor over the grave
8. sacrificed on the alter at mass	said "It is finished."
9. takes on the form of bread and wine	seated at the right hand of the Father
10. adored in the monstrance	affirmed the law, including not to bow down to any graven image
11. has a mother who is co-mediator	is the one mediator
12. was the only child of Mary	had brothers and sisters
13. needs the pope to be head of the church	is the head of the church
14. needs Peter to be the rock	is the rock
15. needs the super-abundant works of the saints to save people	death is sufficient
16. needs to be eaten by one who wishes to have eternal life	needs to be believed in for eternal life
17. needs the saints to listen to the prayers of people	said "come unto me" and taught "Pray like this: Our Father"
The Holy Spirit	
18. inspires the Pope when he speaks ex cathedra	inspired the written Scriptures, including instructions not to add to the Word
19. prompts men capable of responding spiritually in good works unto salvation	gives new life to people dead in their sin
20. uses the sacraments to impart grace	indwells and empowers the believer to grow in Christlikeness
21. convicts us of the sin of presumption if we claim to know we have eternal life	bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God

See also [website 1](#) and [website 2](#).

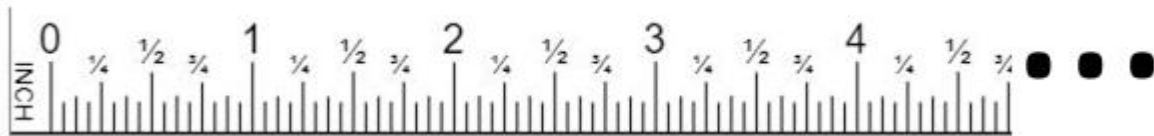
God's Holiness and Infinity

I have a Bachelor's degree in Statistics. That means I can lie with statistics 22.57% better than the average person. But I'm not as good at it as people who are Masters at it—those people are called *politicians*. And they are immeasurably better at it than I am.

Sometimes I meditate on verses of Scripture that describe characteristics of God, especially in quantitative terms, such as *infinite* or *unmeasurable*.

Infinity

When I think of the concept of infinity, I get awestruck. For example, I think of an infinitely long ruler:



In school I was taught that no finite number, no matter how large, was as big as infinity, because you could always add 1 to it and get a bigger number still. So the ruler has an infinite number of inches marked on it.

Technical Aside

The number of positive integers (also called *natural* or *whole* numbers) has been called *aleph-zero*. Aleph-zero is also described as the *smallest infinite number*. Naturally enough, it is followed by aleph-one, etc.

Then I ask myself this: Are there more positive integers on the ruler, or more fractional numbers, $1/16^{\text{th}}$, $2/16^{\text{th}}$, etc. (these markings would be called *rational* numbers)? At first, it seems obvious to me, just by looking, that there would be more rational numbers, but it turns out, no, there are the same number (proven by Georg Cantor...if you could list all the rational numbers, they would match up 1-to-1 to the whole numbers).

The website [wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleph_number](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleph_number) states: "The aleph numbers differ from the infinity (∞) commonly found in algebra and calculus, in that the alephs measure the sizes of sets, while infinity is commonly defined either as an extreme limit of the real number line (applied to a function or sequence that 'diverges to infinity' or 'increases without bound'), or as an extreme point of the extended real number line."

Warning: Trying to understand all of this might give you a headache like it does to me!

God's Holiness

Most of us like the verses in Scripture that tell us that God is love. For example, Ephesians 3:19 says “May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully.” And, John 15:9 where Jesus says “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.”

1 John 4:8 says, “God is love.” As wonderful as it is to read that, it does not say, “God is love, love, love.” What scripture does seem to emphasize is that God is holy, holy, holy. This phrase obviously tells us something very important to God about himself. From the article below, *What does it mean that God is holy, holy, holy?*:

- The phrase "holy, holy, holy" appears twice in the Bible, once in the Old Testament (Isaiah 6:3) and once in the New (Revelation 4:8).
- God's holiness is what separates Him from all other beings, what makes Him separate and distinct from everything else.
- God's holiness is more than just His perfection or sinless purity; it is the essence of His “otherness,” His transcendence.

God is not just different from his creation; he is *categorically* different—infinately different. Any comparison between God and his creation must, in essence, be imperfectly expressed. Theologians use a term about God calling him *ineffable*, which means “incapable of being expressed or described in words.” Yet, we have been given the wonderful words of Scripture—God's Word(s)—and they convey meaning about him to us. But we must always approach his Word humbly, asking the Spirit to help us understand, and we must never get haughty thinking we *fully* understand anything in it. As the Amplified Bible translates 1 Corinthians 13:12, “For now we are looking in a mirror that gives only a dim (blurred) reflection [of reality as in a riddle or enigma] ... Now I know in part (imperfectly)...”

All this makes me wonder how the most erudite theologian can set about writing a textbook on theology, and be confident that it will stand the test of time. Will he not in the coming days learn things more deeply and wish to revise it every year? Despite that, I *am* glad for the textbooks, and I do read them, albeit with caution.

Some Verses on God's Holiness and Infinity

Job 11:7	Can you discover the depths of God? Can you discover the limits of the Almighty?
Job 36:26	Look, God is greater than we can understand. His years cannot be counted.
Psalms 139:6	Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great for me to understand!
Ephesians 3:18-19	And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully.
Ephesians 3:20	Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.
Philippians 3:8	Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

The "Blessed Virgin Mary" of Roman Catholicism

I fully understand that Catholicism states that they officially reserve "worship or *latria*" to the Trinity alone, and that officially, Mary is only *venerated* with what they call *hyper-dulia*. Yet, in the various Catholic dogmas, decrees, and Tradition, I am troubled by the titles and roles that Mary has been given, many of which give her supernatural powers, or rights that I believe belong to God alone. I will take only one example, the role of mediatrix or co-redemptrix.

Catholicism recognizes Mary as the "Mediatrix of All Graces." In the article below, *Is Mary the co-redemptrix/mediatrix?*, it says:

Within Catholicism, there is a drive to define a new Marian dogma in which Catholics, as a matter of faith, would be obliged to accept these three doctrines: (1) Mary participates in redemption with Jesus Christ, (2) grace is granted by Jesus only through the intercession of Mary, and (3) all prayers from the faithful must flow through Mary, who brings them to the attention of her Son. This movement would, in practice, redefine the Trinity as a kind of Quartet.

To be fair, Pope Francis is quoted to have said "Mary is the one 'to whom Jesus entrusted us, all of us; but as a Mother, not as goddess, not as co-redeemer.'" (from this [website](#) which added that "This comment generated much controversy in the Catholic world since one of Mary's traditional titles is "Co-Redemptrix.")

I have written a little poem about this:

***I'm thinking about infinity,
and holiness of the trinity.
And then a silly oddity,
how could there be a quacity?***

The infinite nature of God simply means that God exists outside of and is not limited by time or space. Infinite simply means “without limits.” When we refer to God as “infinite,” we generally refer to Him with terms like omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence.

Omniscience means that God is all-knowing or that He has unlimited knowledge. His infinite knowledge is what qualifies Him as sovereign ruler and judge over all things. Not only does God know everything that will happen, but He also knows all things that could have possibly happened. Nothing takes God by surprise, and no one can hide sin from Him. There are many verses in the Bible where God reveals this aspect of His nature. One such verse is 1 John 3:20: “...God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.”

Omnipotence means that God is all-powerful or that He has unlimited power. Having all power is significant because it establishes God’s ability to carry out His sovereign will. Because God is omnipotent and has infinite power, nothing can stop His decreed will from happening, and nothing can thwart or stop His divine purposes from being fulfilled. There are many verses in the Bible where God reveals this aspect of His nature. One such verse is Psalm 115:3: “But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.” Or when answering His disciples’ question “Then who can be saved?” (Matthew 19:25), Jesus says, “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26).

Omnipresence means that God is always present. There is no place that you could go to escape God’s presence. God is not limited by time or space. He is present at every point of time and space. God’s infinite presence is significant because it establishes that God is eternal. God has always existed and will always exist. Before time began, God was. Before the world or even matter itself was created, God was. He has no beginning or end, and there was never a time He did not exist, nor will there be a time when He ceases to exist. Again, many verses in the Bible reveal this aspect of God’s nature to us, and one of them is Psalm 139:7-10: “Where can I go from Thy Spirit? Or where can I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend to heaven, Thou art there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, Even there Thy hand will lead me, And Thy right hand will lay hold of me.”

Because God is infinite, He is also said to be transcendent, which simply means that God is exceedingly far above creation and is both greater than creation and independent of it. What this means is that God is so infinitely above and beyond us and our ability to fully comprehend that, had He not revealed Himself, we would not know or understand what He is like. But, thankfully, God has not left us ignorant about Himself. Instead, He has revealed Himself to us through both general revelation (creation and our conscience) and special revelation (the written Word of God, the Bible, and the living Word of God, Jesus Christ). Therefore, we can know God, and we can know how to be reconciled to Him and how to live according to His will. Despite the fact that we are finite, and God is infinite, we can know and understand God as He has revealed Himself to us.

What are the implications of God being infinite, unlimited, and unmeasurable?

gotquestions.org/God-unlimited-unmeasurable.html

By saying God is “infinite,” we usually mean that He is unlimited and unmeasurable. Unmeasurable, strictly speaking, could describe properties of other entities besides God. But it’s not a meaningful comparison to God. What can or cannot be measured is subject to the limitations of the measurer. From the perspective of a ten-year-old, the number of protein links in his own DNA is unmeasurable. That doesn’t mean his DNA is infinite; nor does it mean some other person or thing couldn’t quantify it.

Taking unmeasurable to mean “logically impossible to measure,” then it is synonymous with infinite, but, even defined that way, it’s not terribly relevant when it comes to God. My intellect may be “unmeasurable” from the perspective of an amoeba, but that’s not exactly high praise among other people. The same applies, more or less, to the idea of something being “unlimited.” Logic places boundaries on all things, but that’s not really a “limitation,” so this really comes down to the same concept of being “infinite.”

According to logic, there has to be a single “First Cause.” Rather than making something like God impossible, logic makes Him necessary. The point being that God is not “part of reality”; He is reality. That has to be understood in a careful context, however. C. S. Lewis once joked that pantheism—the idea that “all is God”—is not really wrong, just outdated. When there was no creation, there was only God. Now that God has created, some things exist which are not God, but He is still the ultimate source and foundation of their existence.

Another helpful point is that infinity, as regarding God, is not a property a being can have in some attributes, but not others. One is either entirely infinite, or he is not infinite at all. Consider, for example, divine attributes like omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. It’s not possible for a being to be “omnipotent” unless that being is also “omniscient.” How can one have the power to do all things if they don’t also know all things? How can a being be omniscient and not be omnipresent—to know all things happening in reality, but not know some things in that same reality?

Authors who create comic book superheroes run into the problem of “selective infinity” all the time. If you’re strong enough to lift a building, you have to be durable enough to support a building. If you’re fast enough to outrun a bullet, you have to be able to think fast enough to not smash into walls. Those attributes can’t exist independently of each other. On a larger scale, this is how “infinity” works with God. To have any one infinite attribute means, by necessity, all of your attributes must be infinite.

The point is that we break God's attributes into chunks like omnipotence, omniscience, eternality, and so forth, only because that makes it easier for finite humans to talk about Him. In reality, all of God's attributes come down to the same basic source: He is the one and only ultimate and necessary being. He is literally the source of everything else. God expresses this idea in His own words, calling Himself "I AM" (Exodus 3:14). He simply is.

From that perspective, it is impossible for there to be other infinite or unlimited beings. Everything that exists apart from the only necessary being is the result of God's creative work. Logically, every created thing must be different from God. So, it is not possible for beings to be truly "infinite" in the same sense as God, since they cannot literally be God.

Speaking of what might exist "beyond" God is literally to speak of things we couldn't understand even if they did exist. We really don't know what it means to be God. So, in some obscure, academic, theoretical sense, there might be "other" things happening in God's realm of experience. But those things would be as far beyond us as jet fighters are to bacteria. But it's literally pointless (and even a little dangerous) to speculate too much on such things.

We also need to note that God is a "being," and describes Himself that way (Genesis 1:26–27). He is immanent and transcendent, but He is also personal. This partly explains why our reality can operate as it does. You can't get something in a cause that was not present in the effect. In God, we see communication, unity, and relationship in the Trinity. Without those properties in the First Cause, we'd never see them in the creation.

The phrase “holy, holy, holy” appears twice in the Bible, once in the Old Testament (Isaiah 6:3) and once in the New (Revelation 4:8). Both times, the phrase is spoken or sung by heavenly creatures, and both times it occurs in the vision of a man who was transported to the throne of God: first by the prophet Isaiah and then by the apostle John. Before addressing the three-fold repetition of God’s holiness, it’s important to understand what exactly is meant by God’s holiness.

The holiness of God is the most difficult of all God’s attributes to explain, partly because it is one of His essential attributes that is not shared, inherently, by man. We are created in God’s image, and we can share many of His attributes, to a much lesser extent, of course—love, mercy, faithfulness, etc. But some of God’s attributes, such as omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence, will never be shared by created beings. Similarly, holiness is not something that we will possess as an inherent part of our nature; we only become holy in relationship to Christ. It is an imputed holiness. Only in Christ do we “become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21). God’s holiness is what separates Him from all other beings, what makes Him separate and distinct from everything else. God’s holiness is more than just His perfection or sinless purity; it is the essence of His “other-ness,” His transcendence. God’s holiness embodies the mystery of His awesomeness and causes us to gaze in wonder at Him as we begin to comprehend just a little of His majesty.

Isaiah was a firsthand witness of God’s holiness in his vision described in Isaiah 6. Even though Isaiah was a prophet of God and a righteous man, his reaction to the vision of God’s holiness was to be aware of his own sinfulness and to despair for his life (Isaiah 6:5). Even the angels in God’s presence, those who were crying, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty,” covered their faces and feet with four of their six wings. Covering the face and feet no doubt denotes the reverence and awe inspired by the immediate presence of God (Exodus 3:4–5). The seraphim stood covered, as if concealing themselves as much as possible, in recognition of their unworthiness in the presence of the Holy One. And if the pure and holy seraphim exhibit such reverence in the presence of the Lord, with what profound awe should we, polluted and sinful creatures, presume to draw near to Him! The reverence shown to God by the angels should remind us of our own presumption when we rush thoughtlessly and irreverently into His presence, as we often do because we do not understand His holiness.

John's vision of the throne of God in Revelation 4 was similar to that of Isaiah. Again, there were living creatures around the throne crying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty" (Revelation 4:8) in reverence and awe of the Holy One. John goes on to describe these creatures giving glory and honor and reverence to God continually around His throne. Interestingly, John's reaction to the vision of God in His throne is different from Isaiah's. There is no record of John falling down in terror and awareness of his own sinful state, perhaps because John had already encountered the risen Christ at the beginning of his vision (Revelation 1:17). Christ had placed His hand upon John and told him not to be afraid. In the same way, we can approach the throne of grace if we have the hand of Christ upon us in the form of His righteousness, exchanged for our sin at the cross (2 Corinthians 5:21).

But why the three-fold repetition "holy, holy, holy" (called the trihagion)? The repetition of a name or an expression three times was quite common among the Jews. In Jeremiah 7:4, the Jews are represented by the prophet as saying, "The temple of the Lord" three times, expressing their intense confidence in their own worship, even though it was hypocritical and corrupt. Jeremiah 22:29, Ezekiel 21:27, and 2 Samuel 18:33 contain similar three-fold expressions of intensity. Therefore, when the angels around the throne call or cry to one another, "Holy, holy, holy," they are expressing with force and passion the truth of the supreme holiness of God, that essential characteristic which expresses His awesome and majestic nature.

In addition, the trihagion expresses the triune nature of God, the three Persons of the Godhead, each equal in holiness and majesty. Jesus Christ is the Holy One who would not "see decay" in the grave, but would be resurrected to be exalted at the right hand of God (Acts 2:26; 13:33-35). Jesus is the "Holy and Righteous One" (Acts 3:14) whose death on the cross allows us to stand before the throne of our holy God unashamed. The third Person of the trinity—the Holy Spirit—by His very name denotes the importance of holiness in the essence of the Godhead.

Finally, the two visions of the angels around the throne crying, "Holy, holy, holy," clearly indicates that God is the same in both testaments. Often we think of the God of the Old Testament as a God of wrath and the God of the New Testament as a God of love. But Isaiah and John present a unified picture of our holy, majestic, awesome God who does not change (Malachi 3:6), who is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8), and "with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning" (James 1:17). God's holiness is eternal, just as He is eternal.

Some Catholics view Mary as a co-redemptrix or a mediatrix who plays a key role in the salvation of mankind. (The suffix -trix is a feminine word ending in Latin, so a redemptrix is a female redeemer, and a mediatrix is a female mediator.) Within Catholicism, there is a drive to define a new Marian dogma in which Catholics, as a matter of faith, would be obliged to accept these three doctrines: (1) Mary participates in redemption with Jesus Christ, (2) grace is granted by Jesus only through the intercession of Mary, and (3) all prayers from the faithful must flow through Mary, who brings them to the attention of her Son. This movement would, in practice, redefine the Trinity as a kind of Quartet.

The belief in Mary as a co-redemptrix would be in addition to current Catholic teaching on Mary, which states that Mary was a virgin perpetually, that she never had intercourse with her husband, Joseph; that she never had children other than Jesus; and that she was sinless and ascended into heaven. These teachings are more than unscriptural; Scripture directly refutes them.

The idea that Mary is a co-redemptrix or mediatrix contradicts 1 Timothy 2:5, which says, “For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus.” Jesus is the Mediator. There is no mediator between man and Jesus. Jesus Himself dwells in believers; thus, none is required (Colossians 1:27).

Jesus is the perfect and sole Mediator between man and God because He is the sinless Son of God. Mary was not sinless. There is no Scripture whatsoever to back the claim of Mary’s sinlessness or of her assumption into heaven. This dogma was accepted as a result of papal proclamation. In the biblical narratives, Mary is pictured as a humble and submissive young woman, faithful to God, grasping the implications of what is about to happen to her, and uttering praises and doxologies (Luke 1:46–55). In fact, in her Magnificat, Mary says, “My spirit rejoices in God my Savior” (verse 47). The clear implication of Mary’s calling God her “Savior” is that she recognized her need of salvation. Just like the rest of us, Mary needed a Savior, a Redeemer.

Jesus Himself indicated that Mary holds no special place relative to redemption or mediation. In Matthew 12:47–50, Mary and her other sons were trying to see Jesus while He was teaching. “Someone told him, ‘Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.’ He replied to him, ‘Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?’ Pointing to his disciples, he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.’”

Later, at the foot of the cross, Mary is a grief-stricken mother. She did not suffer for mankind as a whole; she clearly suffered her own pain and mourning. She is one of the people receiving salvation from Jesus, not a contributor to His work. She is anguished and must be cared for by the apostle John.

After Jesus’ death and resurrection, Mary was part of the community of believers continuing in prayer and supplication prior to Pentecost (Acts 1:14). Mary is “most blessed among women” (Luke 1:42) because she was the mother of the Messiah. But she is not divine and cannot be seen as part of the Trinity. She did not redeem us from sin and cannot be made part of the redemptive process.

