

GOD, HEAVEN AND HELL: THE PHILOSOPHY OF BELIEF

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Abstract

While heaven is God's promised reward for all who accept Christ and do His will, hell is the abode for all who denounce him. To merit heaven, one is required to renounce worldliness and love God in one's neighbour. While many are undecided, some others remain confused about the reality or otherwise of both the categories and the promise of heaven and hell. Such confusion or undecidedness arises in the face of manifold compelling options before the agent, who is thus immersed in some dilemma—since the issues (of God, heaven and hell) rest in probabilism. There is the need to emerge from the ensuing dilemma of deciding. Consequently, this paper, using the analytical method, articulates the logic/sense in believing heaven/hell real or otherwise. It indicates that heaven and hell, for the unbeliever, may be hypothetical; they, for the believer, are categorical positions. It also lays out the options available to the deciding agent. The paper, therefore, concludes that it could be more reasonable and beneficial for one to believe and make heaven—such that even if heaven turns out to be a farce, nothing would have been lost since one would have lived a moral/desirable life on earth; that there is some gain in believing God, heaven/hell as reasonable probability—which is a pedestal for public morality here on earth.

Keywords: God, heaven, hell, philosophy, belief.

Introduction

The essence of this paper is the analysis of the options before all contemplators of rational theology and belief concerning God (concerning His existence), and, therefore, the reality of heaven and hell. It is not

intended to preach any religion or principle as it might seem; also it is not meant to persuade but to open up all rational/logical options of believing or otherwise which ever one's persuasion. It espouses the possible conclusions open to one. Hence it is an exercise in logico-philosophical analysis which stems from the historical fact of the disparaging views about the existence or not of God (therefore, of heaven and hell). The job here is like the situation of an Electoral Agency, for instance—which body simply exposes the contending parties to the electorate and persuades them to participate in the process, but does not know the eventual winner (even though it knows the possible outcomes). Similarly, in all considerations, the philosophical gamut surrounding the reality of God/heaven and hell are a reasonable probability shall be outlined. In other to achieve this objective, this paper presupposes that God, heaven/hell are possibilities. The reference to certain religions of the world is purely for demonstration of the fact that they mostly extol the reality of life here on earth and the proclivity of same here-after and that most religions think this probability—which reference improves the capacity of our claim to be plausible. Ascertaining this probability is congenial to the goals of religion and its philosophy. The emphasis, therefore, is on the drawing of inferences, and such ought to be drawn for its “this-worldly” social gains.¹

For instance, Christianity holds that the *gift* of heaven is the promised reward for all who not only accept Jesus Christ as the only Lord and son of God Almighty, but also do His will as the saviour of humanity against the manipulations of Satan; and that the award of hell is to all who denounce Him. This idea is also common among most world's religions (exempting Islam and similar dissenting religions) and could be regarded as the theistic foundation of Christian morality). Yet this promise requires one's renouncing of worldliness, materialism, and show of love of God in one's neighbour—moral and peaceable life on earth. The reality or probability of God/heaven and hell needs to be analysed by outlining the logical structure of the claim of God/heaven and hell. There needs to be an establishing that, apparently attractive, Heaven, for the unbelievers, is a hypothetical case; and for believers, a categorical reality; that looking at the inscription of St. Paul² that all men have sinned and come short of the glory of God, it equally, in a special sense, is hypothetical for the believer; and that it is worse if the whole hypothesis never turns unfulfilled. Therefore our present exercise is useful in that, since heaven is a desire of all men of hope, it helps the wary individual to appreciate the facts and discover that it is more reasonable for man to live the requirements and

make heaven; and to realize that even if heaven turns out to be a farce or a false claim, nothing would have been lost since one would have lived a moral/desirable life here on earth and the society is better for it. In order to x-ray the philosophical issues on this subject matter, the analytical or logical procedure would be adopted to outline the implications of the possible options open to the deciding agent; hence the attempt here built upon those of Pascal's and Walls' arguments on the subject.³

Clarification of Concepts

Philosophy - a discipline that is in search of wisdom in all of reality—social, economic scientific, religious, political etc.; its major branches include metaphysics, aesthetics, logic, and epistemology.⁴

God - Many different views of God exist. But in Christianity, God is the Supreme Being or power, and creator of the world.⁵

Heaven - The place of perfect bliss—purportedly prepared by God for eternal life as reward (after death) for those who did not stray but were faithful to His word while on earth.⁶

Hell - The “place or state (prepared by God) reserved for unrepentant sinners after death, where they suffer both separation from God” and other traditional agonies.⁷

Belief - This implies opinion or point of view with varying degrees of evidence. The state where one accepts something or an idea as true or otherwise without necessarily being bothered about any justification for such acceptance/conviction.⁸

Situating the Problem: Literature Review

There is copious literature on the issue of the reality of God and the plausibility of heaven and hell; two of such are very prominent. On the one hand is Pascal's famous *Wager argument* and Jerry Walls' *Hell: The logic of damnation* on the other. On the whole, Pascal could be credited with: (1) making it clear that it is not possible for the human mind to grasp/prove that certainly an “infinitely incomprehensible” God exists; and, however, (2) it is possible to contrive a (solid) reasonable justification for belief in God. The condition requires a wager: to either believe or not believe about God—and to suspend (withhold) belief is not to believe.⁹ Pascal's proposition is replete with posing the personal/psychological import and four possible options (heavenly losses or gains) of the belief or lack of it. However, Pascal's wager does not situate the personal, existential or social implication of believing or otherwise. Even though

Pascal claims that believing makes one humble, faithful, grateful, generous, sincere, and devoid of those poisonous pleasures and glory, his claim also does not point to whether or not God exists. What, however, needs to be established is that in believing or otherwise, in comparison with the its earthly values, there is an intricate indication that: one, moral virtues are congenial to human nature and desires to achieve peaceable social existence; and, two, since man is in search of some perfection (best associated with the idea of God), social values are a pointer to, or a beacon for, belief and are indicators of the reality—that God exists. So the point here is both a justification for believing and an argument for the existence of God, heaven, and hell; and Pascal's argument attends to the latter alone.

However, Jerry Walls holds a traditional view of hell in the sense that he believes hell is a place of conscious and eternal misery.¹⁰ Yet he claims that he agrees with the famous saying that the doors of hell are locked on the outside. Walls' view is a modification of the traditional one in the sense that he believes God always welcomes sincere repentance even after death. Unfortunately, however, he says, some will never exercise that option. Hence, hell, for Walls, is a contingent reality giving full attention to people's proclivity to certain choices, the process of damnation, and the nature of hell and purgatory. Thus so, like Pascal, Walls aims to demonstrate that some traditional views of hell are still defensible and can be believed with intellectual and moral integrity. Focusing on the issues from the standpoint of philosophical theology, Walls explores the doctrine of hell in relation to both the divine nature and human nature. He argues, with respect to the divine nature, that some traditional versions of the doctrine are compatible not only with God's omnipotence and omniscience, but also with a strong account of His perfect goodness. The concept of divine goodness receives special attention since the doctrine of hell is most often rejected on moral grounds. Thus Walls addresses the basic question as to whether the traditional Christian doctrine of hell can still be maintained with intellectual vigour. For Walls, the answer is in the affirmative, but he refuses to rely on *clichés* and conventions to support his claim. Rather, his scholarly treatment of the topic is logical, balanced, and coherent, drawing from a variety of sources, both historical and contemporary. Walls laid out the main versions of the doctrine and evaluated their ability to address the main concern, namely, whether a doctrine of hell can be consistent with: (1) divine freedom, (2) human freedom, and (3) divine goodness. In this regard, he examines the issue in the light of divine attributes and human

nature. In the process, he gives a philosophical critique of Calvinistic predestination, offering *Molinism* as a viable alternative.¹¹ Overall, Walls lays out a careful analysis that makes no assumptions, yet remains faithful to the scripture. His conclusions are not dogmatic, and he remains focused on providing a philosophical basis for the rudimentary elements of the doctrine. But Walls, being an Arminian, often turns the discussion from hell into a refutation of Calvinism.¹² If nothing else, all in all it is a very interesting and even-handed look at the doctrine of hell. Although the account given by Walls is coherent, it needs to be developed a lot more from a reasonable, biblical and moral perspective. Both Pascal and Walls ignite academic appetite concerning God, heaven, and hell; this is the concern here.

The Discussion

Ever since he discovered God, man has never than now been more worried and absorbed in thought about the fate of his soul/life after death. Most living religions of the world variously indicate the reality of life after death—of reunion with God (*Yahweh, Allah, Jehovah, Brahman, Chukwu, etc.*)¹³ as reward for faithfulness; and of hell as a place of punishment for evil doers while on earth. So man ponders whether truly, God exists; how this can be established. More so, how can a perfectly loving God mercilessly punish sinners (his creatures) permanently in hell? In fact, are heaven and hell as final rewards real? On the other hand, man contemplates whether death is finality or is there truly life after life? Merely answering these questions is not the main focus of this writing. To help the curious mind, the various conceptions of God, heaven, and hell should, first be outlined; the expedience of various choices open to man should be determined; and finally, the possibly probable inferences on deciding on a final choice should be analysed and presented. However, the idea of heaven and hell are consequent upon the ‘existence’ of some pertinent God.

For example, the Bible states, “In the beginning God created heaven and earth.”¹⁴ The underlying point in this verse is that before conceiving the creation of man, God already established heaven though the idea of hell was not contained in this same verse, it came to Christian faith with Christ’s new message and criteria redemption. Yet the idea of punishment came into the Bible in Genesis chapter 3 when Adam and Eve fell and, perhaps, also hell—but for what purpose, if one may ask? Understandably, the Bible/Christianity affirms God’s existence; it is, however, not simply a matter concerning whether He exists, but of the fact

that His existence is consistent with the idea of heaven/hell, all other creatures and the inter-dependence/relationships arising there-from. First, it is commonsensical to think the existence of God. The influential cosmological argument premises that all natural things are dependent for their existence on something else; the totality of dependent beings must then itself be dependent upon another, which is God—Who, in turn depends on Himself for His own existence in Christian theology. St. Augustine rendered this argument clearly when he opined that “the very order, changes, and movements in the universe, the very beauty of form in all that is visible, proclaim, however silently, both that the world was created and also that its creator could be none other than God”.¹⁵ Similarly, the argument from (or to) design: that the world or entire universe sufficiently resembles a machine or a work of art or architecture (for it to be reasonable for us to posit a designer whose intellect is responsible for its order and complexity—just like a clock and its maker, is analogical. Thus, “...the design argument is part of a large web of observations, experiences, arguments, and historical belief which add up to a coherent and reasonable belief in the designer whom we call God”.¹⁶ Also, the argument from degrees of perfection posits that since things possess various degrees of the quality of being good, better or best, there must be something which causes in all other things their being, their goodness and what other perfections they have; that, in fact, goodness and perfection exist—and this is God. Also, the fact that objects could be in state of rest (even though they are capable of motion) until they are caused to be in motion (yet by another which must already be in motion) inclines the argument from motion to propose the idea of a ‘first cause’, ‘prime mover’, or ‘unmoved mover’—again, which is God. But down to contemporary times, unassailable is St. Anselm’s proposition that God is “something-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-thought” ; thus apart from God, nothing else greater can be conceived—the culmination of all human reasoning, perception and belief formation.¹⁷ Once all these proofs are any sense to us, then the biblical claim associating ‘creativeness’, the ultimate ‘will’ to do so and ‘eternity’ with God becomes tenable—though these may be untenable to some, in which case those ideas would be non-existent.

It is important to clarify here that Christian eschatological perception considers life at two levels: on the one hand, there is earthly (physical) life preparatory to the *second life*—which is life hereafter (either eternally with God or in eternal damnation/anguish with Satan).

Some other religions, African traditional religion, for example, believe life here on earth transits into the living dead—*ancestralship*. Hence, evidently, conception of the origin and nature of God vary with culture. For example, Omonokhua¹⁸ contends that the idea of God among the *Etsako* of Nigeria is *aposteriori*—derived from the experience of the wonders of life/physical reality of the world: the thick forests, wonders of the rivers/rocks/mountains, changes in season, day and night, birth and death, etc. He also claims that the idea of God (*Osinegba*, among the *Etsako*—meaning god higher than *egba*) arose from the deeds accredited to God believed to be higher than those of *egba* (charm). Accordingly, the *Etsako* believe that *Osinegba* resides in the ancestral home as head, which, for them, represents heaven. Hopefully, this comparative thought helps to indicate where diverse ideas about God collide—life after earthly life.

Yet, it is often asked: What is heaven or is heaven real? Where or when will it be realized? Heaven means different ideas to different people. Heaven is seen as the “place where God is believed to live.”¹⁹ Similarly, Matthew chapter 23, verse 22 declares that heaven is “...the throne of God....” The idea of throne implies the seat of divine political governance of the world which God represents. However, (at the risk of contradiction) more interesting is, if 1st Corinthians chapter 6, verse 15 is anything to go by, the view that since human body is part of the body of Christ and therefore the temple of the Lord, then human body houses God, that God dwells in our body. Put syllogistically, heaven is where God resides; God resides within the human body; therefore, heaven is within the human body. But this is simply analogical since hell is as real as heaven. Still, if heaven is within the human body, where would be hell? Hence, one must note that the reference to human body in the context is metaphorical and therefore has no serious logical import. As much as it could be understood, however, that what is meant by “temple of the Lord” is since man was made in the likeness/image of the Lord and lives by the “breath of God”, then Augustine would be right in saying that evil is the absence of good. Notably, the thoughts of heaven and hell arise from the teachings of Christ—as the “...the way, the truth and life.”²⁰ Heaven is the presence of God. Thus hell, as well as heaven, must be places reserved, respectively, as the abode for the doers of evil and good respectively. While the former would lack the presence, the latter would be boosted with the blissful presence of God and “No one can receive anything except what has been given from heaven.”²¹ Similarly, John the Baptist, Jesus, and the Apostles variously declare that: “The kingdom of Heaven is at hand!”²² Now,

“...heaven ...” in the metaphor, is thus suggested a place/abode outside the human body. In this way, heaven, which could be conceived of both as the immanence of God’s presence in the incarnation of His son, Christ and as the transcendence of God’s presence beyond mankind and “at hand...” thinks of its imminence. This view, perhaps is fortified in Christ instructing his disciples at Matthew chapter 6, verse 9 to pray thus: “Our Father who art in heaven....Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven...” and declaring that “Not all those who say to me ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter into the kingdom of heaven; but only those who do the will of my Father in heaven.” All these statements indicate, justifiably or not, that heaven and hell are real independent places outside the human mind.²³

The above biblical entries and accounts that suggest that heaven is some being, a state and an expression of oneness that exists beyond time and place are corroborated by some Hindu belief that God is the origin and wellspring of all individuality; and since God resides in heaven and then decided to make man, then man came from, and, where he merits would return to, heaven.²⁴ Following this pattern, heaven is both form and formless and it encompasses all that is within and all that is without. The garden at Eden was man’s earthly heaven, man’s original/natural blissful abode until the fall of Adam and Eve. But how can it be validly said that heaven encompasses form and formlessness amidst all that is within and all that is without? What makes a state of being unnatural? Well, the claim therefore, amounts to a paradox and exacerbates the difficulty of defining heaven. However, the idea of heaven can best be understood in the context of God—which is the perfect, purest, greatest conceivable and limitless expression of being. It could be that God and heaven are synonymous. This because the idea of heaven implies the idea of perfection, God is perfection; thus the idea of being in heaven implies the idea of being with God. Accordingly, heaven must be a place where all righteous ones would stay with God after death on earth.

Most individuals and their cultures, including the Africans (despite their belief on reincarnation), believe that even though death may end one’s physical life on earth and is inevitable, one who dies at old age and is accorded proper burial rites achieves the status of an ancestor—a world akin to the Christian belief on heaven. Similarly, for the Christian, one must live a righteous life (while on earth) in order to get a favourable judgement that qualifies him for heavenly abode. Also, for the African, ancestral world is believed to be the place of “life after life” reserved for those who had lived righteous lives on earth; and hell is reserved for those

who lived wicked and unrighteous lives while on earth.²⁵ The implication of this is that heaven and hell, to the African and Christian, are real and, therefore, are a guide for the living to choose which they want to be after death.

Commenting on some eschatological literature in the Bible, Omonokhua explains that the books of Wisdom and Maccabees give clues to the idea of life after death and examine “the resurrection from the dead”. He also contends that the worldview of Africans, for example, considers life as a circle and that “life begins from the ancestral world to the physical world back to the ancestral world.” Anyone who dies and has been accorded due rites of passage resides in the ancestral world and continues to be interested in the goings-on in their family back in the physical world. In this way, ancestral home is a (heavenly) reward for having lived a virtuous life on earth.²⁶ Unfortunately, this is not the angle which St. Paul would consider God and heaven. For Paul declares in Romans chapter 6, verse 23: “For the wage paid by sin is death; the gift freely given by God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Instructively, “...eternal life in Christ Jesus...” does not suggest a life with present human component but with Christ in the place to which He ascended. Pessimists may argue, however, that a wage is wage, after all—and the idea that ‘wage is wage’ impels, despite the abundant proofs summarised above, the materialist and empiricist who find it absurd to accept the existence of God.

Comparatively, nevertheless, the major oriental religions of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism variously extol the virtues of living a life of moderation, abstinence, and discipline here on earth in order to merit liberation of the soul from ceaseless rebirth, incarnation and the eternal cycle.²⁷ For example, the Hindu belief on *Atman* (freed man) reunion with *Brahman* (the creator God) is an indication of heaven. Even the Manicheans of the 3rd century AD had thought that the world is an embodiment of two balanced forces of light and dark, good and evil, thereby elevating Satan’s status/power as comparable to that of God’s.²⁸ And Mithraists, following the Manichean format, argued that salvation could be obtained by washing in the blood of bull.²⁹ However, both Manes and Mithra believed in the temporality (and the reality) of Heaven/hell—the latter as a temporary abode for unrepentant sinners to atone and be remorseful to be later absorbed into heaven because God is gracious and full of love and forgiveness—though St. Augustine later in his

Confessions refuted this idea and averred the permanence of heaven as well as that of hell.³⁰

From the Jewish tradition and in the account of the Old Testament, the finality of death and the resurrection of hope are indicated.³¹ For instance, Genesis chapter 5, verse 18 speaks of the soul departing the body; and Ecclesiastics 12, verse 7 talks of the spirit returning to God at death. These accounts indicate that while the (righteous) soul would rest with God somewhere, the body will lavish elsewhere. These are more indicators of heaven and hell as real. Moreover, (given) Jesus' resurrection could be thought to have universal significance, as the clue to what we ourselves may expect to happen after our death, just as Paul declares, at Romans 5, verses 12-21 and at 1 Corinthians 15, verses 21-22, that: "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive." In fact, some have argued that the resurrection of the flesh, as indicated in Christ's, is possible. The fourth article of the Church of England says that Christ did truly rise again from death, and took again his body, with flesh, bones, and all things pertaining to the perfection of man's nature; wherewith he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth. Similarly, Darl's³² reference to St. Paul's position that earthly and resurrected bodies would not be exactly the same but 'somatically identical' is supported by Aquinas' that "it is the substance that will be restored at the resurrection and not necessarily all the accidents".³³ Yet, Hick thinks that resurrection of the body represents "The creation in another space of an exact psychological 'replica' of the deceased person."³⁴ Despite all these, the idea of fleshly resurrection finds support in eastern religions and in Origen, but has not had popular positive commentaries elsewhere.

However it may be that resurrection happens, Christ sets out the requirements to make heaven in saying that: "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" which culminates in the love for one's neighbour as oneself.³⁵ Achieving this condition, however, is a herculean task. And aware of human nature to pretend or feign, Jesus Christ cautions that not all those who cry loud, "Lord, Lord..." that would merit heaven.³⁶ Moreover, Christ attached no less importance to the requirement of one doing the will of the Father. This is because materialism, pride, love of worldliness and overindulgence are serious objects of human affection—trying "to satisfy infinite needs with finite entities" in a desperate attempt to achieve peace.³⁷ One thus gets disfigured and sunk in envy, greed, jealousy, trickery, panic, and a pervading restlessness. These, in turn breed further immoralities,

criminality and delinquency. Accordingly, Galatians chapter 5, verses 18-21 outlines the lusts of the flesh: sexual vice, impurity, and sensuality, the worship of false gods and sorcery; antagonism and rivalry, jealousy, bad temper and quarrel, disagreements, factions and malice, drunkenness, orgies and all such things—which move one away from attaining heaven. Again, self-indulgence and these evil manifestations could only be countered by one allowing himself to “be guided by the spirit” and “the spirit of love ...kindness, goodness, gentleness and self-control...”—which move one towards attaining heaven.³⁸ Thus, courageously instituting the ideals of humility as a condition for Grace, Jesus said to the rich man who wished to follow him and claimed to observe all the Ten Commandments handed to Moses: “...go and sell your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me”.³⁹ The rich man was then indignant. Again, Jesus stressed the importance of humility in one accessing heaven:

Assuredly, I say to you ‘unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself as little as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven...whoever receives one little child like these in my name receives. But whoever curses one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a milestone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depths of the sea.’⁴⁰

Interestingly, nevertheless, redemption obtained in one breaking with sin and accepting Christ as Lord and saviour, “For this is how God loved the world: he gave his only son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” In view of the obstacle posed by riches, Jesus sums it up in saying that “In truth I say this to you, it is hard for someone rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Yes I tell you again, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for someone rich to enter the kingdom of heaven.’ One would wonder, as the disciples did: ‘who can be saved, then?’ Here, Jesus assures: ‘By human resources ...this is impossible; for God everything is possible’—which is Grace.⁴¹ The implication of Jesus’ statement here is that there is ‘heaven-earth-heaven’ merit of the criteria to earn heaven. The first ‘heaven’ merit refers to God setting the guideline; the ‘earth’ merit refers to one meeting the

requirements; and the final ‘heaven’ refers to the Grace for all whom God wishes and wills to grant. One must note that the hypothetical statement about the reality of God, heaven/hell is simply a sufficient conditional one; it implies that God, heaven/hell are certain and merited once one fulfils the set conditions. The case is different from similar but categorical statements about the same concepts which would amount to “...given any G, that G is an E.” So it is a tougher circumstance for the decider on a categorical decision because the subject may never be obtained. Hence, to outline the logical options open to the deciding agent, one must assume right away the possible veracity of God, heaven/hell. Then, the worry is clear: is it reasonable to believe the reality of God/heaven, and hell? What are the possible options and corresponding implications of believing or otherwise? All said and done, the idea of God, purgatory/heaven, and hell is a trilogy of the afterlife upon which some logical argumentation could be done.

God, heaven, and hell: The Philosophy of Belief

Further analysis of the philosophy of belief concerning God, heaven and hell introduced in the preceding discussion could be achieved adopting the procedures of sound argumentation. This is because in our daily life, we need to formulate and determine principles and rules to ensure that correct reasoning which proceeds from true premises does not lead to false conclusion.⁴² So philosophical logic should not be construed as describing human psychology, i.e. the process of thinking, remembering or imagining. It should rather be seen as normative, reflecting upon the nature of thinking itself, “concerned with the principle of valid inference” and its analysis.⁴³ In this wise, one is not only equipped with skills for correct, persuasive and sound reasoning, it also fortifies our sensitivity to scrutinize the reasonableness of others thereby securing one’s world-view. Hence statements about God, heaven, and hell are propositions which interaction in argument form could form a basis for some sensible philosophical claim.⁴⁴

The preceding insight was necessary to enable ready apprehension of the trajectory of our discussion and is cited against any charm of intuitionism. What we intend to establish is the sound consequence of believing (or otherwise), in this case, that ‘God/heaven and hell are real and true’. However, it is pertinent to note that it is sometimes difficult to know whether certain claims are true or false; but they are easily believable or rejected—whether consciously or inadvertently. A

proposition could be categorical (declaring something, e.g. ‘God is good’) or hypothetical (stipulating what could happen if another does, e.g. ‘If God is gracious, then God is good’); most generally, thoughts and belief about God, heaven/hell belong in the later.

Now, the proposition, ‘*Heaven and hell are real places reserved for righteous men and evil doers respectively as reward*’ (or put differently as argument, ‘*If one is righteous on earth, then, he would go to heaven; and if one is not righteous on earth, then, he would go to hell*’) is, for the unbeliever, a hypothetical case; so also it is to say: ‘If God is gracious, then God is good’—he feels that it is not utterly true that it has been established that God is; and this has to be established before it could be relevant to qualify Him as gracious and good. In fact, what is relevant, for the unbeliever, is simply to establish that God is; and the other quality of being gracious would be necessarily true. Unfortunately, the proposition, ‘If God is gracious, then God is good’ does not declare this. But for the believer, it is *believed* as categorically true to say ‘*If God is gracious then God is good*’; for the proposition amounts, for him, to: ‘*Since God is, then He is gracious and good*’. For him, the existence of God is given. It does not need to be reasonable or preached or explained. God is a necessary being; the qualities of being good and gracious are part of His essence.

However, to say ‘Heaven and hell are real places reserved for righteous men and evil doers respectively as reward’ and to argue that ‘If one was righteous on earth, then he would go to heaven’; and ‘if one was not righteous on earth, then he would go to hell’ degenerate to a hypothetical proposition and argument once Paul’s inscription that “all have sinned and lack God’s glory...”⁴⁵ is given any useful consideration. This is because man falls by the original sin (by Adam and Eve) and thus suffers some curse by God. Except one in his life time acknowledges this fact, repents of his sins and accepts Christ as his Lord and personal saviour (for Christ says in John chapter 14, verse 6: “I am the way; I am truth and life. No one can come to the Father except through me...”⁴⁶) and does His will, he remains barred from God’s blessings and heaven;⁴⁶ and such is the hypothetical nature of the argument. The consequent clause (‘would go to heaven’) may not happen in so far as the antecedence (‘one was righteous on earth’) does not; or at least, it would be a surprise if the result is otherwise. Yet it would be disappointing if the whole hypothesis never turned fulfilled.

Importantly, the question remains, for both the believer and unbeliever: where is heaven or hell? Or, could it be that heaven and hell have yet to be created? This is less probable in that God is believed to reside in heaven—the place of perfection, as the scripture affirms: Heaven is His throne and the earth His foot-stool.⁴⁷ Perhaps, it is hell that is yet to be erected; but certainly would be.

Thus far, this article has had to adumbrate the issues arising from reality or otherwise of the idea of God, heaven, and hell vis-à-vis the belief on this. For some, the afore mentioned concepts are simply a farce—in which case the thought of believing on them does not even arise. The issues of his non-conviction arises from the difficulty in *practicalizing* Christ's moral (ideal) maxims; the historicity of Christ and the haziness of his 'second coming'; that Christ was not tolerant, bland and urbane by preaching eternal condemnation in hell to people who would not listen to him; and that churches place emphasis on virtues even while they also retard moral progress in the world. Yet, as Russell also acknowledges (and we are happy to note this), the whole idea of God and religion is ignited, not by argumentation, but by the state of one's mind or fear—of the mysterious, unknown, defeat and death. Our answer to this and interest here is that it is a great deal that 'fear' is real in men—as a result of the contemplation of God/heaven and hell. How, then can one conquer this palpable fear among all men? Perhaps, such is possible by helping them to weigh (whether or not logical) the options at their disposal. After all the simple reality of holding a belief/idea suffices: it helps as a special 'practical consequence' for the believer—or belief holding agent (subject) and the very outward product of the belief itself. Consequently, the holding or not of some belief in God, heaven, and hell posit some sense and some practical consequence.

Conclusion

One must admit that even though the copious Biblical references in this content may not be exegetically the same in meaning, they are however, employed in the contexts within the authors' limited knowledge of their metaphorical applicability. In all, this article pursues the disjunctive presuppositions thus: it is either that God exists, therefore, heaven and hell are real; or, that God does not exist, therefore, heaven and hell are not real. A possibly third thought is that heaven and hell could be real plans but yet to be created. And then the job could be easier for God; for he created out of nothing (*ex nihilo*). Even though Augustine modifies

this view as from ‘formless matter’, which is a far more difficult job (for in creating the beings, genus, specie, time and type, quantity and quality are brought into being) than instituting heaven and hell (if for some they are not already created/existent though yet inhabited) in our world. Yet the idea of creativity remains un-destructively challenged. Perhaps, if it becomes any sensible option for God, instituting heaven and hell here on earth could be just a matter of initiating a few qualitative changes in some major cities of the world. For instance, by a sheer removal of the power play and ambition in Washington; purging Hollywood of violence, immoralities and fiction; ridding New York of depression, hunger and want, and saving other cities of wild fire or intense snowing, while simply intensifying the pressures, megabytes, heat and radiation in most of Africa’s dark world, heaven and hell could be instituted here on earth respectively. Perhaps, some fear or doubt in realizing this feat may arise, and perhaps be based on: one, human lust for worldliness/materialism; two, the thought that heaven or hell would be constituted in no definite time in the abstract world. However, such fears could be allayed with the assurance that heaven and hell would be real here on earth (as canvassed by the Jehovah’s Witness sects); then deciding whether or not to believe could be a simple task. And one’s sights of (and interest in) the heaven symbolized in a new Hollywood, New York, London, Paris, Washington and other cities described above assures of the will to believe (with Christ as the route, and heaven, the goal of the belief).

Moreover, our initial working proposition has the possibility of fulfilment because either that it is fulfilled or it is not; that is, either that heaven and hell are real or they are not; if they are not, then nothing is lost even where one does/did not believe; if they are, one could gain accordingly; if one believed and they are not, then nothing is lost for even if heaven turns out to be a farce or false, nothing would have been lost since one would have lived a moral/desirable life here on earth; if one did not believe and they are not, he would have denied himself/the world of moral life (loss); if one did not believe and they are, he would have lost in two ways—here on earth an immoral life, and the agony of hell fire hereafter; if one believed and they are, then one would have gained in two folds: here on earth a moral life, and the gift of heaven hereafter. If one believed, he must gain; if one did not believe, he must lose. In this way, one gains only by believing that they are—since this is the reasonable probability, i.e. by believing they are (whether or not they are), one and his community gain either here on earth only (since it is adequate for peaceable social order); or both here on earth and up there in heaven.

Notes and References

1. The agnostic would not readily accept that any decision about the existence or otherwise of God is valid much less it being pedestal for social values.
2. See *The Holy Bible: King James' Version*, Romans 3:23.
3. Concerning the concepts *God, heaven and hell*, the works of these two theorists represent strong classical and recent views.
4. Stumpf, S. E. (1975). *History of Western Philosophy*, (MacGraw-Hill Books, New York), 11.
5. *Illustrated Encyclopedia of Essential Knowledge*, (Reader's Digest Association, Cape Town, 1996), "God".
6. See the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 7th Edition.
7. Simon Blackburn, *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996), 170.
8. *Illustrated Encyclopedia of Essential Knowledge*, (Reader's Digest Association, Cape Town, 1996), "Belief".
9. For more, see Blaise Pascal (1670), *Pencees*. Translated by W.F. Trotter, (Dover Publications, Oregon, 2003).
10. See Jerry Walls, *The Logic of Damnation*, (University of Notre Dame, UND Press, 1992).
11. *Molinism* is generally attributed to the 16th century Jesuit, Luis de Molina. This system of thought seeks to explain and reconcile the sovereignty of God and the free will of man. At the heart of Molinism is that God is completely sovereign and that man is free in a libertarian sense, seeking to avoid "theological fatalism" or the view that God decrees who will be saved apart from their free choice. Today, Craig and some affirm that God has middle knowledge, that God's knowledge consists of three logical moments—respectively called natural knowledge (God's knowledge of all necessary and all possible truths); middle knowledge (God's knowledge of what a free creature would do in any given circumstance); and free knowledge (God's knowledge of what He decided to create).
<http://www.gotquestions.org/molism.html#ixzz3Z16ozcLH>.
Accessed: 2nd May, 2015.
12. The *Arminian* view is one which dominated much of 16th/17th century theodical thought with the theme that God chooses who will be saved because He knows who would choose Him. Compare this view

- with the rivalry Calvinist view extolling the authenticity of theodical predestination against St. Paul's preaching of God's Grace.
13. Names for the perceived *Supreme Being of God* vary from one language to another; these represent a few.
 14. See *The Holy Bible*, Gen 1: 1.
 15. See St. Augustine, 1958, *The City of God*, trans. Gerald G. Walsh, Demetrius B. Zema, Grace Monahan & Daniel J. Honan, (Doubleday Image, New York, 2002). See also W. F. Lawhead (ed.), *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, Second Edition, (Wadsworth & Thomson Learning, Belmont, USA, 2002).
 16. John A. Onimhawo, Matthew A. Izibili, and Benson O. Igboin, *Theistic, Atheistic Arguments: Issues and Problems*, (Deocraftghana, Accra, Ghana, 2006), 98.
 17. Samuel E. Stumpf, *Philosophy: History and Problems*, Fifth Edition, (McGraw-Hill, Inc., New York, 1994), 663.
 18. Cornelius A. Omonokhua, *The God of Our Ancestors*, (Hexagon Information System, Benin City, 2005), 36.
 19. See the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 7th Edition.
 20. See John chapter 14, verse 6.
 21. See John chapter 3, verse 27.
 22. See Matthew chapter 3, verse 2; 4, verse 17; and 10, verse 7.
 23. See *The New Jerusalem Bible*, Standard Edition. Or *The Holy Bible: King James' Version*, for these biblical references.
 24. A.C.S.P. Bhaktivedanta, *Beyond Illusion and Doubt: A Verdic Perspective on Western Philosophy*, (Narmada Goswami, Mumbai, India, 1999), 84.
 25. Abigail O. Imogie, "Death and Dying Education for Healthy Living". *Inaugural Lecture Series 102*, (University of Benin, January 8, 2009), 15-17.
 26. Cornelius Omonokhua, *The God*, 93.
 27. Pierre Grimal, *World Mythology*, (Hamlyn, London, 1977), 208-270.
 28. Simon Blackburn, *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996), 229-230.
 29. Wallace I. Matson, *A New History of Philosophy; Ancient & Medieval*, Vol. 1, (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, New York, 1999), 185.
 30. See St. Augustine, *The Confessions*, 11.4, quoted by S.E. Stumpf, and J. Fieser, *Socrates to Sartre and Beyond*, (McGraw-Hill, London, 2003).

31. See *The Holy Bible: King James' Version* at Genesis chapter 2, verse 7 and stressed in Isaiah chapter 14 verse 11,
32. M.E. Darl, *Resurrection of the Body*, (SCM, London, 1962), 10.
33. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologia*, (Qu. 79 a.1 and 79 a. 2).
34. John Hick, *Death and Eternal Life*, (Collins, New York, 1976), 279.
35. See *The Holy Bible: King James' Version*, Matthew 22: 37-39.
36. *The Holy Bible: King James' Version*, Matthew Matt 7:21.
37. Samuel E. Stumpf, *Philosophy*, 139.
38. See *The Holy Bible: King James' Version*, Galatians 5: 18-21.
39. See *The Holy Bible: King James' Version*, Matthew 19: 21.
40. Consult *The Holy Bible: King James' Version*, Matthew 18: 3-6.
41. *The Holy Bible: King James' Version*, John 3:16; and 23-26.
42. Richard H. Popkin, *The Columbia History of Western Philosophy*, (Columbia University Press, New York, 1999), 606.
43. O. R. Adeniyi, "The nature of logic", *Issues and Problems in Philosophy*, edited by K.A. Owolabi, (Grovas Nwtwork, Ibadan, 2000), 128-138.
44. This is necessary because some sense of logic is required for tenable philosophical discourse; its requirement became necessary for our purposes.
45. See Romans 3:23. *The Holy Bible: King James' Version*.
46. See John 14: 6. *The Holy Bible: King James' Version*.
47. See Matthew chapter 5, verses 34-35.