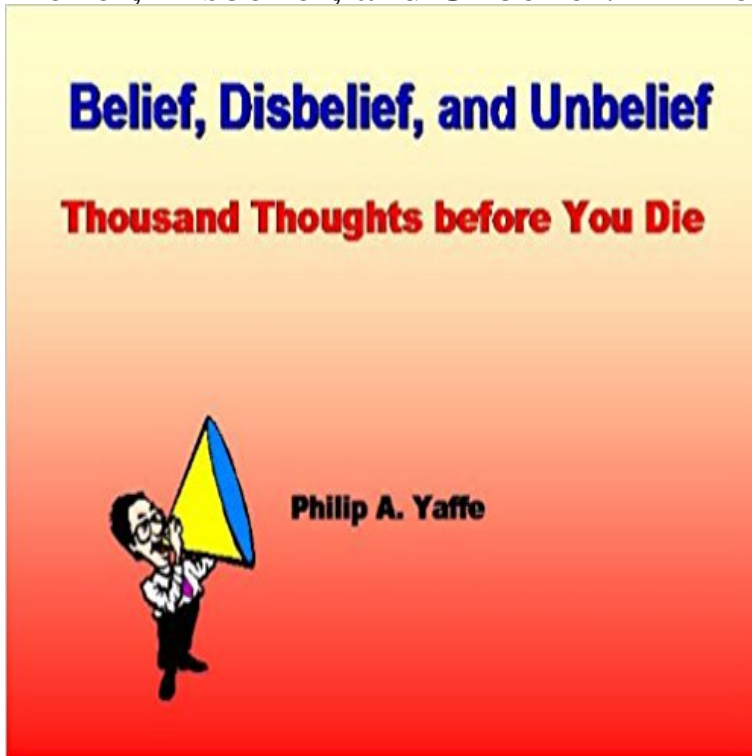


# Belief, Disbelief, and Unbelief: A Thousand Thoughts before You Die



Several years ago when I retired and began writing books, one of the intended topics was religion. However, I quickly dropped the subject for two reasons. First, most books and essays on religion are either very polemical or very dull. Second, my objective would have been to offer insights into various aspects of religion. But doing so would have required a tome rather longer than I wished to write, and certainly longer than most people would wish to read. I had no intention of ever coming back to the subject. However, I was recently contacted by a born-again Christian who wanted to engage me on the topic. This was not the first time in my 70 years that I have engaged with someone on the subject of religion in general and Christianity in particular and always at their instigation. This latest encounter with a true believer prompted an idea for a new approach to exploring religion. Rather than trying to explore religion through debates and apologetics, my new idea is to let readers make up their own minds based on the short, incisive comments of some of history's most influential thinkers. To this end *Belief, Disbelief, and Unbelief: A Thousand Thoughts before You Die* is principally divided into 10 sections containing quotations on various aspects of the subject by these historical luminaries. In each section, you will first see several dictionary definitions of the topic followed by a number of representative quotations. On occasion, a quotation will be complemented by an explanatory note. To round things off, at the end of the book you will also find a section on religious jokes (jokes in good taste help to illuminate key issues) and a section on the basic tenets of logical thinking, i.e. how to most convincingly present your thoughts and defend your ideas. The topics covered are:

1. An overview of belief, disbelief, and unbelief
2. Aspects of religion in general
3. Aspects of Christianity
4. Aspects of

Judaism<sup>5</sup>. Aspects of Islam<sup>6</sup>. Aspects of atheism<sup>7</sup>. Aspects of faith<sup>8</sup>. Aspects of good and evil<sup>9</sup>. Aspects of morality<sup>10</sup>. Aspects of heaven and hell

Recently retired Pope Benedict XVI was well-known for denouncing secularism and trying to raise the ramparts against its encroachment into religious belief. He had good reason to be concerned. Surveys across the world have shown a slow but persistent decline in belief in god and declining adherence to principles and practices that derive from belief in god. If you are moving from belief to disbelief, or vice versa, or know someone who is, this book will provide you with solid but easily acquired insights to help you most fruitfully negotiate this extremely important transition.

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