

God's Story, Our Story

An Introduction to Christianity

Lesson 3: God - His Existence and Attributes



In Him we live and move and have our being. (Acts 17:28)

CCC 27
CCC 36, 37

CCC 32, 33
Rom 1:19-20

For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. (Ps 139:13-14)

Blaise Pascal (1623-1662)

1. Man has a capacity for God and can know Him by looking at the created world with the light of human reason. Yet man encounters difficulties in coming to know God using reason alone.
2. The order and beauty of the physical world points to the existence of God, along with the attributes of the human person.
3. The Argument from Design (Paley's Argument)
 - a. The order and beauty of the world point to God as they could not be a product of chance.
 - b. The universe is fine-tuned to support human life.
 - c. Man himself is an incredibly complex creation.
4. Evolution is not a scientific fact but a theory that has its flaws.
5. The First-Cause Argument
 - a. We can know with our reason, that the world is not self-existing.
 - b. Everything must either exist of itself (self-existent or necessary being), or receive its existence from another being (contingent being).
 - c. The universe contains only contingent beings.
 - d. Contingent beings must depend on *something* (a necessary being) in order to exist.
6. Scientists today accept the Big Bang theory. Even the Big Bang, however, must have a first (uncaused) cause.
7. Although contingent beings must have a cause, God is a self-existent being. He is perfect and unchanging, and therefore does not need a cause.
8. Every human being has a conscience which compels him to do and be good. This conscience must come from a personal God.
9. The meaningful story line of History also points to the existence of God, along with the fulfillment of Biblical prophecies, and the enduring witness of Israel and the Church.
10. Pascal's Wager: If man chooses to believe in God he has everything to win, and nothing to lose.
11. We can know that one of God's attributes is that He is self-

Two errors:

- **Deism:** God is transcendent but not immanent. He is remote from creation and has no influence over the world.
- **Pantheism:** God is immanent but not transcendent. God = material nature.

CCC 53, 69
FR* 12

CCC 156-158

existent. He must therefore be one, infinite, spiritual, and eternal being.

12. God is *immanent*: because He gives existence to all things He is *in all things*, and cannot be limited or ruled by His creation. God is also *transcendent*. He must exist outside of His creation; otherwise He would be limited by it.
13. Because God is infinite in perfections, He must be infinitely intelligent and loving. God is *personal*.
14. God is also all-knowing (omniscient) and all-powerful (omnipotent), so why does evil exist in our world?
15. Evil is not a created thing, but rather the absence of good.
16. Because God loves His creation, He allows man to freely choose to do good, or not.
17. Even though man's actions are the source of evil, God's providence can turn evil into good.
18. God speaks to man gradually, throughout history and even today. He reveals Himself and the answers to life's questions.
19. Faith is built upon Reason. It is based on credible evidence.

*FR= John Paul II, [Fides et Ratio](#) ("Faith and Reason")

Prayer

You are great, O Lord, and greatly to be praised: great is your power and your wisdom is without measure. And man, so small a part of your creation, wants to praise you: this man, though clothed with mortality and bearing the evidence of sin... Despite everything, man, though but a small a part of your creation, wants to praise you. You yourself encourage him to delight in your praise, for you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you. (St. Augustine, CCC 30)

Questions for Discussion

1. Why do some people not believe in God?
2. What are some of the ways of coming to know God? How can we know that He exists?
3. Which argument for the existence of God do you find the most compelling? Why?
4. How do faith and reason work together? Do they contradict each other?
5. Do you think it matters whether a person believes in God? How might belief in God affect our view of sin, of cheating, divorce, euthanasia, abortion?
6. How do we know that God is love?
7. Human beings yearn for happiness. How is this linked to the existence of God? Why do possessions, fame, and power used for self not bring true happiness and leave us desiring and seeking more?
8. We believe in God who is truth, beauty, and goodness. What impact does this have on our lives?
9. How can we explain the presence of evil in our world?