

Lesson 1

Scope of study

1. Who is God and what is creation?

Before we begin this study we must first define our terms, and come to a common understanding of what each of these terms mean and signify. First and foremost is that everything we study is defined by **Faith**.

- **Faith** is the acceptance of truths that cannot be proven. I think it is significant that every culture, every civilization, since the beginning of time has had the concept of God. God has imprinted himself on the psyche of man from the beginning of time. The question "Is there a God?" has really already been answered.

Father Ken Roberts once described faith as like going to a supermarket and buying a can of Campbell's Chicken soup. You bought that can of soup on faith. You can't see inside of the can to prove that there is Chicken soup in the can. You can't prove that there is Chicken soup in the can until you take the can home and open it up. You have to take the word of the Campbell soup company that what they have written on the label is actually in the can. Faith in God is accepting that this universe was created by him out of nothing, and that he created us to spend eternity with him in heaven. You can't open this can to prove it until you die, so you have to accept someone else's word that heaven is in that can. Whose word? Jesus Christ's word, as recorded by the Church.

- **God is Omnipotent.** God is all powerful. There is absolutely nothing that God cannot do. We believe that God created the universe. What did He create the universe with? The universe was not already here, God created the universe out of nothing. Is the universe infinite? No. Already with our limited scientific knowledge we know that the universe is finite. If you started from earth and traveled out to the edge of the universe, at some point you would come to the edge of the universe. What is outside this universe? Anything? If you come to the edge will you see a sign saying "you have come to the end of the universe." What is on the other side? Is there a wall? If so, what is on the other side of this wall?
- **God is outside of His creation.** If God created the universe from nothing, then God would have to have existed before the universe was created. Everything that He created would have to be smaller than Him. If God is bigger than the universe He would be able to see the whole universe at one time. God also holds every single piece of His creation in existence with His will. What would happen if God forgot anything? That piece of His creation would vanish as if it never existed. It wouldn't matter if it was a sun, a moon, a person, or a molecule.
- **God is Omnipresent.** The old joke "What is the one thing God cannot do?" is very true. The answer is move because no matter where God wants to go, He is already there. Because God is outside creation God can see the whole of His creation at one time, from beginning to end. Time means nothing to Him because He sees the beginning and the end at the same time. He does not preordain any event to happen, but because He sees all of creation at once He knows what will happen in individual specifics beforehand.
- **God is All Good and complete within Himself.** If God existed before His creation of the universe it would mean that God existed in His entirety before creation, and that He does not need His creation to exist. He would exist perfectly without His creation. We believe that God is three persons in one. The love of the Father and the Son for each other manifested within the love of the Spirit is the essence of pure love, and goodness. So why did God create the universe? We believe that God is all good, the essence of pure love, and that He created

the universe out of that pure love in order to share that pure love with His creation, us.

2. Promises, Prophecies, Covenants, and Types

God speaks to His creation in a variety of ways.

In Exodus we see God speak to Moses through the miracle of a burning, unconsumed, bush; the smallest of a whisper of the wind; and the power and majesty displayed on the top of Mt Sinai.

God speaks to His chosen people through the Word, both spoken and written. We will concentrate this study on the written word, what we commonly know as the Bible, primarily the first of the books written by Moses, Genesis.

From the document on Divine Revelation “*Dei Verbum*” the church writes:

14. In carefully planning and preparing the salvation of the whole human race the God of infinite love, by a special dispensation, chose for Himself a people to whom He would entrust His promises. First He entered into a covenant with Abraham (see Gen. 15:18) and, through Moses, with the people of Israel (see Ex. 24:8). To this people which He had acquired for Himself, He so manifested Himself through words and deeds as the one true and living God that Israel came to know by experience the ways of God with men. Then too, when God Himself spoke to them through the mouth of the prophets, Israel daily gained a deeper and clearer understanding of His ways and made them more widely known among the nations (see Ps. 21:29; 95:1-3; Is. 2:1-5; Jer. 3:17). The plan of salvation foretold by the sacred authors, recounted and explained by them, is found as the true word of God in the books of the Old Testament: these books, therefore, written under divine inspiration, remain permanently valuable. "For all that was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom. 15:4).

15. The principal purpose to which the plan of the old covenant was directed was to prepare for the coming of Christ, the redeemer of all and of the messianic kingdom, to announce this coming by prophecy (see Luke 24:44; John 5:39; 1 Peter 1:10), and to indicate its meaning through various types (see 1 Cor. 10:12). Now the books of the Old Testament, in accordance with the state of mankind before the time of salvation established by Christ, reveal to all men the knowledge of God and of man and the ways in which God, just and merciful, deals with men. These books, though they also contain some things which are incomplete and temporary, nevertheless show us true divine pedagogy. (1) These same books, then, give expression to a lively sense of God, contain a store of sublime teachings about God, sound wisdom about human life, and a wonderful treasury of prayers, and in them the mystery of our salvation is present in a hidden way. Christians should receive them with reverence.

16. God, the inspirer and author of both Testaments, wisely arranged that the New Testament be hidden in the Old and the Old be made manifest in the New.¹

Promises, Covenants, and Prophecies are easily understood, but Types, while less understood, is where the real action takes place in the Old Testament. What is a Type? A Type is most easily defined as a “Person, Place, Thing or Event that prefigures the salvific work of Christ.” Let’s use an example to help us understand.

In Genesis chapter 3 we are told that God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Only two trees are named, The Tree of knowledge of good and evil, and the Tree of Life. Adam and Eve are told the consequences of eating from the Tree of Knowledge, but nothing is said about the Tree of Life. Strange. What is the function of the Tree of Life? The Tree is a prefigurement of the “Tree” that Christ was lifted up on. The Tree is also much more. Eating its fruit would give you

¹ DOGMATIC CONSTITUTION ON DIVINE REVELATION, *DEI VERBUM*, paragraph 14 – 16.

the gift of everlasting life. Why would God make this gift available to Adam and Eve, they were already immortal. The fruit of this Tree was a channel of grace for Adam and Eve to strengthen their souls for the coming combat with Satan. The Tree of Life is a prefigurement of the Eucharist, Christ's own Body, to strengthen our souls for our combat against Satan.

We could just as easily use Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, or the bloodless sacrifice of Melchizedek, or the Passover from Exodus. The Old Testament is full of "Typology". It is remarkable that the Old Testament, written over the course of two thousand years by various authors, is so consistent. The only explanation is that it truly was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Divine Revelation.

3. Bible timeline

4. For next week read Genesis Chapter 1

Of God and His Creatures

Of the Opinion of those who say that the Existence of God cannot be proved, being a Self-evident Truth

THIS opinion rests on the following grounds:*

1. Those truths are self-evident which are recognised at once, as soon as the terms in which they are expressed are known. Such a truth is the assertion that God exists: for by the name 'God' we understand something greater than which nothing can be thought. This notion is formed in the understanding by whoever hears and understands the name 'God,' so that God must already exist at least in the mind. Now He cannot exist in the mind only: for what is in the mind and in reality is greater than that which is in the mind only; but nothing is greater than God, as the very meaning of the name shows: it follows that the existence of God is a self-evident truth, being evidenced by the mere meaning of the name.

2. The existence of a being is conceivable, that could not be conceived not to exist; such a being is evidently greater than another that could be conceived not to exist. Thus then something greater than God is conceivable if He could be conceived not to exist; but anything 'greater than God' is against the meaning of the name 'God.' It remains then that the existence of God is a self-evident truth.

3. Those propositions are most self-evident which are either identities, as 'Man is man,' or in which the predicates are included in the definitions of the subjects, as 'Man is an animal.' But in God of all beings this is found true, that His existence is His essence, as will be shown later (Chap. XXII); and thus there is one and the same answer to the question 'What is He?' and 'Whether He is.'* Thus then, when it is said 'God is,' the predicate is either the same with the subject or at least is included in the definition of the subject; and thus the existence of God will be a self-evident truth.

4. Things naturally known are self-evident: for the knowledge of them is not attained by enquiry and study. But the existence of God is naturally known, since the desire of man tends naturally to God as to his last end, as will be shown further on (B. 111, Chap. XXV).

5. That must be self-evident whereby all other things are known; but such is God; for as the light of the sun is the principle of all visual perception, so the divine light is the principle of all intellectual cognition.

Summa Theologica

Whether God exists?

Objection 1. It seems that [God](#) does not exist; because if one of two contraries be infinite, the other would be altogether destroyed. But the word "God" means that He is infinite goodness. If, therefore, [God](#) existed, there would be no evil discoverable; but there is evil in the world. Therefore [God](#) does not exist.

Objection 2. Further, it is superfluous to suppose that what can be accounted for by a few principles has been produced by many. But it seems that everything we see in the world can be accounted for by other principles, supposing [God](#) did not exist. For all natural things can be reduced to one principle which is nature; and all voluntary things can be reduced to one principle which is human reason, or will. Therefore there is no need to suppose [God's existence](#).

On the contrary, It is said in the person of [God](#): "I am Who am." ([Exodus 3:14](#))

I answer that, The [existence of God](#) can be proved in five ways.

The **first** and more manifest way is the argument from motion. It is certain, and evident to our senses, that in the world some things are in motion. Now whatever is in motion is put in motion by another, for nothing can be in motion except it is in potentiality to that towards which it is in motion; whereas a thing moves inasmuch as it is in act. For motion is nothing else than the reduction of something from potentiality to actuality. But nothing can be reduced from potentiality to actuality, except by something in a state of actuality. Thus that which is actually hot, as fire, makes wood, which is potentially hot, to be actually hot, and thereby moves and changes it. Now it is not possible that the same thing should be at once in actuality and potentiality in the same respect, but only in different respects. For what is actually hot cannot simultaneously be potentially hot; but it is simultaneously potentially cold. It is therefore impossible that in the same respect and in the same way a thing should be both mover and moved, i.e. that it should move itself. Therefore, whatever is in motion must be put in motion by another. If that by which it is put in motion be itself put in motion, then this also must needs be put in motion by another, and that by another again. But this cannot go on to infinity, because then there would be no first mover, and, consequently, no other mover; seeing that subsequent movers move only inasmuch as they are put in motion by the first mover; as the staff moves only because it is put in motion by the hand. Therefore it is necessary to arrive at a first mover, put in motion by no other; and this everyone understands to be [God](#).

The **second** way is from the nature of the efficient cause. In the world of sense we find there is an order of efficient causes. There is no case known (neither is it, indeed, possible) in which a thing is found to be the efficient cause of itself; for so it would be prior to itself, which is impossible. Now in efficient causes it is not possible to go on to infinity, because in all efficient causes following in order, the first is the cause of the intermediate cause, and the intermediate is the cause of the ultimate cause, whether the intermediate cause be several, or only one. Now to take away the cause is to take away the effect. Therefore, if there be no first cause among efficient causes, there will be no ultimate, nor any intermediate cause. But if in efficient causes it is possible to go on to infinity, there will be no first efficient cause, neither will there be an ultimate effect, nor any intermediate efficient causes; all of which is plainly false. Therefore it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause, to which everyone gives the name of [God](#).

The **third** way is taken from possibility and necessity, and runs thus. We find in nature things that are possible to be and not to be, since they are found to be generated, and to corrupt, and consequently, they are possible to be and not to be. But it is impossible for these always to exist, for that which is possible not to be at some time is not. Therefore, if everything is possible not to be, then at one time there could have been nothing in existence. Now if this were true, even now there would be nothing in existence, because that which does not exist only begins to exist by something already existing. Therefore, if at one time nothing was in existence, it would have been impossible for anything to have begun to exist; and thus even now nothing would be in existence--which is absurd. Therefore, not all beings are merely possible, but there must exist something the existence of which is necessary. But every necessary thing either has its necessity caused by another, or not. Now it is impossible to go on to infinity in necessary things which have their necessity caused by another, as has been already proved in regard to efficient causes. Therefore we cannot but postulate the existence of some being having of itself its own necessity, and not receiving it from another, but rather causing in others their necessity. This all men speak of as [God](#).

The **fourth** way is taken from the gradation to be found in things. Among beings there are some more and some less good, true, noble and the like. But "more" and "less" are predicated of different things, according as they resemble in their different ways something which is the maximum, as a thing is said to be hotter according as it more nearly resembles that which is hottest; so that there is something which is truest, something best, something noblest and, consequently, something which is uttermost being; for those things that are greatest in truth are greatest in being, as it is written in *Metaph.* ii. Now the maximum in any genus is the cause of all in that genus; as fire, which is the maximum heat, is the cause of all hot things. Therefore there must also be something which is to all beings the cause of their being, goodness, and every other perfection; and this we call [God](#).

The **fifth** way is taken from the governance of the world. We see that things which lack intelligence, such as natural bodies, act for an end, and this is evident from their acting always, or nearly always, in the same way, so as to obtain the best result. Hence it is plain that not fortuitously, but designedly, do they achieve their end. Now whatever lacks intelligence cannot move towards an end, unless it be directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence; as the arrow is shot to its mark by the archer. Therefore some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end; and this being we call [God](#).

Reply to Objection 1. As [Augustine](#) says (*Enchiridion* xi): "Since [God](#) is the [highest good](#), He would not allow any evil to exist in His works, unless His omnipotence and goodness were such as to bring good even out of evil." This is part of the infinite goodness of [God](#), that He should allow evil to exist, and out of it produce good.

Reply to Objection 2. Since nature works for a determinate end under the direction of a higher agent, whatever is done by nature must needs be traced back to [God](#), as to its first cause. So also whatever is done voluntarily must also be traced back to some higher cause other than human reason or will, since these can change or fail; for all things that are changeable and capable of defect must be traced back to an immovable and self-necessary first principle, as was shown in the body of the Article.

Of God and His Creatures

Reasons in Proof of the Existence of God

WE will put first the reasons by which Aristotle proceeds to prove the existence of God from the consideration of motion as follows.

Everything that is in motion is put and kept in motion by some other thing. It is evident to sense that there are beings in motion. A thing is in motion because something else puts and keeps it in motion. That mover therefore either is itself in motion or not. If it is not in motion, our point is gained which we proposed to prove, namely, that we must posit something which moves other things without being itself in motion, and this we call God. But if the mover is itself in motion, then it is moved by some other mover. Either then we have to go on to infinity, or we must come to some mover which is motionless; but it is impossible to go on to infinity, therefore we must posit some motionless prime mover. In this argument there are two propositions to be proved: that everything which is in motion is put and kept in motion by something else; and that in the series of movers and things moved it is impossible to go on to infinity.*

The Philosopher also goes about in another way to show that it is impossible to proceed to infinity in the series of efficient causes, but we must come to one first cause, and this we call God. The way is more or less as follows. In every series of efficient causes, the first term is cause of the intermediate, and the intermediate is cause of the last. But in efficient causes there is a process to infinity, none of the causes will be the first: therefore all the others will be taken away which are intermediate. But that is manifestly not the case; therefore we must posit the existence of some first efficient cause, which is God.*

Another argument is brought by St John Damascene (*De Fid. Orthod.* I, 3), thus: It is impossible for things contrary and discordant to fall into one harmonious order always or for the most part, except under some one guidance, assigning to each and all a tendency to a fixed end. But in the world we see things of different natures falling into harmonious order, not rarely and fortuitously, but always or for the most part. Therefore there must be some Power by whose providence the world is governed; and that we call God.*