

FAITH, REASON AND RELIGION

PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful
and kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And You shall renew the face of the earth.

O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit
did instruct the hearts of the faithful,
grant that by the same Holy Spirit,
we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His
consolations.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

THREE TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

- 1. Faith and Reason** – What is meant by Faith and Reason – Are they at odds with each other? How do they co-exist?
- 2. Existence of God** – Does God exist and can we know this with certitude?
- 3. Problem of Evil** – If God does in fact exist and He is all powerful and supremely good then why does evil exist?

FAITH AND REASON

WHAT IS FAITH AND REASON?

Ancient Greek Philosophy began in the 6th century B.C. The Greeks were searching for wisdom and began to inquire and reflect on three fundamental realities:

1. To Be (Existence)
2. To Know (Knowledge)
3. To Do (Morals)

Faith and Reason are modes of knowing and therefore deal with the 2nd fundamental reality “To Know”.

TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE

Within the category of knowledge, we come to acquire knowledge in several ways:

- Sense knowledge (acquired by direct experience)
- Rational knowledge (acquired by reasoning)
- Faith knowledge (acquired by faith)
- Intuitive knowledge (infused knowledge)

SENSE KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge acquired by our 5 senses based on our direct experience with the material world:

1. Sight
2. Hearing
3. Touch
4. Taste
5. Smell

RATIONAL KNOWLEDGE

- Reasoning is not memorization. It is knowledge acquired by recognizing cause and effect relationships.
- Reasoning employs the science of logic and takes two established truths and from these two truths, deduces a third truth.
- For example : Angle A equals angle B
Angle B equals angle C
Therefore given these two truths –
Angle A must equal angle C

FAITH KNOWLEDGE

- Faith -- The belief of something based upon the testimony of another.
- Faith knowledge can be supernatural or natural.
- All historical knowledge is natural faith.
- Most of our knowledge is faith based knowledge.

FAITH AND REASON

- Reason is always looking to better understand and verify if possible all aspects of faith knowledge.
- Faith without the use of reason leads to credulity (believing everything without critical examination).
- Reason without faith leads to sheer skepticism that reduces knowledge to what is understandable or experienced and thereby leads to a truncated knowledge of reality.
- Faith that is healthy and operative will always engage reason to seek better understanding and corroboration to enhance and strengthen faith knowledge.
- Fides quaerens intellectum – Faith seeking understanding.

THE POSITION OF THE CHURCH

- Faith and Reason are wedded together. They both come from the same Divine wellspring and therefore can not be in contradiction to one another but in fact edify and support each other.
- There are certain things that you can know by reason alone (how to build a hydraulic pump).
- There are certain things that you can know only by faith (God has one nature but is three distinct persons).
- There are certain things you can know by either faith or by reasoning (the existence of God, the immortality of the soul and the freedom of the will).

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

ATHEISM AND AGNOSTICISM

- Theism is the belief in one or many gods.
- Polytheism is the belief in many gods, Monotheism (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) is the belief in one God.
- Atheism is a denial of the existence of any god or gods.
- Agnosticism holds the position that a person can not know weather God exists or not.
- An Agnostic will often time accentuate and exalt human scientific empirical knowledge but deny that human reasoning can ascertain God's existence.
- The Church as a defender of human reason teaches that both these positions (Atheism and Agnosticism) are wrong and vitiate human reasoning.

THE TWO WORLDS

- **The Material World** – The world of the senses that is changing and that can be measured, quantified, controlled and observed.
- **The Spiritual World** – The world beyond our senses that is the polar opposite of the material world. A world not bound by time and space.
- We can know by faith that the spiritual world exists. “My kingdom is not of this world” John 18:36

REASON AND THE SPIRITUAL WORLD

Material World

- Physical
- Particular
- Changing
- Finite and bound by time and space

Spiritual World

- Abstract
- Universal
- Unchanging
- Infinite and not bound by time and space

PHILOSOPHY AND THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

REASONS FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE

Saint Thomas Aquinas gives us five ways in which human reasoning if engaged properly without prejudice can ascertain that God exists:

1. Change
2. Causality
3. Contingency
4. Perfection
5. Intelligence

CHANGE

- The world in which we live is a world of change. An acorn can change and become an oak tree. To explain how the acorn changes into an oak tree we must consider outside forces such as the sun, soil, water etc. that act on the acorn. The acorn is not an oak tree and can't by itself become an oak tree. The acorn has the potential to be an oak tree but has to be acted upon by outside forces in order to become an oak tree. Nothing changes itself.
- Are the outside forces such as sun, soil water etc. also things that are changing? Are the things that effect change in the sun, soil, water etc. also themselves changing? It seems that if everything is subject to change and change requires an outside agent that can effect change and the outside agents also require outside agents , then it is quite obvious that the entire visible universe is in the process of change.
- If the visible universe is a changing universe and all change is actualized by an outside agent, then there must be an outside agent that is not a part of the visible universe that can initiate the change in the visible universe.
- If the visible universe is the sum total of all matter, space and time, then the agent that initiates change in the universe must be outside matter, space and time. We call the source from which change originates -- God

CAUSALITY

- If we look at the computer on our desk or the automobile in our driveway, we are certain that these things were made by someone, they did not make themselves. Something or someone must have caused the computer or car to come into being.
- The effect (car or computer) must have a cause. If a person caused the car and computer to come into existence, then who caused that particular person to come into existence? That person's parents. Who caused that person's parents to be born?
- In order for things to exist they need to be brought into existence by something else. Existence is like a gift that gets passed down from cause to effect. Someone must possess the gift at the beginning in order to start the process of passing the gift down.
- The series of causes and effects must have a beginning, a first cause. Someone who possesses the gift of existence - God.

CONTINGENCY

- There are things in this world, including us as human beings, which may exist now but at one time did not exist. We notice that things come into existence and go out of existence. We call this type of being a contingent being because it is possible that these things could not exist.
- A thing that is contingent does not need to exist. Everything in the visible universe is contingent – it doesn't need to exist – it is not necessary.
- We call a being that is not dependent on any other being for its existence a necessary being. This absolute necessary being is --God.

PERFECTION

- In the world in which we live we can see things that are good, true, beautiful, living and all of which possess various degrees of perfection.
- Non living things (rocks, water, air) possess no life and are at the service of living things.
- Plants and trees are living things, but possess life in an extremely limited degree.
- Animals possess life in a higher degree than plants.
- Humans possess life in a higher degree than animals but still lack perfection.
- If there are things in existence possessing limited perfections, then there must exist a being who possesses perfection in an inexhaustible and infinite degree – God.

INTELLIGENCE

- There are many things in this world, which were made for a definite reason. We can observe things that lack intelligence, acting always or nearly always, in the same way so as to achieve a certain end.
- For example, water is the only liquid on this earth that freezes from the top down. All other liquids freeze from the bottom up.
- This phenomenon preserves the fish life in the world. If water froze from the bottom up, our streams and lakes in colder climates would be frozen solid in winter, and all life in such a climate would perish.
- Water freezing from the top down is a crucial fact in preserving all of the higher forms of life outside the tropics.
- So, we see something that lacks intelligence (water) acting for an intelligent end. Therefore, there must be a supreme intelligence that directs things in nature to their end, this supreme intelligence is God.

SCIENCE AND THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

CONTEMPORARY SCIENCE AND THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

The scientific world today tells us that there are two recent remarkable developments in cosmology (how we view the universe):

1. The discovery that the universe is expanding.
2. The discovery of additional universal constants.

THE UNIVERSE HAD A BEGINNING

- Scientists have discovered that the space that exists in the universe is expanding.
- Galaxies that are very distant from each other are getting farther apart, not because they are moving through space, but because the space in between them is getting stretched out.
- If space is expanding then there must have been a beginning to the universe.

UNIVERSAL CONSTANTS

- A universal constant is a fixed quantity that mathematically governs the fundamental equations of physics throughout the observable universe during its duration.
- There are more than 30 of these universal constants. Some examples are the speed of light constant, Planck's constant, the gravitational constant, weak force constant, strong force constant, mass of a proton, mass of an electron, charge of an electron/proton, etc.

FINE TUNING OF THE PHYSICAL CONSTANTS OF THE UNIVERSE

Parameter	Max. Deviation
Ratio of Electrons:Protons	1:10 ³⁷
Ratio of Electromagnetic Force:Gravity	1:10 ⁴⁰
Expansion Rate of Universe	1:10 ⁵⁵
Mass Density of Universe ¹	1:10 ⁵⁹
Cosmological Constant	1:10 ¹²⁰

These numbers represent the maximum deviation from the accepted values, that would either prevent the universe from existing now, not having matter, or be unsuitable for any form of life.

The degree of fine-tuning is difficult to imagine. Dr. Hugh Ross gives an example of the least fine-tuned of the above four examples in his book, *The Creator and the Cosmos*, which is reproduced here:

One part in 10^{37} is such an incredibly sensitive balance that it is hard to visualize. The following analogy might help: Cover the entire North American continent in dimes all the way up to the moon, a height of about 239,000 miles (In comparison, the money to pay for the U.S. federal government debt would cover one square mile less than two feet deep with dimes.). Next, pile dimes from here to the moon on a billion other continents the same size as North America. Paint one dime red and mix it into the billions of piles of dimes. Blindfold a friend and ask him to pick out one dime. The odds that he will pick the red dime are one in 10^{37} . (p. 115)

Quotes from Scientists Regarding Design of the Universe

Fred Hoyle (British astrophysicist): "A common sense interpretation of the facts suggests that a superintellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as with chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature. The numbers one calculates from the facts seem to me so overwhelming as to put this conclusion almost beyond question."

- ***John O'Keefe*** (*astronomer at NASA*): "We are, by astronomical standards, a pampered, cosseted, cherished group of creatures.. .. If the Universe had not been made with the most exacting precision we could never have come into existence. It is my view that these circumstances indicate the universe was created for man to live in."
- ***Arthur Eddington*** (*astrophysicist*): "The idea of a universal mind or Logos would be, I think, a fairly plausible inference from the present state of scientific theory."

- **Robert Jastrow** (*self-proclaimed agnostic*): "For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries."
- **Frank Tipler** (*Professor of Mathematical Physics*): "When I began my career as a cosmologist some twenty years ago, I was a convinced atheist. I never in my wildest dreams imagined that one day I would be writing a book purporting to show that the central claims of Judeo-Christian theology are in fact true, that these claims are straightforward deductions of the laws of physics as we now understand them. I have been forced into these conclusions by the inexorable logic of my own special branch of physics." Note: Tipler since has actually converted to Christianity, hence his latest book, *The Physics of Christianity*.

Coincidence that sun and moon seem same size?

- The sun is 400 times bigger than the moon and it is also 400 times further away which are necessary factors in order to have a total eclipse of the sun. The perfect eclipse of the sun is not only compelling to observe but it also opens the portal onto the physics and chemistry of the entire universe.
- Eclipses allow us to observe a part of the sun that is critical towards understanding how its light is produced and its atmosphere.
- The eclipse of 1870 led to an understanding of the structure of the sun and the discovery of helium, the second most abundant element in the universe. This led to the understanding of how the spectrums of distant stars are produced. This discovery allowed us to understand how other stars work, because distant stars are in fact other suns.
- The best place in the entire solar system to view solar eclipses is from the surface of the earth. The one place that has observers is the one place that has the best eclipses and that is planet earth.

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

FAITH KNOWLEDGE AND THE EXISTENCE OF EVIL

- We can come to know God's existence by Faith or by Reason.
- To better understand the mystery of evil and of suffering we need Faith knowledge to provide us with the deeper spiritual meaning behind this mystery. Reason alone is insufficient to shed light on this mystery.

EVIL AND THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

The problem can be stated as follows:

- Everyone knows by direct experience that evil and suffering exists in our world.
- From the preceding discussions we also know that God exists and that God is all knowing, all loving, all powerful, all just and all good.
- Therefore, God is either the direct cause of the evil in the world or lacks the power to control it, in which case He would be deficient and not all powerful.

IN THE BEGINNING

- In the beginning (the book of Genesis) God created everything out of nothing.
- When God was finished with his created work he proclaimed all of creation to be “good” and the human race to be “very good”.
- “Goodness” is an attribute of God. God is perfect goodness. Evil and good are polar opposites. Therefore evil has nothing to do with God.

EVIL DEFINED

- Evil by its nature is defined as a “privation of the good,” therefore evil is the lack or absence of the good.
- Eyesight is a good that is a normative characteristic feature in a human being. A baby that is born blind has a “privation of the good”. The baby lacks what is normative (what ought to be) – eyesight.
- Therefore evil is the lack or absence of what is normative (what ought to be).
- In a similar way, life is good and normative. Physical death is a privation of the good – a lack or absence of life, therefore death is evil.

ORIGINAL SIN

- God created Adam and Eve with “free will” the ability to choose the good.
- Adam and Eve lived in a “State of Paradise” where everything was ordered and harmonious. There was no sickness, disease, or death (no evil).
- When Adam sinned, death entered the world along with a rupture in the harmony that existed in nature.
- This rupture of harmony in nature due to the sin of Adam is the explanation of the existence of both moral and physical evil in the world.

TYPES OF EVIL

- **Physical Evil** – Occurs when forces of nature such as hurricanes, floods, earthquakes etc. cause destruction of property and life.
- **Moral Evil** -- Occurs when human beings using their free will make a decision not to do the good but to do evil. Lying, cheating, adultery, murder etc. is moral evil. Sin is doing something that is contrary to the good.

GOD AND EVIL

- So God is not the originator of evil, but evil is brought about by man's sin (misuse of his free will).
- Faith tells us that God allows evil to bring forth a greater good.
- Jesus Christ – God Incarnate – allows the greatest evil committed by the human race (Deicide – the murder of God Himself) in order that the greatest good (Salvation and Reconciliation of the Human Race to God) can be accomplished.
- Jesus as the “New Adam” reestablishes the Paradise lost by the Old Adam by undergoing death (evil) and conquering it with the Resurrection. The Paradise gained by Jesus is fully attained and experienced in Heaven (The Spiritual World).

THE REDEMPTIVE VALUE OF SUFFERING

- Evil and suffering are linked together. Where there is evil, suffering follows.
- Human suffering can be physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual.
- Jesus takes the evil and suffering brought into the world by Sin and by means of the Cross transforms it into the glorious work of redemption.
- Because of His great love for us, He allows us to participate in this great work of redemption.

FILLING UP WHAT IS LACKING

- Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. (Colossians 1:24)
- Those words of St. Paul are a puzzle to some, for they seem to imply that something is lacking in the Passion of Christ. St. Paul is speaking here of the Mystical Body of Christ, made up of Christ, **the Head**, and all souls in the state of grace who are **the members** of His Body. It is in the members of His Body that something is lacking.

THE MYSTICAL BODY

- Pope Pius XII spoke of this in his encyclical on the Mystical Body:
- *"In carrying out the work of redemption Christ wishes to be helped by the members of His Body. This is not because He is indigent or weak, but rather because He so willed it for the greater glory of His spotless Spouse (the Church).*
- *Dying on the Cross, He left to the Church the immense treasury of the Redemption. Towards this she (the Church) contributed nothing.*
- *But when those graces come to be distributed, not only does He share this task of sanctification with His Church, but he wants it, in a way, to be due to her action.*
- *What a deep mystery . . . that the salvation of many depends on the **prayers** and **voluntary penances** which the members of the Mystical Body offer for that intention.*

THE MYSTERY OF HIS PASSION

- There is no grace that comes to any human that was not merited by Jesus Christ. He had no need of any other in redeeming the human race.
- But Jesus willed that **the mystery of His Passion continue on in us**, so that we may be associated with Him in the work of redemption.
- Jesus could have accomplished this alone, but **He willed to need us** in order to apply the infinite merits of His Passion to souls.

OUR SHARING IN THE REDEMPTION

- Now if we are children, then we are heirs— heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. (Romans 8:17)
- Human suffering, when accepted and offered up in union with the Passion of Jesus, can remit the just punishment for one's sins or for the sins of another.

EMBRACE THE CROSS

- Think of it. By accepting willingly and without complaint the little inconveniences, irritations, frustrations, delays, setbacks, etc. which God in His Providence allows to come our way, we can pay in part the debt that we, or others, have incurred by our sins.
- Because God is **just**, He demands that the debt of suffering be paid,, but because He is **merciful**, He allows one person to *"fill up what is lacking"* in another member of the Mystical Body which is the Church.

GOD'S PROVIDENCE

- We naturally try to eliminate all forms of suffering from our life, but insofar as they are beyond our power to control, they are part of God's providence.
- God foresees them, allows them, and can bring good out of them if we trust in Him. Suffering in some form or other is the lot of every human, saint as well as sinner.
- But since our attitude toward them can make them **profitable** or **unprofitable** (even increase our misery), it is important to see them in the light of the Gospel, in the light of God's providence.
- That is because suffering can get one down, or it can bring one closer to God. It can make one resentful and bitter - even blaming God for his lot, or it can make one more conscious of God's providence at work. It can make one turn in on himself in self-pity, or it can help one to open out upon the world in apostolic and redemptive action.

SUMMARY

- **Faith** and **Reason** are modes of knowledge that compliment and edify each other.
- We can know with certitude that God exists by **Reason** alone.
- We can know the true purpose of life by **Faith** in the Revelation of the Son of God – Jesus Christ.
- We can better understand the meaning of evil and suffering through **Faith** in the Catholic Church's teaching on the value of redemptive suffering.