

# REASONS TO BELIEVE: NATURAL THEOLOGY

By Msgr. Lawrence Moran & Ronald J. Eldred

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By using human reason, we hope to prove beyond a reasonable doubt in this document that God exists; identify his attributes or perfections; that we owe him worship, thanksgiving, obedience, and love; that the human soul is immortal; that God established an objective moral order called the natural law; that God revealed himself in Scripture; and that he established the Catholic Church to continue his presence in the world and to provide the means with which to distribute his graces and mercy.

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## REASONS TO BELIEVE: NATURAL THEOLOGY

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*“Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence.” (1 Peter 3:15-16)*

### THE MEANING OF NATURAL THEOLOGY

Beginning with St. Augustine, theologians and philosophers discussed carefully and at length the relationships between faith and revealed religion (theology) on the one hand, and reason (philosophy) on the other. Faith was derived from what God had revealed in the Bible and Tradition and philosophy provided the preambles for religious faith. According to the *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, Preambles of the Faith are “the main premises of reason on which the act of divine faith depends as on its rational foundation.” According to Ronda Chervin and Eugene Kevane in *Love of Wisdom: An Introduction to Christian Philosophy*, philosophy doesn’t enter into religious faith as its substance, but serves it in the initial stages of the return of the soul to God. They say:



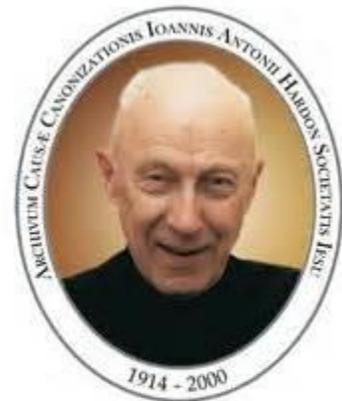
One can see this relationship between reason and faith in the method of St. Thomas. For example, in his *Summa contra Gentiles* (IV, I), he explains that there are two orders of knowledge: reason and revelation...Then he explains in the *Summa* . . . their departure from creatures, ascending by the work of reason to God. Book IV will take its departure from divine revelation, descending from God to the creatures of the created universe. In other words, St. Thomas' method exemplifies the relationship between faith and reason, and can be seen in this structure of the *Summa contra Gentiles*. Furthermore, in the first three books, which are philosophical in nature, the philosophizing proceeds within the Faith, which is its guiding star, so that it will not fall to one side or the other, deviating into errors of various kinds.

They continue to inform us that St. Thomas uses the same method from another point of view in the *Summa Theologiae* “where rational theology is expounded in classic form in the first questions of the *Summa*, which is devoted to sacred doctrine.” They conclude that in Aquinas, *Summa* "philosophy is seen as thought functioning visibly within the Faith. Yet it remains natural theology, the work of natural reason ascending to God, and discerning his most basic attributes, out of the preambles of Faith.” Natural Theology employs philosophy to make it reasonable to believe that God exists and something of his attributes or perfections. It also is used to make it reasonable to believe that God revealed

himself to us. On the other hand, Sacred Theology begins with the fact of God’s revelation. Regarding Sacred Theology, St. Thomas Aquinas said the Church has “a science of the things that can be concluded from the Articles of Faith” (On Truth, 14, 9, ad 3). Chervin and Kevane write that:

The science of Sacred Theology seeks to understand the Articles and mysteries of the Faith more deeply, to perceive their interconnections, and to defend them from error. It does not receive its principles from the human sciences, not even from metaphysics, but takes them immediately from God through the revelation proposed by the Church. Sacred theology, therefore, is a science that stands on a higher level, using the natural arts, sciences, and disciplines as it judges them to be helpful. It itself, however, is the science that teaches divine revelation, elaborating it and developing it in its own order. Sacred theology is called "sacred" because of this fact that it takes its departure from the Articles of Faith and develops its discourse in their light. One must recall that the Articles of Faith summarize divine revelation by the authority of the Church, which gathered them into the basic profession of baptismal faith called the Apostles' Creed. St. Thomas Aquinas is at special pains to show that sacred theology takes its point of departure and the light of its discourse from the Apostles' Creed.

Fr. John Hardon defines Natural Theology in his *New Catholic Dictionary* as “The knowledge of God, his existence and attributes, derived from the world of nature and by the light of natural reason; also called theodicy.” In other words, Natural Theology starts from observing what God has created and reasons from that to proof of his existence and attributes or perfections. The ancient Greeks aspired to Natural Theology, something that the Fathers of the Church received and developed, especially in the work of St. Augustine. Chervin and Kevane state that “the very existence and nature of natural theology, the result of the metaphysical ascent of the mind to God, manifests the manner in which philosophy relates to faith and revealed religion. The one and same transcendent reality of Almighty God, who is seen and recognized by the metaphysical ascent, is heard speaking his word to his creatures and revealing himself to them by doing so.” Regarding our ability to know the truth about God by utilizing Natural Theology, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that “Our holy mother, the Church, holds and teaches that God, the first principle and last end of all things, can be known with certainty from the created world by the natural light of human reason. Without this capacity, man would not be able to welcome God's revelation. Man has this capacity because he is created ‘in the image of God’ (No. 36).



*Servant of God*  
Father John Hardon, S.J.

However, because of our fallen human nature, there is a limit to what we can know about God using human reason. We need his revelation. At this point of our discussions we must prove that it is reasonable to believe that God revealed himself to us. During this discussion we will examine the credibility and integrity of the sources of revelation—Scripture and Tradition. In this regard the *Catechism* says “In the historical conditions in which he finds himself, however, man experiences many difficulties in coming to know God by the light of reason alone:

Though human reason is, strictly speaking, truly capable by its own natural power and light of attaining to a true and certain knowledge of the one personal God, who watches over and controls the world by his providence, and of the natural law written in our hearts by the Creator; yet there are many obstacles which prevent reason from the effective and fruitful use of this inborn faculty. For the truths that concern the relations between God and man wholly transcend the visible order of things, and, if they are translated into human action and influence it, they call for self-surrender and abnegation. The human mind, in its turn, is hampered in the attaining of such truths, not only by the impact of the senses and the imagination, but also by disordered appetites which are the consequences of original sin. So it happens that men in such matters easily persuade themselves that what they would not like to be true is false or at least doubtful. (No. 37)

The *Catechism* concludes by asserting that “This is why man stands in need of being enlightened by God's revelation, not only about those things that exceed his understanding, but also "about those religious and moral truths which of themselves are not beyond the grasp of human reason, so that even in the present condition of the human race, they can be known by all men with ease, with firm certainty and with no admixture of error” (No. 38).

## THE GOAL OF THIS ESSAY

Our goal is to provide readers with reasons to believe that what the Catholic Church teaches is true. First we are going to discuss what it means to believe something, especially the truths that God has revealed to us. This will involve examining the role of faith, reason, and certitude in our search for truth. One of the issues that we will consider during this discussion is: How can we know the truths of the Faith with certainty? Then using human reason, we are going to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that God exists. All other knowledge of religion presupposes that he does. Once we have established that God does exist, or at least making it reasonable to believe that he does exist, using human reason we are going to identify his attributes or perfections. Then based on rational proof of God's existence and something of his attributes, using human reason we are going to establish that we owe God worship, thanksgiving, and obedience. Furthermore, we hope

to prove by using reason that the human soul is immortal and that God established an objective moral order called the natural law.

However, because of our fallen human nature, there is a limit to what we can know about God using human reason. We need his revelation. At this point of our discussions we must prove that it is reasonable to believe that God revealed himself to us. During this discussion we will examine the credibility and integrity of the sources of revelation— Scripture and Tradition.

In order to achieve these objectives, in other essays we will examine the basics from the traditional Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysical point of view, variations on this thought, and various attempts of modern philosophers and theologians to refute it. Before applying the knowledge acquired thus far to specific applications, we discuss philosophies that rejected the Church’s metaphysical manner of explaining its teachings, and how to refute its critics.

Following this we explain how Christ established the Catholic Church to continue his presence in the world and provide us with the means of grace with which to achieve salvation. Proof that God revealed himself depends on the truth that he established a church, the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

It is extremely important to stress that only the Catholic Church can attest to the truth of the Bible. One of the most important subjects considered is proof that Jesus Christ established a church and that this church is the Catholic Church. This is extremely important to prove, because it is the Church that guarantees that God’s revelation is true. The Church was there to witness the events described in the Bible and Tradition, eventually wrote them down, and transmitted them down through the ages for our benefit. In this regard, St. Augustine wrote in *Against the Fundamental Epistle of Manichaeus* that “For my part, I should not believe the gospel except as moved by the authority of the Catholic Church.” The *Catechism* says of this matter: “The Church, ‘the pillar and bulwark of the truth’, faithfully guards ‘the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints’. She guards the memory of Christ’s words; it is she who from generation to generation hands on the apostles’ confession of faith” (No. 171). Substantial evidence will be offered in this website to make it reasonable to believe that this claim is true.



Once the philosophical and theological tools have been presented, we include a thorough overview of the four pillars of the Faith as found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

The pillars are as follows: the Creed; the Sacraments; the Commandments; and Prayer. To deepen our understanding of the Faith and increase our ability to defend it against its critics, we shall examine the reasonableness of believing some of the most fundamental doctrines of the Nicene Creed, such as God is a Trinity of three divine persons; the Incarnation and Redemption; the Crucifixion and Resurrection; and the Ascension. We are going to attempt to prove that these doctrines are reasonable to believe beyond a reasonable doubt. One of the most important subjects during this discussion will be proof that Jesus Christ established a church and that this church is the Catholic Church. This is extremely important to do, because it is the Church that guarantees that God's revelation is true. Then the Sacraments are explained from a metaphysical point of view, followed by a discussion of Christian morality from a natural law point of view and the personalist philosophical perspective developed by Pope John Paul II. The focus is on the universal call to holiness explaining how one can grow in virtue and holiness by keeping the Commandments and following the teachings of Jesus as found in his Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere in the Gospels. The topic of prayer includes a discussion of the classical mystical prayer tradition of the great spiritual theologians and directors in the Church's history.

Not only are the philosophical and theological tools that we have presented applied to an understanding of the doctrines found in the Creed, but to other topics such as the Church and World, Justice in the Marketplace, Dialectical Materialism, Liberal Capitalism and the Social Encyclicals, Social Justice, War and Peace, Church and State, Christ as King and Lord of History, Man and Woman, Husband and Wife, Suffering in Christ, The Body of Christ, the Universal Call to Holiness, and Praying in Christ.

The importance of what God has revealed to us in the Bible is so great that we include a separate treatment of this subject. Every doctrine of the Catholic Faith is found either explicitly or at least implicitly in the Bible. We begin by discussing the purposes, origins, and versions of the Bible, followed by a consideration of the books of the Bible, both individually and in their natural groupings. Besides the doctrinal and spiritual message of each book, we discuss the historical and social context of the Bible. Moreover, we introduce how the Bible has been interpreted (or misinterpreted) over the ages. A major theme of the course is St. Augustine's theme of how the New Testament is concealed in the Old, and how the Old is revealed or fulfilled in the New Testament. Another major theme is the covenantal relationship God had with his Chosen People (the Jews,) and how this covenant (Testament) was fulfilled and perfected in the New and the Eternal Covenant (Testament).

## THE MEANING OF FAITH

Let's begin our discussion of Faith, Reason, and Certitude by asking "What is faith?" The simplest definition of faith is that it means to believe something. Faith equals belief. To believe means to have a firm conviction in the reality or truth of something. The *New Catholic Dictionary* defines faith as "an assent of the mind to the truth of some proposition on the word of another." It states that faith is "The acceptance of the word of another, trusting that one knows what the other is saying and is honest in telling the truth. If one says he believes a statement that I have made about something, he is expressing a trust in my knowledge and honesty. The basic motive of all faith is the authority (or right to be believed) of someone who is speaking . . . It is called divine faith when the one believed is God, and human faith when the persons believed are human beings." It differs from assent in matters of science in that science is based on evidence of fact, whereas faith is based solely on the word of another. Just as with human or natural matters, our belief in the truth of religious matters must be based on the word of others that we trust, because our conclusions are not based on facts and principles that we have personally seen or experienced.

The *Catechism* distinguishes between two meanings of faith: faith as a personal matter of belief (*fides qua*), and Faith (usually capitalized) as a set of doctrines to be believed (*fides quae*).

### ***Faith as a personal matter***

Faith as a personal matter according to the *Catechism* "is an intellectual assent to the truths and doctrines of revelation and the basis for spiritual and moral action." Having faith then is "a personal adherence of man to God. At the same time, and inseparably, it is a free assent to the whole truth that God has revealed" (No. 150). Elsewhere the *Catechism* says of faith: "In faith, the human intellect and will cooperate with divine Grace" (No. 155). The meaning of faith in this sense means believing what God has revealed to be true. In line with this reasoning, St. Thomas Aquinas defined believing (what God has revealed) as "an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will, moved by God through grace." Since divine faith is a theological virtue, it must be infused by God into the soul, but requires an act of the will to command the intellect to accept it.

### ***Faith as a set of doctrines***

What God has revealed was formulated by the Catholic Church into doctrines that make

up the Deposit of Faith (*fides quae*). The doctrines are found in the Holy Bible and Sacred Tradition as interpreted by the *magisterium* or teaching authority of the Catholic Church under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. These formulated doctrines or teachings are found in the Church's creeds, liturgies, and catechisms, papal documents, and the documents of Church councils. In this regard, the *Catechism* states:

We do not believe in formulas, but in those realities they express, which faith allows us to touch. The believer's act [of faith] does not terminate in the propositions, but in the realities [which they express]. All the same, we do approach these realities with the help of formulations of the faith which permit us to express the faith and to hand it on, to celebrate it in community, to assimilate and live on it more and more (No. 170).

In summary, believing is what is called having faith (*fides qua*) in the content of Faith (*fides quae*). Faith as content is the object of faith, which ultimately leads to God, whereas faith as belief is the act of faith. As Peter Kreeft says in his *Handbook of Catholic Apologetics*, “reason can take us a ways up the mountain to Heaven, but faith can take us all the way to the top.”

### ***Knowing contrasted with believing***

Knowing and believing are often contrasted to each other; however, they differ in that knowing something (proper knowledge) means one has actually witnessed it himself or has arrived at it by a process of reasoning, whereas believing is attained by accepting the word of others as true. Most of what we believe to be true is accepted on the word of others, such as clergy, parents, teachers, and experts in various fields, because there is very little that we can witness or experience ourselves during our limited and short lifetimes. Although believing is often used interchangeably with having faith in something, it may or may not imply certitude in the believer. On the other hand, faith almost always implies certitude.

Fr. Hardon tells us that “In theology belief is certain or it is not belief.” To believe means to have a firm conviction in the reality of something; a synonym for reality is truth. When we profess the Nicene Creed we say “I believe” because we accept the doctrines contained therein on the word of another, the Catholic Church. In matters related to God, we simply can't have all of the facts, because much, if not most about God is a mystery. As we have ascertained, believing does not mean that one isn't sure of the truth of something. Countless millions have suffered persecution and even given their lives for what they believed to be true. We have achieved the truth about something when our convictions correspond with reality, what really is true about the matter. Most of what guides our lives is a matter

of belief, because we cannot see or experience everything. The truth of most things must be accepted on the word of others. The key is that our sources of information must be honest and credible.

Why then do we say that “I believe” the doctrines contained in the Creed rather than “I know” them to be true? Is it because we aren’t sure? Believing something to be true or real is akin to what we mean by faith. I believe means I have faith in something. In fact, the *New Catholic Dictionary* defines belief as “accepting of something as true on the word of another.” On the other hand, one can properly use the word “knowledge” or to say that he knows something to be true only when he comes to conclusions based on facts and principles that he has personally seen or is based on a chain of reasoning that he has carefully thought through. However, people commonly use the word “knowledge” to mean anything they are relatively certain about whether it be obtained from personal observation or based on the testimony of others. In either case, they say they know something to be true. However, if what they say they know to be true is based on the word of others, this is an improper use of the word knowledge and is more akin to what one means when he says he believes something, because it is based on the word of others. On the other hand, an example often used to illustrate this point is when one says he believes the sky to be blue and he is looking at it and it is blue, he is using the word *belief* improperly; he does not believe in this case, but *knows* the sky is blue.

Just as with human or natural matters, our belief in the truth of religious matters must be based on the word of others that we trust, because our conclusions are not based on facts and principles that we have personally seen or experienced. We believe religious truths on the testimony of others. This is why there exists the virtue of faith, which is from God, but we must cooperate with it. Only in Heaven will our faith become fact, our hope realized. Because the events described in the Bible happened long ago, and we didn’t witness them ourselves, we must rely on a credible and trustworthy source—the Catholic Church—which witnessed these events, wrote them down in the scriptures for our benefit, and transmitted them to the present. Our trust is placed in the Catholic Church. Once one comes to believe in the truth of the Catholic Church, everything that the Church proposes for our belief can be believed with a reasonable, even absolute assurance that it is true.

### ***Human Faith***

That faith is based solely on the word of others might be hard to understand, but isn’t most of what we believe based on the word of others? Fr. John Hardon tells us that we start to believe the moment we are born. He was one of the greatest catechists and apologists for the Catholic Faith of the twentieth century. In fact, he was on the board of Seton,

the school with which John Paul II Catholic High School is affiliated. Fr. Hardon explains that belief begins when we come to trust that father and mother will protect us and take care of our needs. Then as we go through life, we trust an increasing number of people to satisfy our needs and provide us with knowledge, such as brothers and sisters and other family members, as well as neighbors, teachers, and the like. If we didn't trust and listen to people, we wouldn't believe anything we hear or read. Life would be impossible. We simply can't experience and verify everything that we learn; we have to trust and accept the word of others. We have to believe that whatever they tell us is true, at least until it is proven otherwise. Fr. Hardon says that:

Who would ever read a book unless he believed in its author? Who would never buy an article of clothing or furniture; who would ever sit down to eat a meal he had not personally prepared; who would go to school, or listen to a teacher? Who would ever marry another person? Who would sign a contract or open a friendship or enter the priesthood or convent? Who would ever listen to another person talk or elect a public official? In a word, what would we do unless we trusted people and their word and believed in their promises? What would we do?

So it appears then that human beings are made to believe. Without trust social life would be impossible and social communication would be irrational. According to Fr. Hardon, the human soul is made to believe and the human heart is made to accept people and their words in trustful confidence. This is so true that once our confidence has been betrayed, our trust broken, we can become socially and mentally crippled. He says, "There are no unbelievers except those who are totally insane. It is part of rational man as a social being to believe. The only difference is in the way people believe or in whom. There is no question of not believing."

### ***Belief is not opinion***

Often people equate believing something with opinion. Fr. Hardon tells us that for the ordinary person the word belief is roughly equivalent to opinion. When one says "I believe that the nation's rate of unemployment will rise next year", he means that in his opinion it probably will rise, but he is not sure of it. This is not our meaning of belief in theology. In theology belief is certain or it is not belief. As we said earlier, "faith or belief is an assent of the mind to the truth of some proposition on the word of another," which produces certitude. Also, as we discussed earlier, this meaning of belief we find even on the human level of discussion. For example, if one says that he or she believes a statement that I have made about something, he or she is expressing a trust in my knowledge and honesty.

According to Fr. Hardon, much of our practical knowledge in life and almost all of our

theoretical knowledge are based on human faith. Children take almost everything on the word of their parents, while students absorb almost all they learn from their textbooks and the lectures of their teachers. He tells us that we learn what is going on in our city, country and world almost exclusively from reports in the print and electronic media, all of them informing us through human faith. Passengers believe on the word of others that the jet or train or bus is going to one city instead of a hundred other possible destinations, and shoppers believe on human faith the labels on cans of food. Fr. Hardon says that, “Indeed, it can be said that belief and faith are at the very foundation of human life even on the purely natural level. It cannot be a surprise that they are also the first step of a life lived on the divine level.” As we shall see later, what Fr. Hardon is leading to is Divine faith.

### ***Belief requires commitment that something is true***

So it seems that when one says he or she believes something, even on the natural level, he or she is reasonably certain that it is true. Belief involves commitment. Fr. Hardon says that belief is more than a mere intellectual agreement. He gives an example of one in an airport who theoretically accepts the television monitor's announcement that flight so-and-so goes to a certain city, but that one's acceptance is complete when he or she not only agrees intellectually with the information, but also steps into the plane and buckles up. He states that one has then committed his or her safety to another person. Therefore, belief and faith are thoroughly interpersonal matters. Father remarks that “When there is a genuine acceptance of the word of another there is also a trust in that person's integrity and knowledge. The more we know and love another, the more we are inclined to receive his statements and protestations. The better the person, the more he is worthy of our trust.”

Therefore, when one says he or she believes something, he or she is reasonably certain that it is true, that it reflects what really is regarding the matter. As I said earlier, belief produces certitude. Fr. Hardon tells us in this regard that believing something to be true is not equivalent to saying “I think something is true” or “it seems likely that such is the case.” He says that “If an assent is not sure, it is not belief, but a mere private calculation based on what one deems likely or unlikely.” He goes on to say, “Even on the human level, he who doubts does not believe. The person who doubts another's statement somehow questions the speaker's reliability: his knowledge, his memory or his honesty. There is something lacking to a full interpersonal trust.”

### ***Divine Faith***

Divine Faith is even more certain than human faith. If what we have been discussing about the certainty of belief on the merely human or natural level—that is human faith—how much more this must be true on the divine level, the level of Divine Faith. If we can say that we can believe others on the natural or human level with certainty—that is at least with reasonable certainty—it is even much truer on the divine and supernatural level, for as Fr. Hardon says “God is the purest knowledge and the purest holiness and the purest integrity. When he speaks we give an unqualified assent and entertain no doubt whatsoever.”

In religion, faith is the acceptance of what God has revealed as witnessed and attested by the Catholic Church and found in the Bible and Tradition. Once one comes to believe in the truth of the Church, everything that she proposes for our belief can be believed with a reasonable, even absolute assurance that it is true. So believing and having faith are both based on the word of others, but only Divine Faith is absolutely certain, because it is from God who can neither deceive nor be deceived. The authority of human beings depends on their trustworthiness and on their ability to know the truth of something. The *Catechism* states in this regard.

What moves us to believe is not the fact that revealed truths appear as true and intelligible in the light of our natural reason: we believe because of the authority of God himself who reveals them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. So that the submission of our faith might nevertheless be in accordance with reason, God willed that external proofs of his Revelation should be joined to the internal helps of the Holy Spirit. Thus the miracles of Christ and the saints, prophecies, the Church's growth and holiness, and her fruitfulness and stability are the most certain signs of divine Revelation, adapted to the intelligence of all; they are “motives of credibility (*motiva credibilitatis*), which show that the assent of faith is by no means a blind impulse of the mind (No 156).

The *Catechism* concludes that “Faith is a gift of God, a supernatural virtue infused by him. Before this faith can be exercised, man must have the grace of God to move and assist him; he must have the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and converts it to God, who opens the eyes of the mind and makes it easy for all to accept and believe the truth” (No 153). Divine Faith is more certain than all human knowledge, because “it is founded on the very word of God who cannot lie” (No.157). Fr. Hardon says that Divine Faith is “The infused theological virtue whereby a person is enabled to believe that what God has revealed is true—not because its intrinsic truth is seen with the rational light of reason—but because of the authority of God who reveals it, of God who can neither deceive nor be deceived.” Divine Faith is certain; human faith, which also depends on the credibility of the person, is more akin to believing.

In human faith, believing is the acceptance of something as true on a trustworthy person's word. It differs from Divine Faith only in the stress on confidence in the one who is believed. Moreover, Fr. Hardon informs us that belief emphasizes the act of the will, which disposes one to believe, where faith is rather the act of the mind, which assents to what is believed." The role of the will in faith is to give assent to what is presented to it by the intellect. The intellect must determine whether or not something proposed to it is reasonable to believe, that it is something good to believe, but the will must move the intellect to give its assent. The recognition of truth, the goodness of the object, or of the reasonableness of belief incites the will, which brings reason (intellect) to assent. God infuses the theological virtue of faith into the human soul only if the recipient is willing to accept it, for he respects our freedom of the will and does not force anything on us. Having Divine Faith makes one absolutely certain of that which the Church proposes as true. St. Thomas Aquinas defined believing (what God has revealed) as "an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will, moved by God through grace."

***Credible witnesses are in a position to know the truth of the matter***

Just as with human or natural matters, our belief in the truth of religious matters must be based on the word of others that we trust, because, for the most part, our conclusions are not based on facts and principles that we have personally seen or experienced. I believe that once one comes to believe in the truth of the Catholic Church, everything that the Church proposes for our belief can be believed with a reasonable, even absolute assurance that it is true, because it witnessed the events described in the Bible, wrote descriptions of them down, and transmitted them down through the ages for our benefit. In other words, we believe religious truths on the testimony of another—the other being the Catholic Church.

Where do we find the information needed to understand and defend the Faith? Where can we get this knowledge? Knowledge comes to us either through our senses or by direct infusion by God, what is called inspiration. Most knowledge enters our minds through the senses, meaning our ability to see, hear, smell, taste, and feel. One can attain knowledge of the Faith by listening to EWTN radio and television. Or one can study good religion books like the ones we used at John Paul II Catholic High School in the apologetics and other courses. Teenagers can attend a school like John Paul II. Adults can attend courses offered by their parishes or deaneries. One can read the Church Fathers and other good theologians who have explained and defended the Catholic Faith over the centuries. Another invaluable source is the lives of the saints. Although one might be able to learn the main truths revealed by God by his own efforts, in general the usual way is through the Church, which Christ commissioned to teach in his name and with his authority. Of

course, the main source of knowledge concerning the Faith is Sacred Scripture and Tradition. And don't forget the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* or other suitable catechisms. Wherever one gets his or her information, study must be done prayerfully to achieve understanding of what he or she has learned. Done in this spirit, the Holy Spirit will inspire one with a deeper appreciation and understanding of the Faith.

### ***Why it is difficult to know the truth with certainty***

What makes it so difficult for us to know the truth of things with absolute certainty? I could give several psychological and sociological reasons, but ultimately it is because of our fallen human nature due to the consequences of Original Sin. Among the consequences of Original Sin are a diminished intellect, a weakened will, an imagination that an run wild, a deficient memory, and the urge to sin—concupiscence—all of which militate against our ability to know God and his truth. This makes it difficult for us to know the truth of religious matters with absolute certainty; however, we can achieve certainty with the infusion of the gift of faith. Our belief can be akin to knowing (proper knowledge), when God himself guarantees it through the Catholic Church.

Furthermore, another reason knowing the truth is difficult to know something is because everything that we know originally existed outside of our intellect, our minds. In order for us to know something, it must somehow get from the outside into our minds. Knowledge of the reality outside of us can get into our minds only by passing through our senses, that is, by perception, or by direct infusion. By the senses we mean our ability to smell, see, hear, touch, and taste. By infusion we mean knowledge that is directly put into our minds by God. For example, the Holy Spirit inspired the writers of the Holy Bible to know the truth of God's Revelation. In prayer God inspires us to understand things that we couldn't otherwise understand. Moreover, God's law, the natural law, is written on our hearts.

How is it possible that we know things that exist outside of our minds with certainty? In order for us to know anything with certainty, what is in our minds must correspond with what is really outside of us, what really exists outside of our minds. Some have argued that we can't know anything with certainty, because everything has to be filtered through the senses, which are imperfect. The blind person perceives differently than persons with sight. Reality for the deaf person is different than for those who can hear. The deaf and blind person even more so. Moreover, to compound the problem, our senses are conditioned by our way of life or culture, our past, our personality, and other factors. What's more, evil spirits can mislead us. And most importantly, our wounded nature militates against our knowing the truth of things about God with absolute certainty. All of these can militate against our knowing the truth with certainty. Nonetheless, with all of these lim-

itations, God created us with the ability to comprehend the outside world, even the past world. All of limitations are all the more reason why we need the Church to guide us to the truth. The Church was established by Jesus Christ and has been here since he walked the earth. Only the Church can verify the truth of what the Bible teaches and the Nicene Creed professes. We can trust with absolute confidence that what she teaches is true. The Church has always taught that we can know the truth of things outside of our minds with a reasonable degree of certainty, even with absolute certainty. The Church should know, because it was there to witness the events described in the Bible, wrote them down, and transmitted them down through the ages for our benefit.

### ***Why humans believe in men but not God***

St. John asked the question, “How is it that humans are so ready to believe in men, yet are so slow to believe in God?” Fr. Hardon asks “Why is this so true?” He answers “How, indeed! How is it that gullible man who is so ready to believe in the most bizarre TV statements or in the most atrocious editorials in newspapers; how is it that this same person can suddenly become so skeptical when God speaks and when the message He communicates is His own divine wisdom?” He says that whatever the reason, it’s not that man is not inclined to believe. He muses, “Might it not be that what God asks him to believe is so demanding and the cost to man’s generosity is so great?”

Then Fr. Hardon goes on to say, “As we look at the shambles of faith in the western world today, we are tempted to exclaim, ‘What happened? Why have so many Catholics, so well educated, suddenly stopped believing?’” He answers, “No one but God knows the full answer. But one reason, it seems to me, is that in today’s agnostic climate only a realized faith can be trusted to endure.” By realized faith, he means, “a well-grounded conviction that what I believe makes sense, that it is not a mirage, that I have reasons for being a Christian and a Catholic, which first of all satisfies my mind as credible.” I think what he is making reference to here is the need for apologetics, an explanation and defense of the Catholic Faith. I’ve heard Msgr. Moran say on numerous occasions that the second largest denomination next to the Catholic Church in this country is fallen away Catholics. It is they as much as others outside the faith that need evangelized.

### ***Divine Faith is even more certain than human faith***

Above we said that Divine Faith is even more certain than human faith. Recall that we earlier quoted Fr. Hardon as saying “much of our practical knowledge in life and almost all of our theoretical knowledge are based on human faith.” On the other hand, he asserts

in the *New Catholic Dictionary* that “Divine faith is the holding of some truth as absolutely certain because God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived, has spoken it. It is not merely a feeling or a suspicion or an opinion, but a firm, unshakeable adherence of the mind to a truth revealed by God.”

All that God has revealed and nothing else is the object of Divine Faith, for it is that and that alone which can be accepted on the word of God. Though a person may be able by his own resources to learn the main truths revealed by God, the normal and usual way is through the Church which has been commissioned by Christ to teach in his name and with his authority. Divine Faith is a supernatural act and therefore requires the grace of God. This grace is given to all adults who do not place any obstacle in its way. Without faith no man can be saved. For infants the virtue of faith received at the time of Baptism suffices, but for adults an act of supernatural faith that God exists and rewards the good and punishes the evil is necessary for salvation. Divine faith is an infused virtue. Regarding Divine Faith the *Catechism* states:

What moves us to believe is not the fact that revealed truths appear as true and intelligible in the light of our natural reason: we believe ‘because of the authority of God himself who reveals them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived.’ So ‘that the submission of our faith might nevertheless be in accordance with reason, God willed that external proofs of his Revelation should be joined to the internal helps of the Holy Spirit.’ Thus the miracles of Christ and the saints, prophecies, the Church's growth and holiness, and her fruitfulness and stability are the most certain signs of divine Revelation, adapted to the intelligence of all; they are ‘motives of credibility’ (*motiva credibilitatis*), which show that the assent of faith is ‘by no means a blind impulse of the mind.’ Faith is certain. It is more certain than all human knowledge because it is founded on the very word of God who cannot lie. To be sure, revealed truths can seem obscure to human reason and experience, but the certainty that the divine light gives is greater than that which the light of natural reason gives.’ “Ten thousand difficulties do not make one doubt” (No. 156).

### ***The Motive of Divine Faith***

The motive of Divine Faith is the reason why we believe; it moves or motivates us to believe. We believe because of God's authority, his unfailing knowledge and truthfulness. We believe because God can neither deceive nor be deceived. We believe the truths of Faith not because our minds understand or see them, but because the infinitely wise and truthful God has revealed them. Fr. Hardon explains the grounds of the Motive of Faith as follows:

1. The Christ event grounds its own reality and certitude. In this regard, he says that,

“The risen Jesus manifests himself to his disciples and thus creates in them an experiential certitude regarding his Resurrection; this certitude then finds expression in the Christian kerygma.”

2. The apostolic community, the early *ecclesia* (Church), enjoys a primary and privileged position in mediating this Christ-event to the entire world. Regarding this, Fr. Hardon says “This first Christian community experienced the risen Lord and received an abundance of his transforming Spirit. They had no doubts about their proclamation, for it was rooted in what they could not possibly deny: their day by day experience of Jesus of Nazareth culminating in his Passion and death and crowned by the staggering experience of his risen life. ‘For this reason, the apostolic Church is normative for the Christian faith of every age, not simply because it is not possible to come in touch with the Christ-event except through the testimony of the apostolic Church but also and above all because the apostolic Church came into being through a privileged grace and revelation of Christ.’”
3. Within this early Church were conceived and from her womb were born the New Testament writings. On this matter, Fr. Hardon tells us that “These compositions were authored by her members and attested to by the whole community under the guidance of her leaders, the Apostles and their successors. Thus the New Testament and the apostolic Church are interlinked as normative for all later ages. They in turn are tied in with the unshakable Christ-event. The Spirit of the risen Jesus, who transformed the apostolic community on Pentecost, also inspired the Scriptures and continues to dwell in the Church, which Jesus founded. This risen Lord through his Spirit is the radical ground of our certitude, for he caused the Resurrection, inspired the New Testament and dwells in the pilgrim Church.”

Fr. Hardon concludes his discussion of the grounds for the motive of Faith by saying, “This ecclesial community in unbroken continuity from the first century to the twentieth and beyond cannot betray its indwelling Lord for he is with her until the end of time (Matthew 28:20). She cannot teach error, for ‘when the Spirit of truth comes, he will lead you to the whole truth’ (John 16:13). This Spirit is given to the Church forever, not just for the first century (John 14:16). Human beings cannot have a more secure source of certitude.” In summary, the Catholic Church was witness to the events described in the Bible, its apostles wrote them down in the scriptures, and the Church transmitted them down through the ages for the benefit of humankind. This is why St. Augustine said that he couldn’t believe what was in the Bible except for the witness of the Church.

### ***How one arrives at Divine Faith***

St. Thomas Aquinas' defined believing or having faith as "an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth, by command of the will, assisted by God's grace." Fr. Hardon in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary* defines intellect as "The spiritual power of cognition, knowing reality in a nonmaterial way. [It is] the faculty of thinking in a way essentially higher than with the senses and the imagination. It is possessed by human beings, disembodied souls, and the angels, both good and demonic." The intellect is our ability to understand and think. He defines the will as "The power of the human soul, or of a spiritual being, which tends toward a good or away from an evil recognized by the intellect. It is basically a rational appetite with several functions, namely the ability to intend, choose, desire, hope, consent, hate, love, and enjoy." According to St. Thomas Aquinas, the will is an innate inclination towards the good. In other words, it is a natural appetite or inclination for a general goodness. The intellect's role is to determine which particular good to seek and present to it to the will for consideration as something good. Since the intellect is an inclination towards truth and the will is oriented toward the good, the greatest good is truth, and the greatest of all truths is Truth itself, which is God; therefore, the intellect is an inclination towards truth, which ultimately leads to God.

Regarding believing, Fr. Hardon states it is "the acceptance of something as true on a trustworthy person's word. It differs from [divine] faith only in the stress on confidence in the one who is believed. Moreover, belief emphasizes the act of the will, which disposes one to believe, where faith is rather the act of the mind, which assents to what is believed." The role of the will in faith is to command the intellect to give assent to what is presented to it by the intellect. The intellect must determine whether or not something proposed to it is reasonable to believe, that it is something good to believe, but the will must move the intellect to give its assent. The recognition of truth, the goodness of the object, or of the reasonableness of belief incites the will, which brings reason (intellect) to assent. Still yet, God must move the will to accept the theological virtue of Divine Faith, but only if the recipient is willing to accept it, for God respects our freedom of the will and does not force anything on us. Having Divine Faith makes one absolutely certain of that which the Church proposes as true. One scholar perceptively summarizes this matter for us:

In order for the will to move the intellect to assent, and in order to preserve the truth basis of an agent's set of beliefs, the will must get the intellect to somehow judge that the proposition in question is more likely to be true than not. Consequently, the will gets the intellect to arrive at the likely truth of the proposition by working through other acts of the intellect, such as focusing on one kind of evidence over another, paying attention to certain kinds of facts and disregarding others, or giving more weight to some pieces of the evidence and less to others. In doing so, the will gets the intellect to judge that the proposition is most likely true and thus the will is able to command the intellect to assent.

Not only does the will play an important role in acquiring ordinary beliefs, but Aquinas also teaches that the will is essential to Divine Faith. The object of Divine Faith is God himself, the greatest good of all.

Wherever one gets his or her information, study must be done prayerfully to achieve understanding of what he or she has learned. Done in this spirit, the Holy Spirit inspires us with a deeper appreciation and understanding of the Faith. Fr. Juan R. Vélez, an expert on the theology of John Henry Newman, gives us the final word on this by stating “what does [Newman] say to the average person striving to live a Christian life in a secular world? Newman advised to walk by faith and to win one’s salvation with “fear and trembling.” In other words, if you want the prize you must fight for it, and this calls for a humble faith in God.

## MOTIVES OF CREDIBILITY

The term motives of credibility has come up several times during our discussion. It must not be confused with Motives of Divine Faith. We said above that the Motive of Divine Faith is the reason why we believe. We believe because of God's authority, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. It is God who moves us to believe if we accept his offer of grace. On the other hand, motives of credibility are the signs, and among them the most certain are miracles and prophecies, by which we can conclude with full certitude that God has revealed and that therefore there is a strict obligation to accept the truths he has made known. Motives of credibility deal with evidence that what has been revealed is true. It is these motives of credibility which precede the act of faith and which make it essentially reasonable to assent to the truths of faith

In other words, motives of credibility prepare the will to receive the infused virtue of Divine Faith. They make the truths of the Faith believable, i.e. credible, or reasonable to believe. They motivate us to open ourselves to the infusion of God's gift of Divine Faith. The more we open ourselves to God's grace, the more grace he will infuse into our souls and the stronger will be our faith. This is true because once one is certain that God has spoken, it is unreasonable to withhold assent to what he has revealed. Motives of credibility are signs by which we can be certain of the truths that God has revealed; therefore one is strictly obligated to accept the truths he has made known. Among the surest motives of credibility are miracles and prophecies. Essentially, apologetics is the science of motives of credibility, because it strives to make reasonable the truths of the faith.

The Church has spoken officially regarding the motives of credibility. For example, the First Vatican Council said in regard to the motives of credibility, "in order that the submission of our faith should be in accordance with reason, it was God's will that there should be linked to the internal assistance of the Holy Spirit external indications of his revelation, that is to say divine acts, and first and foremost miracles and prophecies, which clearly demonstrating as they do the omnipotence and infinite knowledge of God, are the most certain signs of revelation and are suited to the understanding of all" (Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic faith, Chapter 3, On faith).

I'll give an analogy I have heard to illustrate our point. Motives of credibility prepare the soil in which the planter, God, can plant the seed of faith. The motives of credibility plow and cultivate the soil, the soil being analogous to the soul's faculties of intellect and free will. The motives, which are reasons to believe, are introduced to the intellect, which determines whether or not they are reasonable to believe, which are, in turn, presented to the will to decide whether or to give assent. When the soil is ready, the planter, the Holy Spirit, plants the seeds of faith, which are analogous to the motive of faith, which is based

on God's authority, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. So, when one has faith, that is, he believes what God has revealed, he or she can say the Nicene Creed with a firm conviction that the statements contained therein are true.

To repeat, the Motives of credibility are reasons to believe. Motive means to move and credibility means "the quality or power of inspiring belief." Motives of credibility are the signs, such as miracles and prophecies, by which we can be certain of what God has revealed, and that there is a strict obligation to accept the truths he has made known. Motives of credibility deal with evidence that what has been revealed is true or at least reasonable to believe. The evidence is found in many sources: miracles and fulfilled prophecies found in the Old and New Testaments; the Tradition of the Catholic Church; the writings of the Church Fathers and Doctors, and other saintly theologians down through the ages; the glorious history of the Catholic Church; scientific discoveries that support the Faith; modern miracles; the lives of countless virtuous and holy persons; hundreds of logical inferences taken from Scholastic and Personalist philosophies; personal religious experience; internal experience of conscience; and others.

St. Thomas Aquinas defined believing or having faith as "an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth, by command of the will, assisted by God's grace." Motives of Credibility precede the act of faith and make it reasonable to assent or agree to the truths of Faith. They prepare the will to receive the infused virtue of Divine Faith. They make the truths of the Faith believable, credible. They motivate us to open ourselves to the infusion of the gift of faith. The more we open ourselves to God's grace, the more grace he will infuse into our souls and the stronger will be our faith. This is true because once one is certain that God has spoken, it is unreasonable to withhold assent to what he has revealed. Motives of credibility are signs by which we can be certain of the truths that God has revealed; therefore, one is strictly obligated to accept the truths he has made known.

It is important to emphasize here that although the motives of credibility precede faith and dispose one to believe the truths of the Faith, they are not the cause of Divine Faith itself. This can't be emphasized too much; faith is not a consequence of a careful study of the motives of credibility. In other words, faith is a supernatural gift and is not the necessary outcome of assent to the motives of credibility. Motives of credibility simply make it reasonable to believe what God has revealed, but only God can move the will to assent to what he has revealed. In fact, even after seeing the reasonableness of believing what God has revealed, one can still reject it for several reasons, such as an unwillingness to live by the Faith if assent is given. Faith is the free gift of God. Any one of the hundreds of motives for believing the truth of the Catholic Faith by itself does not provide proof beyond a reasonable doubt of the authenticity of the Catholic Faith, but the weight of all of them put together provide irrefutable proof that the Catholic Church is the Church est-

abished by Jesus Christ and that everything that it teaches is true.

Newman explained in *A Grammar of Assent* how the human mind proceeds in matters of inference, assent and certitude, and how the faculty of judgment—the illative sense—ranges over a far greater diversity and quantity of different kinds of evidence than logical or scientific methodology can ever produce. Therefore, judgment allays our doubts and produces certainty on the vast majority of human questions, which neither science nor logic are suited to answer. Jeffrey Mirus states of this matter that:

It is to Newman that we owe the profound insight that we become certain of things not through a discursive analysis of all the logical arguments which may be made for and against (for logic, which is so useful with respect to abstractions, offers very little when it comes to facts), but rather through a growing aware-ness—either over considerable time or in just a few moments—that there is such a convergence of probabilities in favor of the thing under consideration that it must be true. From this convergence of probabilities arises certitude.

Nonetheless, in the final analysis faith is a supernatural gift and is not the necessary outcome of assent to the Motives of credibility. The Church has twice condemned the view that faith ultimately rests on an accumulation of probabilities. Thus the proposition “The assent of supernatural faith . . . is consistent with merely probable knowledge of revelation” was condemned by Innocent XI in 1679 and the “Syllabus of Errors” in 1907 condemns the proposition that “the assent of faith rests ultimately on an accumulation of probabilities. Therefore, faith is essentially an act of assent, and would be impossible without a supernatural strengthening of the natural light of faith.

In summary, faith is a supernatural gift and is not the necessary outcome of assent to the motives of credibility. Motives of credibility simply make it reasonable to believe what God has revealed, but only God can move the will to assent to what he has revealed. In fact, even after seeing the reasonableness of believing what God has revealed, one can still reject it. Faith is the free gift of God. Hence the Vatican Council I teaches that “faith is a supernatural virtue by which we with the inspiration and assistance of God's grace, believe those things to be true which He has revealed.” The same decree goes on to say that “although the assent of faith is in no sense blind, yet no one can assent to the Gospel teaching in the way necessary for salvation without the illumination of the Holy Spirit, Who bestows on all a sweetness in believing and consenting to the truth.”

### ***Motives of Credibility: Old Testament or Covenant***

First, I will provide a little background. The Old Testament is the story of the creation,

fall, and the beginning of the redemption of humankind. After the fall, God began to gradually reveal himself to humanity. To begin the process of restoration of the human race to the Trinitarian Family, he made covenants or agreements with a chosen people, the Hebrews. The story of the old covenant is found in the Old Testament of the Bible. God made covenants with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David, each covenant progressively adding more and more people to God's family. In the old covenant, God promises to make the Chosen People a great and numerous people, provide them with land, and make them prosperous if they, in turn, worshipped him as the one true God and obeyed his commandments.

Now let's consider the motives of credibility found in the Old Testament. Considering the Old Testament not as an inspired book, but merely as a book having historical value, we find a detailed account of God's marvelous dealings with the Israelite nation to whom he repeatedly reveals himself. God revealed his commandments to Moses at Mt. Sinai, the Ten Commandments. The covenant was sealed by sacrificing animals. In the Old Testament we read of God performing numerous miracles to benefit his people and as proofs of the truth of his revelation to them. There also we find the most sublime teaching and the repeated announcement of God's desire to save the world from sin and its consequences.

The Chosen People invariably broke their covenants with God when they prospered. God repeatedly sent prophets to remind them of their covenants with him, instruct and encourage them, call them to repentance, and to warn them what would happen to them if they didn't repent, which they seldom did until punished. After a period of punishment, they usually returned to God for a brief while, but as soon as they prospered again, the sordid cycle started all over again. Much of the Old Testament is taken up with describing these cycles of prosperity, backsliding, warning, punishment, and repentance. In time God tired of this repeating cycle and began to reveal through his prophets, such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel, that he would one day send a Messiah who would save his people from their sins.

Below is a list of miracles recorded in the Old Testament compiled by BELIEVE Religious Information Source

- The flood Gen. 7, 8
- Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah Gen. 19:24
- Lot's wife turned into a "pillar of salt" Gen. 19:26
- Birth of Isaac at Gerar Gen. 21:1
- The burning bush not consumed Ex. 3:3
- Aaron's rod changed into a serpent Ex. 7:10-12

- The ten plagues of Egypt--(1) waters become blood, (2) frogs, (3) lice, (4) flies, (5) murrain, (6) boils, (7) thunder and hail, (8) locusts, (9) darkness, (10) death of the first-born Ex. 7:20-12:30
- The Red Sea divided; Israel passes through Ex. 14:21-31
- The waters of Marah sweetened Ex. 15:23-25
- Manna sent daily, except on Sabbath Ex. 16:14-35
- Water from the rock at Rephidim Ex. 17:5-7
- Nadab and Abihu consumed for offering "strange fire" Lev. 10:1, 2
- Some of the people consumed by fire at Taberah Num. 11:1-3
- The earth opens and swallows up Korah and his company; fire and plague follow at Kadesh Num. 16:32
- Aaron's rod budding at Kadesh Num. 17:8
- Water from the rock, smitten twice by Moses, Desert of Zin Num. 20:7-11
- The brazen serpent in the Desert of Zin Num. 21:8, 9
- Balaam's ass speaks Num. 22:21-35
- The Jordan divided, so that Israel passed over dryshod Josh. 3:14-17
- The walls of Jericho fall down Josh. 6:6-20
- The sun and moon stayed. Hailstorm Josh. 10:12-14
- The strength of Samson Judg. 14-16
- Water from a hollow place "that is in Lehi" Judg. 15:19
- Dagon falls twice before the ark. Emerods on the Philistines 1 Sam. 5:1-12
- Men of Beth-shemesh smitten for looking into the ark 1 Sam. 6:19
- Thunderstorm causes a panic among the Philistines at Ebenezer 1 Sam. 7:10-12
- Thunder and rain in harvest at Gilgal 1 Sam. 12:18
- Sound in the mulberry trees at Rephaim 2 Sam. 5:23-25
- Uzzah smitten for touching the ark at Perez-uzzah 2 Sam. 6:6, 7
- Jeroboam's hand withered. His new altar destroyed at Bethel 1 Kings 13:4-6
- Widow of Zarephath's meal and oil increased 1 Kings 17:14-16
- Widow's son raised from the dead 1 Kings 17:17-24
- Drought, fire, and rain at Elijah's prayers, and Elijah fed by ravens 1 Kings 17, 18
- Ahaziah's captains consumed by fire near Samaria 2 Kings 1:10-12
- Jordan divided by Elijah and Elisha near Jericho 2 Kings 2:7, 8, 14
- Elijah carried up into heaven 2 Kings 2:11
- Waters of Jericho healed by Elisha's casting salt into them 2 Kings 2:21, 22
- Bears out of the wood destroy forty-two "young men" 2 Kings 2:24
- Water provided for Jehoshaphat and the allied army 2 Kings 3:16-2
- The widow's oil multiplied 2 Kings 4:2-7
- The Shunammite's son given, and raised from the dead at Shunem 2 Kings 4:32-37
- The deadly pottage cured with meal at Gilgal 2 Kings 4:38-41

- An hundred men fed with twenty loaves at Gilgal 2 Kings 4:42-44
- Naaman cured of leprosy, Gehazi afflicted with it 2 Kings 5:10-27
- The iron axe-head made to swim, river Jordan 2 Kings 6:5-7
- Ben hadad's plans discovered. Hazael's thoughts, etc. 2 Kings 6:12
- The Syrian army smitten with blindness at Dothan 2 Kings 6:18
- The Syrian army cured of blindness at Samaria 2 Kings 6:20
- Elisha's bones revive the dead 2 Kings 13:21
- Sennacherib's army destroyed, Jerusalem 2 Kings 19:35
- Shadow of sun goes back ten degrees on the sun-dial of Ahaz, Jerusalem 2 Kings 20:9-11
- Uzziah struck with leprosy, Jerusalem 2 Chr. 26:16-21
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego delivered from the fiery furnace, Babylon Dan. 3:10-27
- Daniel saved in the lions' den Dan. 6:16-23
- Jonah in the whale's belly. Safely landed Jonah 2:1-10

### ***Motives of Credibility: New Testament or Covenant***

The prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled by the New Testament, the New and Everlasting. Covenant. The New Testament is the story of the redemption of mankind. It describes the birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, one who, while clearly man, also claimed to be God, and who proved the truth of his claim by living a life of perfect holiness and virtue, by performing marvelous miracles, by making prophecies that came true, by uttering sublime teachings, and finally by his triumphant resurrection. All of these are motives of credibility proving that Jesus Christ is who he said he is, the Son of God Incarnate. Below are listed miracles of Jesus described in the New Testament:

#### *Control of Nature*

- Calming the storm – Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:37-41; Luke 8:22-25
- Feeding 5,000 - Matthew 14:14-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-14
- Walking on water - Matthew 14:22-32; Mark 6:47-52; John 6:16-21
- Feeding 4,000 – Matthew 15:32-39; Mark 8:1-9
- Fish with coin – Matthew 17:24-27
- Fig tree withers – Matthew 21:18-22; Mark 11:12-14, 20-25
- Huge catch of fish – Luke 5:4-11; John 21:1-11
- Water into wine – John 2:1-11

#### *Healing of Individuals*

- Man with leprosy – Matthew 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-44; Luke 5:12-14
- Roman centurion's servant – Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10
- Peter's mother-in-law – Matthew 8:14-15; Mark 1:30-31; Luke 4:38-39
- Two men possessed with devils – Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-15; Luke 8:27-39
- Man with palsy – Matthew 9:2-7; Mark 2:3-12; Luke 5:18-26
- Woman with bleeding – Matthew 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34; Luke 8:43-48
- Two blind men – Matthew 9:27-31
- Dumb, devil-possessed man - Matthew 9:32-33
- Canaanite woman's daughter – Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30
- Boy with devil - Matthew 17:14-21; Mark 9:17-29; Luke 9:38-43
- Two blind men – including Bartimaeus - Matthew 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43
- Demon-possessed man in synagogue – Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:31-37
- Blind man at Bethsaida – Mark 8:22-26
- Crippled woman – Luke 13:10-17
- Man with dropsy – Luke 14:1-4
- Ten men with leprosy – Luke 17:11-19
- The high priest's servant – Luke 22:50-51
- Nobleman's son at Capernaum – John 4:46-54
- Sick man at the pool of Bethsaida – John 5:1-15
- Man born blind – John 9:1-41

### *Raising the Dead*

- Jairus' daughter – Matthew 9:18-26; Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56
- Widow's son at Nain – Luke 7:11-17
- Lazarus – John 11:1-44

To conclude our discussion of the Old and New Testaments, God had always kept his side of covenant relationships, but the Chosen People rarely kept theirs. The only way that man could keep his end of the covenant was for God himself to become a man and make a New and Everlasting Covenant on man's behalf. The New and Everlasting Covenant, fulfills the covenants of the Old Testament, the covenants that God made with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David. God promises in the new covenant to provide faithful Christians the blessings described in the Sermon on the Mount, the Last Supper, and elsewhere in the Gospel. In the Old Testament, God was preparing the world for the redemption of the world when the Father was to send his only begotten Son into the world to save us. This agreement was sealed in the New Covenant or Testament by the Precious Blood of the Lamb, our Lord Jesus Christ, on the Cross, which is made present at each

Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

### ***Motives of Credibility: History of the Catholic Church***

When we come to the history of this Church after Jesus' ascension into Heaven, we find the Church that he established growing rapidly everywhere in the Mediterranean World and beyond, and this was in spite of her humble origin, her unworldly teaching, and the horrible persecution she endured at the hands of the rulers of this world. And as the centuries went by as Fr. Hardon tells us we find this Church battling against heresies, schisms, and the sins of her own people, even of her own rulers, and yet continuing on, disseminating the same doctrine, and putting before men the same mysteries of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the world's Savior, who had, as she taught, gone before to prepare a home for those who while on earth should have believed in him and lived lives in accordance with his will. By any standards these developments were miraculous, that is, their cause was far beyond and above the natural realm of things.

These and many more miraculous developments go a long way to making it reasonable to believe the truth of the Church's claims. As Fr. Hardon says:

The history of the Church since New Testament times wonderfully confirms the New Testament itself, and if the New Testament so marvelously completes the Old Testament, these books [books of the Bible] must really contain what they claim to contain, viz. Divine revelation. And more than all, that Person Whose life and death were so minutely foretold in the Old Testament, and Whose story, as told in the New Testament, so perfectly corresponds with its prophetic delineation in the Old Testament, must be what He claimed to be, viz. the Son of God. His work, therefore, must be Divine. The Church which He founded must also be Divine and the repository and guardian of His teaching. Indeed, we can truly say that for every truth of Christianity which we believe Christ Himself is our testimony, and we believe in Him because the Divinity He claimed rests upon the concurrent testimony of His miracles, His prophecies His personal character, the nature of His doctrine, the marvelous propagation of His teaching in spite of its running counter to flesh and blood, the united testimony of thousands of martyrs, the stories of countless saints who for His sake have led heroic lives, the history of the Church herself since the Crucifixion, and, perhaps more remarkable than any, the history of the papacy from St. Peter to Pius X."

Fr. Hardon states that all of these point in one direction, they are of every age, they are clear and simple, and are within the grasp of the humblest intelligence. To bring his point home, he quotes the First Vatican Council as saying, "the Church herself, is, by her marvelous propagation, her wondrous sanctity, her inexhaustible fruitfulness in good works,

her Catholic unity, and her enduring stability, a great and perpetual motive of credibility and an irrefragable witness to her Divine commission” (Const. *Dei Filius*).

*Jesus Christ founded the Catholic Church*

Since apologetics is the science of motives of credibility, how then can apologetics contribute to our knowledge of faith in God and all that he teaches through his Church? The reason that we have discussed the issue of the motives of credibility in so much detail is that they make it reasonable to believe what God has revealed. Therefore, it is imperative that one have a clear understanding of what role they play in our faith. Apologetics derives from the Greek *apologia*, which means defense or justification. It is the branch of theology that is concerned with the defense of Christian doctrines. It is sometimes called fundamental theology. Knowledge of apologetics can deepen our faith and better help us defend it from the enemies of the Church. Moreover, it can help us better perform the spiritual works of mercy of instructing the ignorant and counseling the doubtful. Apologetics can help us approach a level of certainty in regard to the truth of the Catholic Faith approaching proper knowledge. Nonetheless, it is God who must move the will to command the intellect to give its assent to the truths of the Faith. One hundred percent proper knowledge will be possible only when we see God face to face in the Beatific Vision in Heaven. Then we can say “I know” rather than “I believe.” Only then will faith have become fact.

How do we know that Jesus Christ founded the Catholic Church? We know that he founded the Catholic Church because it contains the following marks or signs:

- **Oneness:** The Church founded by Jesus Christ must contain only one faith, the same sacrifice, the same sacraments, and the same visible head, the successor to St. Peter.
- **Holiness:** The Church founded by Jesus Christ must be holy, because its founder and the Spirit that gives it life are holy; because her doctrines, her sacrifice, and her sacraments are holy; because her members are called to holiness; and because many of her members have achieved holiness.
- **Catholicity:** Catholic means universal. The Church founded by Jesus Christ must be catholic, because she was instituted for all men, is suitable for all men, and has spread throughout the entire world.
- **Apostolicity:** The Church founded by Jesus Christ must be apostolic, because she was founded upon the apostles and their preaching, and because she is governed by their successors, the bishops and popes.

Of all of the religions and churches in the world, only the Catholic Church contains all of these marks. The *Catechism* states regarding this matter that “The Church was made

manifest to the world on the day of Pentecost by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit” (No. 1076). Jesus sent his Holy Spirit to institute his One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church—the Catholic Church—to continue his presence in the world through his sacraments and to preserve, transmit, and interpret his teachings, his Word—the Deposit of Faith. The new People of God are the members of the Catholic Church. The Church is the Mystical Body of Christ, the Bride of Christ, and the Temple of the Holy Spirit.

Other factors that identify the Catholic Church as the true church established by Jesus Christ are as follows:

- The Church even now maintains unity against all natural obstacles.
- She has remained stable over two thousand years in the face of every form of external attack.
- She has been able to propagate herself from the first under the most difficult of conditions.
- Her doctrine has been always sublime, her sacraments symbolic of the grace they confer, her authority conducive to the salvation of souls, her character unsurpassably holy.
- She has been marvelously fruitful in all manner of good works, projects, purposes and people since her foundation.
- The antiquity of the Church; no other institution in the world's history comes close to its longevity.
- The fact that the teachings of the Church have never changed over 2,000 years.
- The longevity of the Church in spite of its sinful members, including bad popes and bishops.
- The Church's phenomenal growth throughout the world.
- The holding power of its members.
- The unity of its faith and worship for two millennia.
- The fruitfulness of its charity, such as hospitals, orphanages, hospices, schools, and aid to the poor.
- The sanctity of millions of its members over the centuries.
- The unbroken history of the Church from Jesus Christ to the present.
- The countless miracles attributed to the intercession of the Church.
- The Church has withstood the assaults of Godless totalitarian forces such as Nazism and Communism as no other institution has done.

The following are additional factors that should be considered in identifying the Catholic Church as the one established by Jesus Christ?

- The Church provides the only satisfactory explanation for evil in the world.

- The Church provides the only satisfactory explanation for who we are and what our destiny is.
- The Church provides meaning and purpose to our lives as no other institution has ever done.
- The Church provides the best explanation for suffering, sorrow, and death ever devised.
- The Church provides the only reasons for hope in a world of darkness and despair.
- The Church is the only institution in the world that fosters a culture of life.
- The Church is the world's only institution that teaches objective morality and traditional family values.

Any one of the factors considered in the above factors by itself might not provide proof beyond a reasonable doubt of the authenticity of the Catholic Faith, but the weight of all of them put together provide irrefutable proof that the Catholic Church is the church established by Jesus Christ. Any person who knows these truths would be a fool if he or she didn't believe in the truth of the Catholic Faith and lived his or her life accordingly. None of the other world religions, except Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, claim to offer divine revelation and that their founders intended to establish churches. Christianity is, of course, the fulfillment of Judaism and Islam, in spite of its claims, is a manmade amalgamation of Christianity, Judaism, and Arabic paganism. All Protestant denominations have human founders and were not established until the sixteenth century and afterwards. Only the Catholic Church fully satisfies the four marks of the true church established by Jesus Christ to convey his revelation and to provide the means of salvation for the human race. Only the fullness of truth (the Deposit of Faith) is found in the Church founded by Jesus Christ and all graces needed for salvation are channeled through her (the Deposit of Grace).

All of this being said, it is important to re-emphasize here that although the motives of credibility precede faith and dispose one to believe the truths of the Faith, they are not the cause of Divine Faith itself. This can't emphasize too much; faith is not a consequence of a careful study of the motives of credibility. In fact, the First Vatican Council expressly condemned this view. In this regard, the Council stated, "If anyone says that the assent of Christian faith is not free, but that it necessarily follows from the arguments which human reason can furnish in its favour . . . ; let him be anathema" (Session. IV). Moreover, the Church has condemned the view that the motives of credibility can in themselves make clear the mysteries of faith. In this regard, St. Thomas says "the arguments which induce us to believe, e.g. miracles, do not prove the faith itself, but only the truthfulness of him who declares it to us, and consequently they do not beget knowledge of faith's mysteries, but only faith." On the other hand, we should not minimize the real ability of the motives of credibility to verify the truth of the gospel, for as Pope Leo XIII stated in his encyclical

*Aeterni Patris* “Reason declares that from the very outset the Gospel teaching was rendered conspicuous by signs and wonders which gave, as it were, definite proof of a definite truth.”

In the final analysis, it's true then that faith is a supernatural gift and is not the necessary outcome of assent to the motives of credibility. The Church has twice condemned the view that faith ultimately rests on an accumulation of probabilities. Thus the proposition, “The assent of supernatural faith . . . is consistent with merely probable knowledge of revelation” was condemned by Innocent XI in 1679 (Denzinger, *Enchiridion*, 10th ed., no. 1171); and the “Syllabus of Errors” (*Lamentabili sane*, July, 1907) condemns the proposition (XXV) that “the assent of faith rests ultimately on an accumulation of probabilities.” Therefore, faith is essentially an act of assent, and would be impossible without a supernatural strengthening of the natural light of faith.

In other words, faith is a supernatural gift and is not the necessary outcome of assent to the motives of credibility. Motives of credibility simply make it reasonable to believe what God has revealed to be true, but only God can move the will to assent to what he has revealed. In fact, even after seeing the reasonableness of believing what God has revealed, one can still reject it. Faith is the free gift of God. Hence the First Vatican Council (III, iii;) teaches that, “faith is a supernatural virtue by which we with the inspiration and assistance of God's grace, believe those things to be true which He has revealed.” The same decree goes on to say that “although the assent of faith is in no sense blind, yet no one can assent to the Gospel teaching in the way necessary for salvation without the illumination of the Holy Spirit, Who bestows on all a sweetness in believing and consenting to the truth.” The document continues by saying “The Catholic Church, (III, iv), “has always held that there is a twofold order of knowledge, and that these two orders are distinguished from one another not only in their principle but in their object; in one we know by natural reason, in the other by Divine faith; the object of the one is truth attainable by natural reason, the object of the other is mysteries hidden in God, but which we have to believe and which can only be known to us by Divine revelation.”

Since apologetics is the science of motives of credibility, how then can apologetics contribute to our knowledge of faith in God and all that he teaches through his Church? The reason that we have discussed the issue of the motives of credibility in so much detail is that most of apologetics involves discussing motives of credibility, which make it reasonable to believe what God has revealed. Therefore, it is imperative that one have a clear understanding of what role they play in our faith. To repeat what we said at the beginning of this essay, apologetics is a derivative of the Greek *apologia*, which means defense or justification. It is the branch of theology that is concerned with the defense of Christian doctrines. It is sometimes called fundamental theology. Knowledge of apologetics can deepen our faith and better help us defend it from the enemies of the Church.

Moreover, it can help us better perform the spiritual works of mercy of instructing the ignorant and counseling the doubtful. Apologetics can help us approach a level of certainty in regard to the truth of the Catholic Faith approaching proper knowledge. However, one hundred percent proper knowledge will be possible only when we see God face to face in the Beatific Vision in Heaven. Then we can say “I know” rather than “I believe.” Only then will faith have become fact.

## FAITH FORMATION

Most Catholics first received their faith in their infancy. Others first receive it in adulthood. Even though cradle Catholics have faith infused into their souls at Baptism, they still have to undergo a process of confirming their faith as they grow into adulthood much as do converts to the Faith. As the formation of adult faith is discussed, one must remember St. Thomas Aquinas' definition of faith: "Believing is an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will moved by God through grace." Fr. Hardon has given us a thorough explanation of faith formation outlined below.

Since man is endowed with the faculty of reason, reasonable investigation must precede faith. Here we are looking for motives of credibility. In accordance with St. Thomas' definition of faith, motives of credibility inform the intellect, they demonstrate the reasonableness of believing something, but the will must still give its assent moved by the light of faith, which is God's grace. The assent of the will inspired by grace is essential for Divine Faith, which is the holding of some truth as absolutely certain because God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived, has spoken it.

By using reason, theologians have proven the existence of God, something of his attributes or perfections, the immortality of the soul, and the origin and destiny of man. From these facts, theologians have been able to discover what we owe God, which is true worship of the true God, not in accordance with our ideas, but according to what he himself has revealed. Furthermore, theologians have shown that it is reasonable to believe that God has revealed himself to us? Once we grant that he has, where is this revelation to be found?

The Bible is said to contain it; does investigation confirm the Bible's claim? The Old Testament of the Bible contains numerous prophecies of the Messiah; the New Testament tells the story about one who claims to be the fulfillment of these prophecies. Theologians have shown that it is reasonable to believe by the use of reason that Jesus Christ is the only one who could have fulfilled the prophecies of the Messiah. They have also shown that it is reasonable to believe by the use of reason that Jesus Christ is the only begotten son of God the Father and that he proved this by living a life of perfect virtue and holiness, by his marvelous teaching, by making prophecies that came true, by performing numerous miracles, and by raising himself from the dead.

Moreover, theologians have shown that it is reasonable to believe that Jesus Christ further claimed to have founded a Church to continue his presence in the world and to provide the means with which to distribute his graces and mercy. The Church is an infallible guide for all who wish to carry out his will and save their souls. The Church established by Jesus

must have certain definite characteristics or marks. It must be One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic; it must claim infallible teaching power. None but the Holy, Roman, Catholic, and Apostolic Church can claim these characteristics, and her history is indestructible and incontestable proof of her Divine mission. We will investigate all of these matters from a reasonable point of view in this website.

Motives of credibility are not enough in themselves to produce Divine Faith. The inquirer who has come this far in the formation of faith has proceeded by pure reason. It is possible for one on the evidence just given on motives of credibility found in the Bible and the Church's history to make his or her submission to the authority of the Catholic Church and believe her doctrines; however, as Fr. Hardon reminds us, one who has faith based on entirely reasonable grounds has only human, fallible faith.

At this stage of faith formation, it is still possible for the person to use reason to question the various steps in his or her line of argument. One can still hesitate at some truth taught by the Church, and one might withdraw the assent he or she has already given to the Church's teaching authority. At this point in faith formation, one has merely a natural faith. In other words, Fr. Hardon states that the person does not have Divine Faith at all. This is what is meant that motives of credibility, in themselves, do not produce faith. motives of credibility precede the act of faith and make it reasonable to assent or agree to the truths of the Faith. Nonetheless, to have Divine Faith, one must open oneself up to the infusion of the theological virtue of faith, which disposes one to act in accordance with the dictates of reason enlightened by faith.

Fr. Hardon asserts that the person assisted only by motives of credibility does not have Divine Faith at all. Natural faith can be arrived at by the intellect's ability to reason. Divine Faith, on the other hand, is supernatural; it requires more than the intellect's use of reason. Having Divine Faith requires that the human mind must be illumined by a light superior to the light of reason, namely, the light of faith. However, even with this light of faith, the intellect remains human, and the truth to be believed still remains obscure. The final assent of the intellect must come from the will assisted by divine grace, as we have said.

Divine light and divine grace are pure gifts of God, and are consequently only bestowed at God's good pleasure. What one is striving for is a faith of absolute certitude. As theologians have told us, it is here that the heroism of faith comes in; our reason can lead us to the door of faith, but there it leaves us. This reminds me of the old adage that "We can lead a horse to water, but we can't make him drink." It is here that the inquirer says, "I believe, Lord, help Thou my unbelief," which allows us to repress the misgivings of the intellect and say, as did St. Augustine, "Where reason fails there faith builds up." When

the will assents, the light of faith floods the soul and is even reflected back upon the motives of credibility which were diligently studied in one's search after the truth; and even those preliminary truths which precede all investigation, for example, proofs for God's very existence. Fr. Hardon concludes that one now sees these things with Divine Faith, and not simply natural faith.

In summary, one might be able by his own efforts learn the main truths revealed by God; however, the usual way is to look to the Catholic Church, which was commissioned by Jesus Christ to teach in his name and with his authority. So that we could fulfill our duty of embracing the true faith and of persevering unwaveringly in it, God, through his only begotten Son, founded the Catholic Church, and he endowed it with clear marks of Oneness, Holiness, Catholicity, and Apostolicity so that she might be recognized by all as the guardian and teacher of the revealed word. The Church possesses the fullness of Truth in the Deposit of Faith, because Jesus deposited all of his teachings there, and it possesses the Deposit of Grace, because he deposited all of the graces merited by his suffering and death on the Cross there. There exist numerous motives of credibility, that is, reasons to believe, to prove the reasonableness of believing what the Church proposes. Furthermore, since Divine Faith is a supernatural act, to receive it requires the assent of the will moved by the inspiration of God's grace. Every one of the age of reason can receive this grace who doesn't place any obstacle in the way of its reception.

### ***The role of the intellect and will in faith formation***

Fr. Hardon in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary* defines intellect as "The spiritual power of cognition, knowing reality in a nonmaterial way. [It is] the faculty of thinking in a way essentially higher than with the senses and the imagination. It is possessed by human beings, disembodied souls, and the angels, both good and demonic." The intellect is our ability to understand and think, to reason.

He defines the will as "The power of the human soul, or of a spiritual being, which tends toward a good or away from an evil recognized by the intellect. It is basically a rational appetite with several functions, namely the ability to intend, choose, desire, hope, consent, hate, love, and enjoy." According to St. Thomas Aquinas, the will is an innate inclination towards the good. In other words, it is a natural appetite or inclination for a general goodness. The intellect's role is to determine which particular good to seek and present to it to the will for consideration as something good.

The greatest good is truth, and the greatest of all truths is Truth itself, which is God; therefore, the intellect is an inclination towards truth. One scholar perceptively writes of

this matter:

In order for the will to move the intellect to assent, and in order to preserve the truth basis of an agent's set of beliefs, the will must get the intellect to somehow judge that the proposition in question is more likely to be true than not. Consequently, the will gets the intellect to arrive at the likely truth of the proposition by working through other acts of the intellect, such as focusing on one kind of evidence over another, paying attention to certain kinds of facts and disregarding others, or giving more weight to some pieces of the evidence and less to others. In doing so, the will gets the intellect to judge that the proposition is most likely true and thus the will is able to command the intellect to assent.

Not only does the will play an important role in acquiring ordinary beliefs, but Aquinas also teaches that the will is essential to Divine Faith. The object of Divine Faith is God himself, the greatest good of all. The scholar quoted above, states that “since human knowers, in this life, cannot comprehend God directly or immediately, the object of faith is not God but propositions about him. Assent to the propositions of faith (such as the proposition ‘God exists’) is a case in which the assent is not generated by the intellect’s being sufficiently moved by its object. The assent of faith is produced by the will being moved sufficiently by the object of faith [the propositions] and therefore the intellect is brought to assent.” However explained, Divine Faith is a theological virtue infused into the soul by God. The will can’t give its assent without God’s grace. The role of the will in faith formation is in the accepting of his grace, his gift of Divine Faith.

### ***Faith is both human and divine***

Recalling St. Thomas’ definition that believing is “an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will, moved by God through grace”, the *Catechism* states that, “Believing is possible only by grace and the interior helps of the Holy Spirit. Elsewhere the *Catechism* tells us that “knowledge of God by the light of reason alone man...is unable to enter into the intimacy of the divine mystery. This is why he stands in need of being enlightened by God’s revelation, not only about those things that exceed his understanding, but also about those religious and moral truths which of themselves are not beyond the grasp of human reason, so that even in the present condition of the human race, they can be known by all with ease, with firm certainty and with no admixture of error” (No, 37-38). Nonetheless, “it is no less true that believing is an authentically human act. Trusting in God and cleaving to the truths he has revealed is contrary neither to human freedom nor to human reason. Even in human relations it is not contrary to our dignity to believe what other persons tell us about themselves and their intentions or to

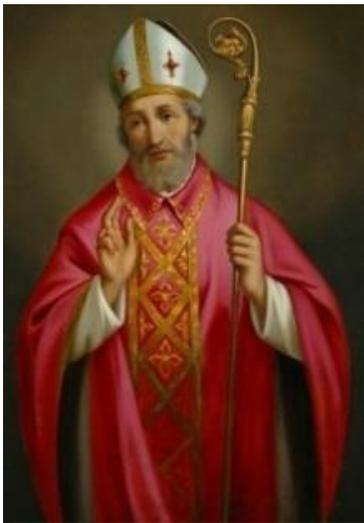
trust their promises” (No. 154). In faith “the human intellect and will cooperate with divine grace” (No. 155). Again the scholar quoted above is worth quoting at length here:

The contribution of the will to the intellectual assent in faith occurs because of the will’s natural inclination for goodness. The will is moved by considerations of the willer’s happiness and by considerations of God, who is himself the true good. When an agent is presented with the propositions of faith, she sees that these propositions represent the combination of the two ends mentioned above, namely, the eternal life and happiness of the willer in union with God. Even though these propositions are not sufficient to command assent on the part of the intellect, the will recognizes the great good offered by assent to these propositions, and the will thus influences the intellect to assent. When an agent begins to have [natural] faith through the will’s attraction to perfect goodness, God is then able to work on the will of that believer in order to produce a true change of heart and align her will in other aspects with the righteous desires of the heart that a true Christian should possess. The changes that take place after the assent of faith which are of the most importance in making the agent a true disciple are changes in the will of the agent to love goodness and hate sin.

To summarize what we have thus far said about faith, faith means the assent of the mind to the truth of some proposition on the word of another, whether the other be God or man. It differs from assent in matters of science, because they are based on evidence of fact, whereas faith is based solely on the word of another. Divine Faith is a supernatural gift and is not the necessary outcome of assent to the motives of credibility. Motives of credibility simply make it reasonable to believe what God has revealed, but only God can move the will to assent to what he has revealed. Divine Faith holds that revealed truths are absolutely certain, because God has spoken them, he who can neither deceive nor be deceived. But even if motives of credibility, such as prophecies and miracles, make it reasonable to believe the truths that God has revealed, only he, with the help of his grace, can move the will to assent to their truth. Faith is more than mere feelings or opinions that something is true, but a firm, unshakeable adherence of the mind to God’s revelation. Opinion also results from the will moving the intellect to assent, but in the case of opinion, the agent recognizes that there is evidence both for and against the proposition; therefore, the agent must admit that the knowledge is not completely certain. Faith, unlike opinion, holds to its object with certainty, and in this sense is like proper knowledge (that which is directly experienced by the knower). Faith is the first of the theological virtues, which means that it is oriented to God. Hope and Charity are the other two infused theological virtues.

Although personal faith is an infused virtue, infused into the soul by the action of the Holy Spirit, one still has to open one’s mind or intellect to receive it and one’s will to accept it. One can use his or her free will to reject God’s gift of faith. Faith is then a human act, but

one assisted by God. As the *Catechism* tells us, although faith or believing is possible only by grace and the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, it is no less true that believing is “an authentically human act” (No.154). It says, “In faith, the human intellect and will cooperate with divine grace:” then quotes St. Thomas Aquinas’ famous definition of faith we just quoted: “Believing is an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will moved by God through grace” (No. 155). Our faith is a free assent to the whole truth that God has revealed. We have faith only if we believe in Christ’s entire public revelation. The Catholic Faith is faith that Christ instituted (a divine institution), a Church blessed with authority to infallibly teach his public revelation.



### ***Faith seeking understanding***

St. Augustine wrote “I believe, in order to understand; and I understand, the better to believe.” Like Augustine, St Anselm of Canterbury held that one must love God in order to have knowledge of him. He was a gifted eleventh century theologian who was declared a Doctor of the Church and is known as the Father of Scholasticism, a system of philosophy and theology that dominated the Church’s thinking until Vatican Council II. St Thomas Aquinas is considered to be Scholasticism’s greatest representative. Anselm is known for the statement “Faith seeking understanding.” He wrote two famous works: *The Monologion* or its English title “An

Example of Meditation on the Meaning of Faith” and the *Proslogion*, in English “Faith Seeking Understanding” These titles reveal two very different models for the relation between faith and reason.

### ***The Monologion***

By “monologion” Anselm means a monologue or soliloquy representing a train of reasoning in one person’s mind. It is a form of a meditation. The original title of the *Monologion* was “An example of meditating about the rational basis of faith.” He follows this line of reasoning entirely without the Bible to prove some of the most basic truths of the Faith, such as, proof for the existence of God and his attributes or qualities. He has been criticized for teaching that doctrines ordinarily known only by Revelation can also be known solely by using reason, doctrines such as the Trinity, the Redemption, and the Incarnation. His purpose was to show by strictly philosophical reasons the truth of doctrines he held by faith: he already believed them, but wanted to show that they are true, that they are reasonable to believe. The original title of *Proslogion*, “faith seeking under-

standing”, expresses the same view. He sought to know God who he already believed existed so he could love and serve him all the more. A methodology that derives its knowledge of God from the study of nature independent of special revelation is called natural theology.

Like Augustine, Anselm held that the theologian seeks not to understand in order to believe, but to believe in order to understand. Under this conception, reason is not used to pass judgment on the content of faith, but to find its meaning and to discover explanations that make it possible for others to understand it. The proofs are intended to be convincing even to unbelievers. One source claims that “when reason is confronted with the incomprehensible, it remains unshaken, because it is guided by faith's affirmation of the truth of its own incomprehensible claims.” Faith seeking understanding means something like “an active love of God seeking a deeper knowledge of God”, faith being the active love of God and understanding the deeper knowledge of God.

### *The Proslogian*

The Proslogion seeks to prove God's existence and attributes by a single simple argument, which follows in syllogistic form:

1. One can imagine a being than which none greater can be conceived.
2. We know that existence in reality is greater than existence in the mind alone.
3. If the being we imagine exists only in our mind, then it is not a “being than which none greater can be conceived”.
4. A being than which none greater can be conceived must also exist in reality.
5. Failure to exist in reality would be failure to be a being than which none greater can be conceived.
6. Thus a being than which none greater can be conceived must exist, and we call this being God.

It follows that if God is the greatest thing of which one can conceive, then he must possess several attributes or perfections, such as omniscience, omnipotence, simplicity, eternity, and others. If he lacked any of these qualities, he would be less than the greatest conceivable being, which is impossible. Immanuel Kant, an eighteenth century philosopher, was to call this the ontological argument. It has been called “a sort of divine-attribute-generating machine” (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*). There are problems with this approach to proving God's existence. St. Thomas Aquinas rejected this approach a couple centuries after Anselm. While proposing his five proofs of God's existence in his *Summa Theologica*, he objected to Anselm's argument, because one can't know the nature of God; therefore, he believed one can't conceive of God in the way

Anselm proposed. His rejection of the ontological argument caused other Catholic theologians also to reject the argument. Rene Descartes was to pick up on it in the seventeenth century, much to the detriment of religion. The author has never found this argument to be particularly convincing himself.

The *Proslogion* stresses wisdom and holiness. It responds to our Lord's command that we should have faith, and that only if we have faith will we have understanding. But what does it mean to have faith? It is more than just assenting to propositions, although it is this too. To have faith is to believe, not just what God said, but to believe in God. This requires the overcoming, not just of ignorance, but of sin as well. Without prayer, faith is impossible. Thus, in the *Proslogion* there is no attempt to limit arguments to natural reason (Natural Theology), and Scripture is heavily used as well (Sacred Theology).

As discussed, the slogan that we most associate St. Anselm with is "Faith seeking understanding." In the preface of the *Proslogion* he tells us that he means that "Just as proper order requires us to believe the profound things of the Christian faith before we dare to discuss them by reason, so also it seems to me to be negligence if after we are confirmed in faith we do not try to understand what we believe." He means here that we must believe before we can intelligently discuss the mysteries of Faith. One who doesn't believe, that is, one who doesn't have faith, simply is incapable of understanding the Faith. Countless unbelieving scholars have tried to pontificate about the meaning of the scriptures to no useful avail. Also, Anselm is saying that once one has faith, he or she is obligated to try to better understand it, for his or her own sake and to be able to help others better understand it as well.

Understanding is a gift of the Holy Spirit that gives us a deeper insight and penetration of divine truths held by faith. It gives us a permanent insight into the meaning of what we believe. It provides us with a supernatural enlightenment to the mind for grasping revealed truths easily and profoundly. The greater one understands, the greater becomes one's faith. The more that one knows God, the better he or she can love and serve him. However, St Anselm warns us in the *Proslogion* that, "the smoke of our wrong-doing" will prohibit us from this knowledge. In this regard, the *Catechism* tells us:

Faith seeks understanding is intrinsic to faith that a believer desires to know better the One in whom he has put his faith and to understand better what He has revealed; a more penetrating knowledge will in turn call forth a greater faith, increasingly set afire by love. The grace of faith opens 'the eyes of your hearts' to a lively understanding of the contents of Revelation: that is, of the totality of God's plan and the mysteries of faith, of their connection with each other and with Christ, the center of the revealed mystery. 'The same Holy Spirit constantly perfects faith by his gifts, so that Revelation may be more and more profoundly understood.' In

the words of St. Augustine, ‘I believe, in order to understand; and I understand, the better to believe (No. 158).

What has been said about “Faith seeking understanding” can be summarized by a model used by St. Augustine and adapted by St Anselm to his theology. Faith seeking understanding has two phases:

- A movement from partial understanding to belief. Motives of credibility operate at this level. This phase is followed by
- A movement from belief to deeper understanding. Faith seeking understanding operates at this level.

To illustrate the model, suppose someone hears the Gospel, and before believing it, he must understand at least, in part, what it means. One might also need some reason to think that the messenger is genuine. This is the first phase—the movement from understanding the message and seeing that the messenger is credible to believe. St. Augustine saw this as movement from seeing in part to believing what one cannot see. This involves understanding or reasons to believe, for unless one understands what the Gospel is saying, he cannot believe it. In this regard, St. Augustine says, “unless he understands somewhat, no man can believe in God . . . .” He says elsewhere, “Since it is reason that persuades us that this is reasonable, ‘reason itself precedes faith.’” It is at this phase that motives of credibility play a role. Then, if one comes to believe, that is to have Divine Faith, the second phase begins—the movement from belief to deeper understanding. When this happens, one acts on the message and thinks about it, and as a consequence, he might come to understand its meaning and truth more deeply than he did when he first decided to accept it. The second of the two phases is for Christian believers who are seeking a deeper understanding of what they believe to consider what reasons could be given to people still in the first phase, who are considering whether to believe.

### ***Growing in Faith***

Faith is not something that once we have it we will always have it; it is something that we will lose if we don’t feed it. Our faith must be constantly fed. If we don’t continually feed our faith, it will wither and die, just like our bodies will wither and die if we don’t nourish them with food and exercise. Not only the intellect must be continually informed, but also the will must be continually strengthened, the memory cleansed, and the imagination controlled as well. In other words, the entire soul must be nourished. Studying and meditating on our Faith by reading the Bible, the lives of the saints, the Church Fathers, the history of the Church, good religious books and magazines, and other matter can be

major sources of nourishment for our souls. Meditating on good reading matter is one means with which we can become holy and achieve union with God.

However, to be holy and achieving union with God requires more than study and prayerful meditation. Although knowledge of God is achieved by study, our knowledge must be transformed into faith in Jesus Christ and his promises. It is one thing to know of God and another to know and believe in him. Many prominent scholars have known a lot about God over the ages, but they didn't know him, they didn't believe in him. We get to know God by exercising our wills to accept his grace, by opening ourselves to accepting his grace, which is his presence in us. Sanctifying grace makes us temples of the Holy Spirit and the Trinity comes to dwell in our souls. When we have God's grace in our souls, he infuses into us knowledge, understanding, and wisdom as well as the virtues of Faith, Hope, and Love. When we have the gift of faith, then and only then do we believe, but we have to open ourselves up to it. Faith means to commit oneself to the person of Jesus Christ and to believe all that he teaches. Both the intellect and will play a role in faith. To repeat St. Thomas Aquinas again, "Believing is an act of the intellect assenting to [agreeing to] the divine truth by command of the will moved by God through grace."

But faith in itself is not enough, for it must be transformed into action. God created us not only to know him and to believe in his teachings, but also to love and serve him as well. To do so will earn us happiness in Heaven with him forever. Love is fostered by reading and meditating on the Bible and other holy literature, by prayer and penance, a frequent reception of the sacraments, the cultivation of the theological and moral virtues, the practice of good works, and above all by the grace of God. We will be judged not only by faith, but works as well: by how well we performed the spiritual and corporal works of mercy and use the talents that God has given us to be good stewards. These are the principal means with which we inform our intellects and strengthen our wills so we can better bring them into conformance with the will of God. Love is essentially a decision to do God's will. Did not Jesus say "if you love me, you will "keep my commandments" (John 14:15). He did not say to have good feelings or emotions toward him or any other such thing. St John tells us that "God is love" (1 John 4:16) and we can love only to the extent we have the love of God in us. When we love, it is God loving through us.

## THE MEANING OF REASON

Recall that we began our discussion of faith as part of explaining the meaning of Faith, Reason, and Certitude. Let's begin our discussion of reason by asking: What is reason?

According to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1913 edition, etymologically the word comes to us, through the French, from the Latin *ratio*, which is originally the functional noun of the verb *reor*, which means "I think." It can mean an object of thought, or a mode or act of thinking. Essentially we mean by reason the power of the mind by which man attains truth or knowledge.

What role does reason play in our faith? St. Paul says in Romans 1:18-23 of using reason to discover what God has revealed that:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse; for although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles.

St. Paul here is telling us that reason is enough to believe in God's existence and his attributes and what he expects of us in our lives. As we discussed above in this essay, this type of reasoning is called natural theology, because we can use it to have faith in God by using our ability to reason. However, reason is not enough to know specifically who God is and what he commands of us. For example, by using reason, we can know that God exists and has the attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence, but without God revealing it to us we could not have known that God is a Trinity of three Divine Persons who loves us. St. Peter tells us in 1 Peter 3:15 to "Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence;" He is here telling us to be able to give reasons for our faith. So we use reason to both understand and defend our faith.

In other words, using human reason can make it reasonable to believe in the existence of God, many of his attributes, and the fact of Revelation. We are going to discuss these matters in some detail in this website. Reason provides the motives of credibility that must precede the exercise of faith and lead us to it. For, unless we possessed natural certitude of the existence of God, of his wisdom and truthfulness, and of the fact of Revelation, we could not reasonably give the certain assent of faith to revealed truths.

Pope John Paul II wrote a great encyclical called *Fides et Ratio* explaining the relationship between faith and reason. Theologians tell us that the relationship is mainly of three

kinds, where the role of reason is to assist divine faith:

1. Reason can establish the rational grounds for belief by proving God's existence, his attributes or perfections, his authority or credibility as all-wise and trustworthy, and by proving that God actually made a revelation since he confirmed the fact by working (even now) miracles that testify to God's having spoken to human beings, especially in the person of Jesus Christ.
2. Reason can further reflect on what God has revealed and thus come to an even deeper and clearer understanding of the divine mysteries
3. Reason can both show that the mysteries of faith are in harmony with naturally known truths and can defend their validity against the charge of being contrary to reason.

I think what it boils down to is that reason can be used to ascertain the motives for believing what God has revealed, that is the motives of credibility, which prepare the way for the will's assenting to God's revelation, moved by his grace. Reason helps prepare the way for the infusion of the theological Virtue of Divine Faith.

### ***Traditionalist or Fideist vs. Rationalists views of Reason.***

Over the centuries, theologians have debated the relative importance of faith and reason in religion. There have been some who have argued that faith, by which I mean an assent of the intellect to the truth of some proposition on the word of another is everything; that reason plays no part in knowing and understanding the Faith, by which I mean the Deposit of Faith. This extreme position is called Traditionalism or Fideism.

**Traditionalism:** Traditionalism denies the ability of unaided human reason to arrive at certain knowledge of religious matters. The Traditionalist or Fideist argues that faith alone (*sola fidei*) is the means by which we attain certitude. Where then do Traditionalists or Fideists find their source of truth? They find truth or certitude only in Divine Revelation, which is transmitted through the ages in the form of Holy Scripture or Tradition. Among the leading Catholic advocates of this position were Louis de Bonald, Félicité Robert de Lamennais, Joseph de Maistre, and Augustin Bonnetty. These men were reacting to the excessive rationalism and materialistic skepticism of the late eighteenth century French Enlightenment. Their goal was to place Christianity on a firmer footing than human reason can do. Ironically, their system was so extreme that it led to all kinds of false philosophies, including skepticism itself. Traditionalism or Fideism leads

to skepticism and other false philosophies, because people simply refuse to believe something unless it is reasonable to believe. In the extreme, fideism degenerates into fundamentalism or Biblical literalism.

**Rationalism:** At the other extreme are those who have declared that reason is everything; they are called Rationalists. The *New Catholic Dictionary* defines rationalism as “A system of thought or attitude of mind which holds that human reason is self-sufficient and does not need the help of divine revelation to know all that is necessary for a person's well-being. Also the view that *a priori* reason can give certitude without experience or verification of facts.” It has also been defined as “A theory or system that exaggerates reason's independence from the senses in philosophy or from supernatural revelation in religion.” It has also been defined as the belief that the rational mind is the best way to know something. If one is a rationalist, he believes that his mind is more trustworthy than his senses. Usually rationalistic knowledge is thought to originate in reason itself, being a system of universal and necessary truths based on principles or starting points not discovered by the senses. Rationalism tends to emphasize abstract human reason while minimizing other human powers, such as sense, imagination, and free will. The Rationalist might concede that there exists a reality outside of his mind, but that the senses are too unreliable to rely on them for the discovery of reality or truth. He maintains that one must rely on more certain data, such as innate ideas, intuition, infused knowledge, or self-evident principles and axioms. One source has written in regard to a rationalistic approach to the Bible:

The rationalism that was characteristic of the Enlightenment took a proto-materialistic view of miracles and of the historicity of biblical narratives. This approach sought to interpret the Bible by focusing on the text itself as a prelude to considering what the Church Fathers had traditionally taught about it. This method was readily accepted by Protestants and Anglicans. It was the natural consequence of Martin Luther's *sola scriptura* doctrine, which asserts that Scripture is the highest authority, and that it can be relied on alone in all things pertaining to salvation and the Christian life.

Pope Leo XIII said in a letter to the Bishops of England in 1901 that “No poison is more fatal to divine faith [than] the subtle and insidious spread of rationalism.” John Henry Newman wrote before his conversion to Catholicism in 1845 that:

RATIONALISM is a certain abuse of Reason; that is, a use of it for purposes for which it never was intended, and is unfitted. To rationalize in matters of Revelation is to make our reason the standard and measure of the doctrines revealed; to stipulate that those doctrines should be such as to carry with them their own justification; to reject them, if they come in collision with our existing opinions or habits of thought, or are with difficulty harmonized with our existing stock of

knowledge. And thus a rationalistic spirit is the antagonist of Faith; for Faith is, in its very nature, the acceptance of what our reason cannot reach, simply and absolutely upon testimony. (Tract No. 73)

### ***Catholic compared with Protestant views of Faith and Reason***

Matthew J. Bellisario states in an article entitled “Rationalism vs. Faith (Protestantism vs. Catholicism)” that:

When one breaks down the essential difference between Catholicism and Protestantism, the ultimate breakdown lies between reason guided by faith, and faith determined by reason. The Catholic believes God based on the living authority and living Voice (The Holy Spirit) He gave to those chosen to spread the Gospel. The Catholic believes that man has the capacity to comprehend the infallible Word of God by his reason, but his reason does not determine what he will and will not believe. In other words, his reason is able to comprehend and analyze that which is revealed by God to him through His living voice in the Church, but man does not determine individually what he will or will not believe based on his own rational faculties.

Then he contrasts the Catholic position with the Protestant, which puts man’s intellect and individual rational capacity above faith. He says that most Protestants will tell us that they live by faith alone, but “it is not really faith in God they are living by, but only faith in themselves. For the Catholic, faith precedes reason, for the Protestant, reason precedes faith.” In other words, he claims that “the Protestant takes God’s Written Word and attempts as best as he can to determine what it means for him, and then put his faith in what he has determined. He bases his faith off of what he reads in the Scriptures and determines for himself the doctrines he will believe [private judgment]. This is completely the opposite of the Catholic’s position, who simply listens to God’s voice speaking through His one and only Church, and then seeks to understand that faith by his reason.” He closes by quoting the great nineteenth century English Cardinal, Henry Manning, who while addressing Protestantism said “You have no foundation but human judgment, and therefore you are ‘tossed to and fro and carried about’ by words of men. To me this is simply impossible, because I believe on the basis of a Divine Teacher. . .”

### ***Varieties of Philosophical Rationalism***

There are several varieties of Philosophical Rationalism, but most if not all of them hold the view that human reason or understanding is the sole source and final test of all truth. Philosophical rationalism has especially been associated with certain seventeenth and

eighteenth European philosophers, such as Rene Descartes, Benedict Spinoza, and Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz. Generally this school holds that reason rather than sense experience is the source of knowledge and the ultimate test of truth. It is usually opposed to empiricism or positivism, which maintain that ideas and propositions not directly verifiable by sensory observation are meaningless. John Locke, George Berkeley, and David Hume were among the most prominent of the empiricists. Rationalism is the belief that the rational mind is the best way to know something. If you are a rationalist you believe that your mind is more trustworthy than your senses. Descartes appears to have been a rationalist, because he did believe that there existed a reality outside of our minds, but that the senses are too unreliable to depend upon them for knowledge. Both the Protestant Liberalism of Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher and David Friedrich Strauss, and the Catholic Modernism of Alfred Loisy and George Tyrell were rationalistic.

Often Rationalism is compared with Idealism and contrasted with Realism. Idealism is the philosophical belief that reality is merely a mental construct and there exists no object without an observer. It is the notion that we can't know anything outside our minds for certain; all we can know for certain is our ideas. I remember the adage as early as my teens that "If a tree falls in the forest, there is no sound unless there is someone there to hear it. All of you have probably heard the famous anecdote of Samuel Johnson to refute Berkley's idealistic claim that matter did not actually exist, but only seemed to exist by kicking a stone proclaiming, "I refute it thus!" Applied to religion, this means since the events described in the Bible are found in the world of reality outside of us and that they happened long ago, their truth can't be known with certainty. Idealists have claimed that if there is to be any certain knowledge of God at all, it must either be innate or infused directly into our souls.

Descartes' and Kant's Idealism was the most notable representative of this way of thinking. Contrary to their intentions—for both men believed in God—they got humans thinking in the wrong direction, which eventually led to skepticism, agnosticism, and atheism. Both claimed that because of the limitations of our senses and other reasons, the only things that can be known for certain are ideas, not objective reality. Since Idealists necessarily ignore doctrine and the witness of the Church—things that exist or once existed independently of our minds—they must rely solely on intuition or some other type of inner experience to explain the formation of faith. Such experiential faith was called the "religion of the heart" by nineteenth century Protestant theologians and biblical scholars influenced by Kant, such as Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, who was a prominent German theologian, philosopher, and biblical scholar. Some have called him the Father of Modern Liberal Protestantism.

Descartes claimed the search for knowledge begins with clear "clear and distinct ideas" or

with innate ideas, such as certain basic mathematical axioms and self-evident truths. His “methodical doubt”, in effect, separated faith from reason, theology from philosophy, body from mind, because there is left no way to ascend to God by rational means. One could no longer reason to God’s existence and the truth of revelation by relying on sources outside the mind; one had to rely strictly on innate ideas or intuition as starting points with which to reason to his existence. Early modern philosophers who followed Descartes, such as Baruch Spinoza, completely rejected Descartes variety of religious rationalism, which effectively made it impossible to reason to proof of God's existence or anything else in the spiritual realm. A century later, Kant's Idealism closed “all the windows of access which the human mind had to the real world.”

Was Kant a Rationalist or an Idealists, or what? I can’t judge, because the professional philosophers themselves seem not to have agreed about this matter over the years. One scholar has written that:

Classically Kant's Critical philosophy goes beyond the duality of empiricism and rationalism of the philosophies to which he was referring that was the context of his work. He believed that Reason produced phantasms on its own without the input of experience. So he believed there was limits to the usefulness of Reason, but still thought that if Reason was used properly, e.g. for science, then there was great benefit in it. He was looking for an alternative to either induction (empiricism) or deduction (rationality). Kant was a rationalist that recognized the limits of what reason could accomplish on its own. And specified that only reason operating on the basis of experience could be trusted to tell us something important about the world in which we live, i.e. something scientific.

Opposing Kantian Transcendental Idealism is the doctrine of philosophical Realism, that is, the proposition that the world is knowable as it really is, without any consideration of the knower's manner of knowing. Realism is the philosophical theory that believes that reality exists independent of our perception of it. Beginning with St. Paul, the Church has always taught that we can know things with certainty that exist outside or independent of our minds by using our senses and powers of intellect, meaning we are capable of reasoning from what God has created to the reality of his existence and other matters. The Realist believes that images of things in the mind apprehended by the senses really exist outside the mind; that they correspond to what is in the real world and are not simply inventions of the mind. The philosophy that we can know objective reality is known as Realism, which was the principal philosophical outlook fashioned into a synthesis and harmony of faith and reason in the universities of medieval Europe.

The ability to know reality—that which exists outside our minds—is absolutely necessary to religious faith, because not only did the events described in the Bible happen outside

and independent of our minds, but also happened long ago. Knowing the reality or truth of these long past events depends upon us having the ability to know things that exist or once existed outside our minds. Moreover, since these events happened long ago and we did not witness them ourselves, we must rely on a credible and trustworthy source—the Catholic Church—who’s Apostles witnessed these events and wrote them down in the scriptures.

Some over the centuries have accused the theology of the Catholic Church as being rationalistic, especially the variety called Neo-Scholasticism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Ordinarily the term Rationalism is not applied to the theological method of the Catholic Church. The 1911 edition of the *Catholic Encyclopedia* states of this matter:

All forms of theological statement, however, and pre-eminently the dialectical form of Catholic theology, are rationalistic in the truest sense. Indeed, the claim of such Rationalism as is dealt with above is directly met by the counter claim of the Church: that it is at best but a mutilated and unreasonable Rationalism, not worthy of the name, while that of the Church is rationally complete, and integrated, moreover, with super-rational truth. In this sense Catholic theology presupposes the certain truths of natural reason as the *preambula fidei*, philosophy (the *ancilla theologiæ*) is employed in the defense of revealed truth, and the content of Divine revelation is treated and systematized in the categories of natural thought. This systematization is carried out both in dogmatic and moral theology. It is a process contemporaneous with the first attempt at a scientific statement of religious truth, comes to perfection of method in the works of such writers as St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Alphonsus, and is consistently employed and developed in the Schools.

There is a third position that has been made up of those who have tried to breach the gap between the two extremes called Semi-Rationalists. The Semi-Rationalists admit the importance of Revelation, but teach that natural reason can understand and demonstrate all the truths of faith after they have been revealed. Moreover, they have argued that reason and faith are completely independent of each other.

### ***The Church’s position on faith and reason in faith formation***

The Church opposes the extreme positions of Fideism and Rationalism discussed above and teaches that reason plays an important role in preparing the soil in which the seed of faith is planted. In fact, Pope Gregory XVI condemned Traditionalism or Fideism in two Encyclicals in 1832 and 1834. Both faith and reason are needed to possess a correct understanding of the Catholic Faith.

**The role of reason in our faith:** There are three elements to understanding what the Church teaches regarding the role of reason in our faith.

1. First, the Church teaches that human reason by itself can know with certainty the existence of God, many of his attributes, that the soul is immortal, that there exists a natural moral law, and the fact of Revelation. It follows that reason precedes and leads us to faith. This is true, because unless we believe in the certainty of God's existence, of his wisdom and truth, and of the fact of his Revelation, we could not reasonably give certain assent of faith to what he has revealed to us. This is an application of St. Augustine's and St. Anselm's model of Faith seeking understanding, "A movement from partial understanding to belief."
2. The second element is that because of our fallen human nature, which resulted in diminishing our intellects, there is a limit to what we can know about God by the use of reason. For example, we can prove beyond a reasonable doubt that God exists, but we cannot reason to the conclusion that God is a Trinity of three Divine Persons who loves us. This and other mysteries of the Faith cannot be understood and demonstrated by reason alone even after they have been revealed. Mystery means hidden and we can understand these mysteries only to the extent that God reveals them to us and helps us understand them.
3. A third element is that faith and reason are both required to better understand the Faith. They complement one another rather than one excluding the other. This is true for several reasons.

Now let's look at the function that reason plays in our faith.

1. First, reason can dispose one to believe in the Christian Faith, but it can't make one believe; it does not motivate him or her to believe. As we discussed above, the motive for an act of Faith is the authority of God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. Earlier we called this the Motive of Divine Faith. Faith is an infused virtue through which God motivates us to believe in all that he has revealed. Making the Faith reasonable prepares the way to acts of the will, which assents to the divine truth, moved by God's grace.
2. A second function of reason is that it organizes the truths of Faith into a unified body of doctrine. St. Thomas Aquinas and others played a big role in organizing the Faith into a coherent system in the thirteenth century. Furthermore, reason employs analogies to illustrate the truths of the Faith. In fact, St. Thomas said that we can know God only by analogy. An analogy is an expression that involves explicit

or implied comparison of things basically unlike, but with some striking similarities. For example, God is so awesome and mysterious that he can be described only by analogy. A childish example is conceptualizing God the Father as an old man with a beard. Moreover, reason enables us to see the harmony that exists between the Faith and natural truths discovered by science or other methods of seeking truth.

3. The third function of reason is it defends the truths of Faith against its enemies, at least to the extent of exposing their errors. This is the field of apologetics.

Now that we have discussed the role that reason plays in our faith, what role does faith play in our reason? Faith safeguards reason from error. Reason unaided by faith can lead to making all kinds of blundering errors. All one has to do to verify this is to look at the hundreds, even thousands of theologians and scripture scholars today who ply their trade without the assuring aid of faith. Furthermore, faith aids reason in the discovery of new truths.

### ***Growing in Faith***

Our faith must be constantly fed. If we don't continually feed our faith, it will wither and die, just like our bodies will wither and die if we don't nourish them with food. Not only the intellect must be continually informed, but also the will must be continually strengthened and the imagination controlled as well. In other words, the entire soul must be nourished. Studying and meditating on our Faith by reading the Bible, the lives of the saints, the Church Fathers, the history of the Church, good religious books and magazines, and other matter can be major sources of nourishment for our souls. Meditating on good reading matter is one means with which we can become holy and achieve union with God. Of course, this must be supplemented with prayer, good works, and a regular reception of the sacraments, because being holy and achieving union with God requires more than study and meditation.

Although knowledge of God is achieved by study, our knowledge must be transformed into faith in Jesus Christ and his promises. It is one thing to know of God and another to know and believe in him. Many prominent scholars have known a lot about God over the ages, but they didn't know him, they didn't believe in him. We get to know God by exercising our wills to accept his grace, which is his presence in us. Sanctifying grace makes us temples of the Holy Spirit and the Trinity comes to dwell in our souls. When we have God's grace in our souls, he infuses into us knowledge, understanding, and wisdom as well as the virtues of Faith, Hope, and Love. When we have the gift of faith, then and only then do we believe, but we have to open ourselves up to it. Faith means to

commit oneself to the person of Jesus Christ and to believe all that he teaches. Both the intellect and will play a role in faith. In this regard, to quote St. Thomas Aquinas again, "Believing is an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will moved by God through grace." But even faith is not enough in itself, for it must be transformed into action. God created us not only to know him and to believe in his teachings, but also to love and serve him as well. To do so will earn us happiness in Heaven with him forever. Love is fostered by reading and meditating on the Bible and other holy literature, by prayer and penance, a frequent reception of the sacraments, the cultivation of the theological and moral virtues, the practice of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, and above all by the grace of God. These are the principal means with which we inform our intellects and strengthen our wills so we can better bring them into conformance with the will of God. Love is essentially a decision to do God's will. Did not Jesus say, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). He did not say to have good feelings or emotions toward him or any other such thing. St John tells us that "God is love" (1 John 4:16) and we can love only to the extent we have the love of God in us. In this sense, when we love, it is God loving through us.

## THE MEANING OF CERTITUDE

Now that we have completed our discussion of faith and reason, let's go on to certitude. Certitude means that faith is certain, that it is free from doubt, that it is true. The *Catechism* says that "Faith is certain. It is more certain than all human knowledge because it is founded on the very word of God who cannot lie. To be sure, revealed truths can seem obscure to human reason and experience, but 'the certainty that the divine light gives is greater than that which the light of natural reason gives' (No. 157).

The proper test of certainty or truth is evidence. Because we have not directly seen or experienced many things, we must accept many truths on the authority of others, but the authority must be credible, trustworthy, and legitimate. On this matter the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1911 Edition, states, "Many truths, indeed, have to be accepted on authority; but then it has to be made evident that such authority is legitimate, is capable of knowing the truth, and is qualified to teach in the particular department in which it is accepted." Most things we believe are on the authority of others. It is impossible for us to experience and verify everything that we know. Parents, teachers, scientists, historians, engineers, and hundreds of other authorities. Society is built on trust that what others say is true." In other words, the authority must be in a position to know the truth of the matter.

As we said above in this essay, the Church verifies the truth of the Faith. The Church is in a position to know the truth of the Gospel, because she was there and witnessed the events described in the Creed. Therefore, we can accept what the Church teaches with certitude, without doubt. Regarding this matter, the *Encyclopedia* states:

So that we could fulfill our duty of embracing the true faith and of persevering unwaveringly in it, God, through his only begotten Son, founded the Church, and he endowed his institution with clear notes [marks or signs] to the end that she might be recognized by all as the guardian and teacher of the revealed word. To the Catholic Church alone belong all those things, so many and so marvelous, which have been divinely ordained to make for the manifest credibility of the Christian faith. What is more, the Church herself by reason of her astonishing propagation, her outstanding holiness and her inexhaustible fertility in every kind of goodness, by her Catholic unity and her unconquerable stability, is a kind of great and perpetual motive of credibility and an incontrovertible evidence of her own divine mission.

What we should notice here is that our certitude is not derived from mere philosophical theory, but derived from objective historical facts. When we say we are certain of something, we know it to be true. Fr. Thomas Dubay in his book *Faith and Certitude* tells us

that we relate to reality in a mysterious and profound way. We know it. He says that “We enter into, possess, indeed, even live what we know.” Then he asked the question, “When can we be sure that what we enter into, possess and live is actually what we experience it to be?” He answers, “There are many possible states of mind relevant with respect to reality: ignorance, suspicion, doubt, opinion, and certitude.” It is certitude we are mainly concerned with here. He defines certitude as “the firm assent of the mind to some truth, which assent is based on reasons so solid that they exclude any reasonable fear of error.” For example, he says that one knows that the three angles of a triangle equal 180 degrees, that a piece of balsa will float, that Paris is a city in France, that more cannot come from less, that humans act for reasons, or that Papua New Guinea, is north of Australia. Fr. Hardon defines certitude in *The Modern Catholic Dictionary* as a “Firm assent of the mind to a proposition without fear of error. It implies clear knowledge that the evidence for the assent excludes even the possibility of error.”

There is more than one type of certitude. Fr. Hardon tells us that there exist two types of certitude: subjective certitude and objective certitude. Subjective certitude is the ill-founded conviction that careless or bigoted people have about their ideas. Many human beings feel certain of all sorts of things that are simply not true, and if they approached the matter with an open mind and with adequate study, they would find out that they are mistaken. Objective certitude, on the other hand, is a state of mind having three traits, as follows:

1. First it is an enlightened assent. One not only knows something, but one also knows why he or she knows it to be true, and he or she sees the objective reasons why it is so. The objective reason might be in the very nature of the thing; for example, that all parts of a circle are equidistant from its center. Or using a religious example, the witness to the statement is completely reliable, such as, Jesus declaring himself to be equal to the Father.
2. The second trait is that certitude excludes a reasonable fear of being wrong. Fr. Dubay asserts that a person is not certain of some proposition if he or she can endure the thought of its contradictory being the case.
3. The third trait is that certitude is unchangeable, because since it is based on objective reality, it is permanent.

Also there are different degrees of certitude. Evidence, whatever its source, has different degrees of certainty in regard to the truth of something. For example:

- Arguments or authorities for and against a truth may be either lacking or evenly

balanced. In this case, the intellect doesn't concede that the arguments are true and continues in a state of doubt or suspended judgment on the matter. In other words, the evidence or information in this case is insufficient on either side of the argument to form even an opinion.

- Arguments or authorities on one side may predominate; though not to the exclusion of those on the other side. In this case, the intellect doesn't completely adhere to the truth in question, but holds only an opinion on the matter. An opinion is nothing more than a hypothesis at most, which is an educated guess of what the truth is of the matter.
- Arguments or authorities brought forward may be so convincing that the intellect gives its unqualified assent to the statement proposed and has no fear whatever that it isn't true. This state of mind is called certitude, and is the perfection of knowledge.

In addition to the degrees there are different types of certitude: metaphysical, physical, and moral. However, we are here interested only in divine certitude. Fr. Thomas DuBay, is a well-known retreat master and world renown expert in the spiritual life says that "Divine faith, which is supernatural certitude, and which, according to theologians generally, is greater than any degree of certitude to be had in science, because it rests not upon human reason, which is liable to be mistaken, but upon the authority of God, who cannot err." He is here quoting from St. Thomas Aquinas' great *Summa*.

Divine Faith, which is the holding of some truth as absolutely certain because God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived, has spoken it, then, is that form of knowledge which is derived from Divine authority, and which consequently produces absolute certitude in the mind of the recipient. Don't forget though from our earlier discussion about the formation of faith, the final assent must come from the will assisted by divine grace.

The First Vatican Council reaffirmed the Church's long-standing teaching that there are two orders of religious knowledge, one known by natural reason and the other by Divine revelation. Regarding the certitude of natural reason, the Council held that "Holy Mother Church holds and teaches that God, the first cause and last end of all things, may be known with certainty, by the natural light of the human reason, through the medium of things created." The Council taught that "truths not unattainable by the natural light of the human reason have, by divine mercy, been revealed in order that they may be known by all easily, and *with certainty* and without any admixture of error."

As regards certitude of Divine revelation, the Vatican Council taught that "the proofs are

not, indeed, such as to make assent intellectually necessary, but that they are sufficient to make the belief 'agreeable to reason' being 'most certain and accommodated to the intelligence of all.'" The Council said that Divine revelation is made credible by "external signs" such as miracles and other motives of credibility. Moreover, the Council taught that "When it is a question whether any particular truth is contained within the deposit of revelation, the certainty of faith can be obtained only from the authority of the 'teaching Church', but a human certitude may be obtained by arguments drawn from the inferior and subordinate authorities such as the Fathers and the "*Schola Theologica*." The Council is here discussing the degrees of certainty coming from the motive of faith and the motives of credibility.

### ***Doubt and difficulty***

The Church makes a distinction between doubt and difficulty. Fr. DuBay defines doubt as "a state of mind in which a person suspends judgment as to whether something is so or not." He says that one doubts that A is B when upon reflection he or she decides neither to affirm nor to deny it. Some doubts are positive, that is, they are based on both pro and con reasons. Other doubts are merely negative, that is, there is no reason for either affirming or denying something. A negative doubt is closely related to ignorance.

Father also distinguishes between healthy and unhealthy doubts. He says in this regard that a sensible person does well to suspend judgment either because he is ignorant of the matter under consideration or because he sees no conclusive evidence for a sure affirmation or a sure denial. He says that there would be a lot less bigotry and plain nonsense in our world if people carefully studied something before they pontificated with their assertions and denials. While a healthy doubt is refreshing, he says that an unhealthy one is not. In the latter case a person suspends judgment even when the evidence is conclusive and completely adequate. This is skepticism, in this case intellectual cowardice or arrogance.

Now that we have discussed doubt, let's discuss difficulty. People commonly confuse doubts and difficulties and think that they are the same, but this is not true. Fr. DuBay defines difficulty as "a problem, a not seeing how two realities fit together." He remarks that in a way everything in the visible universe is surrounded with difficulties, with problems, with mystery. Although we see a lot of truth, but there is a lot more that we don't see. He says that a difficulty is simply a situation we do not yet understand and perhaps never will understand. A difficulty is a limitation on our knowledge, which can be either a passing or a permanent limitation.

But difficulties don't necessarily create doubts. Fr. DuBay tells us the problem is that many of us

assume that difficulties necessarily create doubts, but this need not be so. A doubt is a suspension of judgment: I do not know if A is B. A difficulty on the other hand can be concerned with a certain judgment and not in the least damage it: A difficulty exists if one has a certain judgment, but doesn't see how they fit together. To illustrate his point he takes an example from physics. Even though light is a plain fact, physicists cannot reconcile its wave characteristics with its quanta of energy (particle) characteristics. He says that they wisely don't deny either set of truths, even though they don't see how they can be fitted together. Yet people frequently doubt things they don't see how they fit together in matters of religion and morality. For example, he says that they don't see how Hell is compatible with a good God, which is a difficulty, so they proceed to deny, i.e. to doubt, one or the other or both. Others don't see how God can be three persons possessing one nature or how Christ can be present in the Eucharist. As a consequence they doubt or deny the Trinity and the Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament. He quotes John Henry Cardinal in this regard: "Ten thousand difficulties do not make one doubt, as I understand the subject; difficulty and doubt are incommensurate."

The *Catechism* tells us that doubt can be a sin against faith. In this regard, it says "The first commandment requires us to nourish and protect our faith with prudence and vigilance, and to reject everything that is opposed to it." Then it says that there are various ways of sinning against faith, such as voluntary doubt about the faith that disregards or refuses to hold as true what God has revealed and the Church proposes for belief. Involuntary doubt refers to hesitation in believing, difficulty in overcoming objections connected with the faith, or also anxiety aroused by its obscurity. If deliberately cultivated doubt can lead to spiritual blindness (No. 2088).

Then the *Catechism* gives us several ways that one can sin against faith by saying, "Incredulity is the neglect of revealed truth or the willful refusal to assent to it. Heresy is the obstinate post-baptismal denial of some truth which must be believed with divine and catholic faith, or it is likewise an obstinate doubt concerning the same; apostasy is the total repudiation of the Christian faith; schism is the refusal of submission to the Roman Pontiff or of communion with the members of the Church subject to him" (No. 2089).

### ***Ascertaining the truth of the statements found in the Nicene Creed***

The principal truths of our faith that need defending are found in the Nicene Creed. The Creed is a summary of the teachings of the Catholic Church, the summary of the body of truth that we call the Deposit of Faith. The Church proposes the Creed for our belief. When we profess our belief in the teachings contained in the Creed, we are professing our faith in the Faith. (*fides quae*). When we profess the Creed, we should firmly believe

what we say is true. As St. Teresa of Avila said, when we profess the Creed, pay attention what you are saying and mean what you say.

We begin the Apostle's Creed and the Nicene Creed with "I believe." Why don't we say instead that I know? Is it because we aren't sure? Remember we said above that when we use the term faith, we mean we are certain that it is true. How do we know with certainty these statements are true? God has given man various methods with which to use his reason to know the truth. These include theology, philosophy, logic, history, and science. We can prove that God exists by using the philosophy of Aristotle and the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas. I believe that to a certain extent we can get over the difficulties of knowing the truth and come to a reasonable degree of certainty about the truths of the Faith—the truths that we profess in the Creed—by properly employing these and other methods. They can give us the ability to know the truth, to perceive reality as it really is.

But as we stressed above in this essay, reason alone cannot provide us with everything we need to know about God; we also need his revelation. Above all, we know that the Creed is true because it is based on Holy Scripture, Tradition, and the *Magisterium* or teaching authority of the Catholic Church. God's Revelation is contained within the teachings of the Church. Jesus backed up the truth of his Revelation by living a life of perfect holiness and virtue, making prophecies that came true, performing many miracles, and raising himself from the dead. Furthermore, countless miracles have occurred over the centuries to substantiate the truth of his teachings. These and others are motives of credibility that inspire us to, believe. Moreover, God sends the Holy Spirit with knowledge, understanding, and wisdom to guide and inform us. God is truth and he won't fail to help us know his truth. About this the *Catechism* says "Faith is a supernatural gift from God. In order to believe, man needs the interior helps of the Holy Spirit." (No. 179). Faith helps us to believe in God and all that he has revealed. Once we have faith, then we will have the ability to understand. St Anselm of Canterbury said, "I believe that I may understand." In fact, theology has been defined as faith seeking understanding

There are many reasons to believe that the statements contained in the Creed and elsewhere are true. In fact, a close examination of the facts reveals that the reasons for believing them are so convincing that anyone who knew them would be a fool if he or she failed to believe them after having discovered them. During the rest of this essay, we are going to discuss some of the reasons for the credibility of belief in the truths contained in the Creed. We will begin by looking at John Henry Cardinal Newman's illative sense.



## JOHN HENRY NEWMAN & THE ILLATIVE SENSE

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that “Created in God's image and called to know and love him, the person who seeks God discovers certain ways of coming to know him. These are also called proofs for the existence of God, not in the sense of proofs in the natural sciences, but rather in the sense of converging and convincing arguments, which allow us to attain certainty about the truth. These ‘ways’ of approaching God from creation have a twofold point of departure:

the physical world, and the human person” (No. 31). Newman formulated the idea of the illative sense in part two of his *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* to explain how a person reaches certitude in matters of faith by employing converging and convincing arguments.

In a lucid article on “Newman’s illative sense,” Andrew M. Greenwell writes that “The illative sense, relying upon the created world for its data, will lead to the morally certain conclusion that God exists. The Catholic faith, relying on what God has revealed in the deposit of faith, will lead us to a different kind of certainty, one yet more sure.” Newman’s illative sense is a theory of the Convergence of Probabilities asserting that a number of probable hints or indicators point to the existence of God. In one scholar’s words:

These indicators range from people’s experiences of beauty and goodness to the mystery of our world from the voice of conscience to the enjoyment of freedom. [It] also asserts that no indicator alone necessarily provides the existence of God, instead it claims that when the indicators are combined they produce a powerful argument, the strength of these probable indicators together arise at the same conclusion: God exists.

The first part of Newman’s book is on how man comes to believe or to give religious assent. Applying the illative sense to the human experience of conscience and moral duty, Newman argues that based upon reason alone there must be a divine legislator, namely God. Fr. Aidan Nichols writes in his *Grammar of Consent* that Newman’s illative sense “is the kind of reason that gathers up the fragments of experience into a single and unified judgment”, and this “heaping together of tiny indications, not one which by itself is conclusive, produces certitude in ordinary human affairs.” He suggests that the illative sense allows us to “use the materials of experience to come to an unconditional assertion of God's existence (and of the propositions of revealed religion) even when we would not be justified in concluding to these things by strict inference.”

The illative sense takes the given facts of the world and “determines what science cannot determine, the limit of converging probabilities and the reasons sufficient for proof.” The illative sense is in the words of one Newman scholar “the ratiocinative [a reasoned train of thought] faculty of the mind that recognizes the extent to which probabilities converge toward a certain conclusion. The illative sense allows a person to judge which probabilities can be confidently asserted (and assented to) with certainty.” As we will discuss, one fact might not be enough to justify certitude of belief in the truth of something, but many converging facts can be overwhelming proof of its truth. Illative is a derivative of the Latin *illativus*, which means to be “brought in” or “the reasoning involved in drawing conclusions or making logical judgments on the basis of circumstantial evidence and prior conclusions rather than on the basis of direct observation.”

### ***Faith is not based on formal evidence alone***

Writing in the mid nineteenth century, Newman was countering the eighteenth century Enlightenment’s understanding of reason, which was the notion that all truth must be ascertained only by scientific evidence, what we called scientism above in this essay. Unlike in science, Newman argued that evidence is not the foundation for faith, that faith in God is possible without formal evidence, i.e. evidence acquired by scientific methodology. Nor was he favorable to acquiring evidence by employing the scholastic syllogistic method either. In this regard, he asserted that “Many a man will live and die upon a dogma: no man will be a martyr for a conclusion,” the result of a logical syllogism. He insists, “No one, I say, will die for his calculations: he dies for realities.”

Fr. Nichols informs us that Newman, having been an Anglican minister before his conversion in 1845, had not been educated himself in the contemporary Roman Catholic seminary system where the scholastic syllogistic approach was employed. The Catholic Church in the Western Roman Empire had adopted the Aristotelian idea that truth is originally obtained from data supplied by the senses “through rational judgment to rational inference and rigorously logical conclusions.”

According to Fr. Nichols, Newman’s illative sense of obtaining truth is radically different. He writes that “Like the traditionalists [or fideists], he starts off, indeed, from given data. But the development which he foresees for the idea to which the data give rise is far more historically conditioned than guided by *a priori* logic. The initial idea itself is not reducible, in his view, to a single proposition.” By employing the illative sense to the understanding of faith formation, Newman utilized experience, history, Scripture, and the writings of the Church Fathers in his methodology, which reminds us of the *Ressourcement Théologie* (getting back to the sources) of the *Nouvelle Théologie* (New

Theology) of the mid twentieth century. Much of this theology was incorporated into the Documents of Vatican Council II.

In regard to scientific evidence, Jeffrey Mirus writes in “The Meaning of Newman’s Grammar of Assent posted on his website *Catholic Culture* that:

If you have ever been seriously perturbed by assertions, so rightly foreign to your own natural state of mind, that the great questions of human affairs, including religious belief, must be determined, if they are to be determined rightly, through some sort of scientific research or a strictly logical analysis, then you would want very much to read *A Grammar of Assent*; for in it Newman explains how the human mind proceeds in matters of inference, assent and certitude, and how the faculty of judgment (for Newman, the “illative sense”) ranges over a far greater diversity and quantity of different kinds of evidence than can ever be produced by logic or science, and so brings us through doubt to certainty on the vast majority of human questions, which both logic and experiment are singularly ill-suited to address.

Mirus states that “it is to Newman that we owe the profound insight that we become certain of things not through a discursive analysis of all the logical arguments which may be made for and against (for logic, which is so useful with respect to abstractions, offers very little when it comes to facts), but rather through a growing awareness—either over considerable time or in just a few moments—that there is such a convergence of probabilities in favor of the thing under consideration that it must be true. From this convergence of probabilities arises certitude.” Mirus concludes this insightful comment by writing “Thus the same staggering probability that England is an island, though most persons will never put this to the test, is equally at work in our conviction that Christ is the Son of God, or that the Church speaks with Christ’s own authority.”

### ***Certitude can be reached with the illative sense***

Newman believed that people can achieve certitude by employing the illative sense. In fact, as he points out, many truths are received implicitly, meaning that people often cannot explain what they know to be true, but this doesn’t mean that what they implicitly believe is untrue. This period saw some Christian theologians, such as Newman and Friedrich Schleiermacher, a mid-nineteenth century German theologian and scripture scholar considered to be the father of liberal Protestantism, shifting away from the cold calculating intellectualism of the Enlightenment toward an emphasis upon inner subjective religious experience.

With respect to Newman's notion of an inner religious experience, some might say that this subjective approach to religious belief is a leap of faith, what theologians, such as Schleiermacher, called the "religion of the heart." But as Fr. Juan R. Vélez claims in his article entitled "Newman's Assent of Faith" published in *First Things* that "there is no such leap because the assent of faith has a cumulative and painstaking dimension; we grow into a conviction, rather than leap into it. Newman used the example of a polygon inscribed in a circle to illustrate his point. As its sides become smaller it tends to become the circle. It never becomes the circle but the mind closes the gap."

According to Fr. Velez, Newman's idea of faith is a "personal act (not a subjective one) by which a person apprehends religious truths from others," that to him "humility, a child-like spirit, is a necessary condition for belief. Without humility one is incapable of believing in God; a person establishes his own universe and close him or herself to any supernatural reality." Pride closes a person in a limited sphere of rationality.

Since believing is accepting truths on the word of others, and not something we have personally experienced or thoroughly thought through ourselves, Fr. Nichols argues that we may reasonably rely on the experiences of others and not only our own; however, he warns that "if we are going to rely on the experience of others in a sort of appeal to authority or *argumentum ad verecundiam*, we ought to make sure that we look toward "persons of outstanding moral and intellectual integrity." And what better authority is there to religious truth than that of the Catholic Church.

Fr. Velez tells us that Newman made an important distinction between "personal" and "scientific" forms of inquiry into truth. He says that:

Unlike in science, evidence is not the foundation for faith. Newman defended the rationality of 'simple faith', Still Newman tried to find an adequate answer to the problem of the certitude of the assent of faith, and he dedicated part two of the *Grammar of Assent* to explain how a person reaches certitude. He called this the illative faculty or sense. This is a natural mode of reasoning which is unconscious and implicit; it goes from concrete thing to other things, not from propositions to propositions as formal inference or logic.

Fr. Velez states that "Unlike theological propositions, faith is not a logical conclusion. It is a higher knowledge, which is not contrary to reason, but which admits of an order higher than that of science." He continues that "When God reveals himself man must act on God's terms. Man must accept with humility what God reveals. The celebrated poem 'Lead Kindly Light' suggests that Newman did this."

***Simple childlike faith leads to the illative sense***

According to Fr. Velez, this is the place where Newman explains that for a child, God is a real being, that a child “perceives the existence of God as a Sovereign Law Giver and Judge, someone outside of himself. God is not a notion or a conclusion.” While explaining how the existence of moral conscience reflects God’s image, even in children, Newman writes “It is an image of the good God, good in Himself, good relatively to the child, with whatever incompleteness; an image, before it has been reflected on, and before it is recognized as a notion. Though he cannot explain or define the word ‘God,’ when told to use it, his acts show that to him it is far more than a word.” Fr. Velez says of this that “Something similar can be said for many adults: they cannot explain religious truths, but they know them because they have a moral conscience that speaks to them of right and wrong, and of a Law Giver and Judge.” Continuing in this vein he says “In the same way, all men can have this real knowledge of God—have faith—in God and in that he creates, provides, judges, rewards and punishes.” Then he quotes Newman as writing in a letter to a friend regarding the certainty of faith by distinguishing between religion and science: “Much lies in the meaning of the words certainty and doubt—much again in our duties to a person, as e.g. a friend—Religion is not merely a science, but a devotion.”

In Newman’s parochial sermons, which were addressed to common people and not intellectuals, he urges them to develop a childlike simplicity and trust in God, that these enabled children in Fr. Velez’s words “to listen with awe to descriptions or tales. Children distinguish between right from wrong and are free from a proud spirit of independence.” Quoting Newman “This is how Christ has so willed it, that we should get at the Truth, not by ingenious speculations, reasonings, or investigations of our own, but by teaching.” Children are ready to learn from others; they don’t set themselves as the measure of truths. Regarding this Fr. Vélez states:

Although as we will point out faith begins with a personal experience of God through one’s moral conscience, most truths of faith are learnt from others. Faith is the assent of the mind to what God reveals through the Bible and is taught by the Church. Newman points out, however, that many truths are received implicitly. Often people cannot explain what they know to be true and yet this does not diminish the truth of their claims. An Englishman may never have traveled to the shore, but he is absolutely certain that England is an island.

Newman warns that one must be careful using the illative sense, because its use could make one vulnerable to superstition and eccentricity. Nonetheless, he believed that superstition could be held in check by the holiness, obedience, and the sense of duty of the believer. For Newman, humility is a necessary condition for belief, that without humility one is incapable of believing in God. A prideful person creates his own universe closing

himself off from God. Newman urged his listeners to have “a childlike simplicity and trust in God, which enable children to listen to and receive with awe descriptions or tales.”

Something similar can be said for many adults: They cannot explain religious truths, but they know them because they have a moral conscience that speaks to them of right and wrong, and of a Law Giver and Judge. My holy and virtuous mother and grandmother were these types of Christians. They didn't need science or logic to firmly believe that Jesus Christ was their Lord and Savior. Newman placed a lot on the role of conscience in faith formation. Greenwell quotes Newman as saying regarding conscience that “My true informant, my burdened conscience . . . pronounces without any misgiving that God exists, and it pronounces quite as surely that I am alienated from him . . . . Thus it solves the world's mystery and sees in that mystery only a confirmation of its own original teaching.” Nonetheless, in our world of skepticism and relativism, science and philosophy can provide powerful motives of credibility contributing to faith formation and maintenance.

Greenwell writing of how the illative sense operates in faith formation says that “To have a natural theology, that is, to know that God exists through reason, we need to recruit our illative sense.” He states that:

The illative sense is what allows us to take our concrete human experiences—whether they be of nature's beauty, of the demands of conscience (the feeling of guilt, the pangs of remorse, the search for forgiveness), of the sense of the contingency of life, of the peaceful joy elicited by the shallow breathing of your sleeping child beside you in bed, of the honor given to a soldier who sacrificed his life for his fellows, of the haunting beauty of the second movement of Schubert's Piano Sonata in A major, of the pathos of G. M. Hopkins' poem “Spring and Fall,” of indeed any created good or beautiful thing—and come to the conclusion that there must be a transcendent reality behind it all, ultimately, He whom we call or know as God...The potential fodder of the illative sense is the whole host of human experiences: desire, truth, perfection, transcendence, contingency, justice, good, hope, joy, beauty, love. These experiences are the stuff with which the illative sense works.

### ***The Illative sense opens us to the transcendent***

Greenwell asserts that “Without the illative sense, we would not be open to the transcendent and therefore never be open to the reality of a God who has revealed himself to us. Without this preliminary openness to God as a result of reason's illative sense, we would not be able to put our faith in that God who has revealed himself to us.” He claims that the illative sense is ‘a preamble to the faith. It is the prelude to the ‘reasonable wor-

ship' of God of which St. Paul calls us to (Rom. 12:1) and to which today the Church, in what she calls the New Evangelization, calls us." He continues, "The illative sense is not the sort of narrow reason which is used in the empirical sciences, or mathematics, or logic, or any serious academic or professional discipline—what Newman called 'explicit reason,' and what the medieval scholastic called *ratio*. The conclusions yielded by this reason, which are built upon inference and are clearly demonstrable, are solid but rigid, sort of like an iron rod."

According to Greenwell "The illative sense is found in that broader reason which Newman called "implicit reason," and what the medieval scholastic called *intellectus*." He continues describing Newman's meaning of implicit reason:

Implicit reason is almost an intellectual feltness. It is the kind of thinking we use every day, all the time, without even thinking about it. The conclusions it yields, which are based upon converging probabilities and not strict demonstration, result in assent, and, when dealing with ultimate reality and with the aid of grace, the unique assent we call faith. These converging and convincing probabilities are like a cable, each individual strand cannot stand on its own, but when all the strands of its thought are all considered together, it has formidable strength but also pliability.

Greenwell then goes on to explain how the illative sense works in discovering truths in general, other than by scientific or logical inference. He quotes Newman as writing that "The fact is that there are many truths in concrete matter, which no one can demonstrate yet every one unconditionally accepts." Greenwell includes Newman list of a number of these truths:

[T]hat we are not the only being in the world that exists, that there is an external world different from us, that there is such a thing as parts and a whole, that the universe appears to operate through certain laws, that the future relies upon the past, that we are the cause of certain things. These truths extend beyond abstract truths to even concrete truths such as that the earth is a globe and revolves around a sun, that there are cities that exist though we may not have visited them or that they continue to exist though we have not visited them in a long time, that Charlemagne was the King of the Franks many years ago. The existence of God is the kind of truth that falls within this kind of truth.

We receive and accept all of these truths as true on the word of others that we trust and who are in a position to know. None of these truths are based on scientific discovery or logical deduction, but are received implicitly, and often people cannot explain what they know to be true and yet this does not diminish the truth of their claims. Next Greenwell explains how the illative sense also guides us to "the unknown known, to the God un-

known by reason, whom we know nevertheless exists.” Emphasizing this point, Greenwell states:

This is the famous “unknown God” to reason, the *agnostos theos*, the true God whom the Greeks unknowingly worshiped, as St. Paul described it to the Athenians in his speech at the Areopagus. (Acts 17:23) It is this God whose existence we can be certain of from the things that are made (Rom. 1:20) by using the illative sense. This illative sense is in us so that people might seek God, even perhaps grope for him and find him, though indeed he is not far from any one of us. For ‘In him we live and move and have our being,’ as even some of your poets have said, ‘For we too are his offspring’ (Acts 17:27-28).

The Scholastic theologians of the Middle Ages had made it reasonable to believe that God exists, something of his attributes or perfections, that the human soul is immortal, and other truths of the Faith by the use of reason. Newman had not found these preambles of the Faith particularly convincing, which is the reason why he produced the illative sense for that purpose. He has taken us to the preambles of faith by his implicit reasoning, rather than by scientific methodology or logical inference. The Preambles of the Faith according to the *Modern Catholic Dictionary* are:

The main premises of reason on which the act of divine faith depends as on its rational foundation. They are mainly three: 1. the existence of God; 2. his authority, or right to be believed because he knows all things and is perfectly truthful; and 3. the fact that he actually made a revelation, which is proved especially by miracles or fulfilled prophecies performed in testimony of a prophet's (or Christ's) claim to speaking in the name of God.

The next step is moving from the preambles, whether obtained by scientific methodology or logical inference or the illative “implicit sense” to faith.

### ***The Illative sense and our own faith formation***

However valuable Newman’s illative sense is in helping us understand the formation and maintenance of faith, it is not without its limitations. Fr. Nichols tells us that faith formation shouldn’t be limited to only the internal experience of conscience to arrive at probable conclusions that God exists, but also to a lot of other human experiences as well. He claims that there are other particular experiential materials that the illative sense can draw on in considering whether or not God exists:

It seems possible to suggest that while the form of Newman's argumentation is eminently acceptable, the content is extremely restrictive and impoverished. Is it

really the case that the only indications of the existence of God in experience are of this narrowly moral order? On the contrary, there is a rich variety of areas of experience that may well have theistic relevance. One thinks immediately of such experiences as wonder, hope, desire, joy—all of which have been held by different writers to carry metaphysical implications of an ultimately theistic kind.

Nichols points out another undue restrictiveness of Newman's illative materials; the notion that assent is always in the form of a uniquely personal act. He argues that it does not require that the content of what a person takes as his or her illative materials should be individual. He asserts that:

There is no reason why we should not regard the theistic assents of others—their grasping of transcendent reality through the particularities of experience—as among the materials on which our own illative sense can get to work. Partly this is because, where persons of outstanding moral and intellectual integrity are involved, we should be willing to let their judgments be indicators in our exercise of illation. This is the legitimate place of argument from authority. It implies no surrender of our powers of judgment, because in locating such people we have ourselves applied judgment to our impressions of their lives and writings. But more importantly, we can find our own existence and experience illuminated through their intersection with the texts that represent the illative judgments of others in their own particular approaches to God.

Let's not forget the lives and testimony of the great saints of the Church beginning with the Apostolic Fathers and Apologists, of the Patristic Fathers such as St. Gregory of Nyssa and the other Cappadocian Fathers, and of St. Augustine, St. Anselm, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bonaventure, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, St. Therese of Lisieux, and countless others. In this vein Fr. Nichols writes:

If, therefore, we take as our point of departure not just our own experience, as individuals or a generation, but that of a gallery of figures through the tradition of reflection on these matters, we shall secure a much richer supply of illative materials. A variety of our predecessors in the tradition reasoned to God as the condition of possibility for some variety of human experience, whether that be desire (Gregory of Nyssa), truth (Augustine), perfection (Anselm), transcendence (Thomas), the limits of action (Pascal), hope (Marcel) or joy (Chesterton). Their personal assent cannot be ours, yet the convergence of areas in which such men have come to make theistic assent provides us within an infinitely richer sense of the real in coming to our own judgment in the matter of belief in God.

Fr. Nichols then goes on to describe Newman's metaphor of the cable that is composed of a number of separate threads, each of which is feeble, but not as a whole feeble, but as

sufficient as an iron rod. He closes his discussion of Newman's illative sense by saying "What is wanted, therefore, is not simply a *Grammar of Assent* but a *Grammar of Consent*: an invitation to let one's illative sense explore the real through the media of various 'consenting' theists."

To close our discussion of Newman's illative sense, according to Greenwell, Neman has taken us "at this threshold of knowing the existence of the unknown God, something reason's path takes us to, we are at the threshold out of realm of reason which is the same threshold that will lead us into the realm of faith. Here, Newman's great contribution is to show how it is reasonable to believe what you cannot know by reason alone (an unknown known) and how you can believe what you cannot absolutely prove by reason alone (a known unknown)." The "known unknown" is the Motive of Divine Faith, which is why we believe. We believe because of God's authority, his unfailing knowledge and truthfulness. Divine Faith holds that revealed truths are absolutely certain, because God has spoken them, he who can neither deceive nor be deceived. Faith is more than mere feelings or opinions that something is true, but a firm, unshakeable adherence of the mind to God's revelation. We believe the truths of faith not because our minds understand or see them, but because the infinitely wise and truthful God has revealed them. Faith is the first of the infused theological virtues, which means that it is oriented to God.

Now we have completed our discussion of the role of faith, reason, and certitude in our search for truth. One of the issues that we considered during this discussion was how can we know the truths of the Faith with certainty? Our next step is to use human reason to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that God exists. All other knowledge of religion presupposes that he does.

## LOGICAL REASONS FOR BELIEVING THAT GOD EXISTS

Now that we have completed our discussion of Faith, Reason, and Certitude in our search for truth, we are ready to begin our discussion of using human reason to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that God exists. All other knowledge of religion presupposes that he does. Once we have established that God does exist, or at least making it reasonable to believe that he does exist, using human reason we are going to identify his attributes or perfections. Then based on rational proof of God's existence and something of his attributes, using human reason we are going to establish that we owe God worship, thanksgiving, and obedience. Furthermore, we hope to prove by using reason that the human soul is immortal and that God established an objective moral order called the natural law. Following this we explain how Christ established the Catholic Church to continue his presence in the world and provide us with the means of grace with which to achieve salvation. Proof that God revealed himself depends on the truth that he established a church, the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. St Augustine wrote in the fourth century that he couldn't believe what is contained in the Bible without the testimony of the Church, because the Church was there to witness the events described therein, eventually wrote them down in scripture, and transmitted down through the ages for our benefit.

St. Paul writes in his Letter to the Romans of God's existence: "Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made" (Romans 1:20). The most fundamental question of all is: Is it reasonable to believe that God exists? We briefly touched on this subject when we discussed St Anselm's ontological proof for the existence of God above in this essay. Any course in apologetics begins with proving that God exists. All the other doctrines matter only if he does exist. We hope to prove that not only does God exist, but also something about the qualities that he possesses, known as his attributes or perfections. We can start out doing this simply by observing the universe that we live in—God's creation—and reasoning to his existence. Philosophers and theologians have developed several arguments over the centuries using this line of reasoning.

***St. Thomas Aquinas' five ways***

St. Thomas Aquinas, who was a Dominican priest, theologian, and philosopher who lived in the thirteenth century, proposed five arguments to prove God's existence, or at least to make it reasonable to believe that he does. Called the *Doctor Angelicus* (the Angelic Doctor), he is considered one of the greatest theologians and philosophers ever to have lived. Two of his most famous works, the *Summa Theologiae* and the *Summa Contra*

*Gentiles*, are the finest examples of his work on Christian philosophy and theology. He believed that we could know of God's existence simply by using our reason. He taught that human beings could reason from an observation of God's creation, or nature, to proof of his existence. Using Aristotle's philosophy, he developed five ways for proving God's existence from an observation of nature. Essentially his five arguments can be broken down into two. The first one is the argument of intelligent design called the teleological argument and the second is the argument from causation, of which four of the five are examples.

**Teleological or Intelligent Design Argument:** Design arguments are empirical arguments for God's existence. By empirical is meant they are observable by direct sense experience. One using design arguments to prove God's existence usually progresses by identifying various observable features of the world that constitute evidence of intelligent design, then infers from this that God's existence is the best explanation for these features. Sometimes design arguments are called "teleological" arguments, from the Greek *telos*, which means purpose, because the concepts of design and purpose are closely related. Theologians such as St. Thomas put their arguments to prove God's existence into the form of a syllogism.

A syllogism is a form of deductive logic or reasoning. It is reasoning from general or universal to the specific or particular. The Latin term for deductive reasoning is *a priori*, which means, from the cause to the effect. It is a type of reasoning that examines given general principles to discover what particular facts or real-life observations can be derived from them. A syllogism is defined as "the regular logical form of every argument, consisting of three propositions, a major premise, a minor premise, and a conclusion. The conclusion necessarily follows from the premises; so that, if these are true, the conclusion must be true, and the argument amounts to having been proven. Each of the premises has one term in common with the conclusion: in the case of the major premise this is the *major term*, or *predicate* of the conclusion; in the case of the minor premise it is the *minor term*, the *subject* of the conclusion. For example:

**Major Premise:** All men *are* mortal.

**Minor Premise:** *Socrates* is a man.

**Conclusion:** Therefore, *Socrates* (subject) *is* (predicate) mortal.

"Being mortal" is the *major term* and "Socrates" the *minor term*; the connection between them is made by the *middle term*, in this case "being a man". Here the major premise is general and the minor particular. I'll give a couple more syllogisms to illustrate my point.

**Major Premise:** All humans are mortal.

**Minor Premise:** I am a human.

**Conclusion:** Therefore, I am mortal.

**Major Premise:** Every virtue is commendable.

**Minor Premise:** Kindness is a virtue.

**Conclusion:** Therefore kindness is commendable.

St. Thomas tells us that common sense tells us that the universe works in such a way that one can conclude that an intelligent designer, God, designed it. In other words, all physical laws and the order of nature and life were designed and ordered by God, the intelligent designer. For example, some scientists say that the “Big Bang” theory is a plausible explanation for the beginning of the universe. If as the astronomers and physicists say, that the first matter was converted from energy (Einstein’s formula  $E=mc^2$ ), who converted it in the first place? If God created energy, and  $mc^2$  is mass x the velocity of light squared, God designed and created all matter from energy. Some all-powerful and all-knowing being that is always and everywhere present had to design and create the universe from nothing, perhaps with a big bang. That being is God. If the writer of the first 12 chapters of the Book of Genesis were writing today, he might explain the creation in terms of a Big Bang for modern readers, instead of in the form that the story is told in Genesis. Nonetheless, there are still scientists and philosophers who argue that everything that exists, including the universe, is the result of pure chance. They usually rely on some evolutionary hypothesis to account for what exists in living or inanimate forms.



Peter Kreeft, a prominent Catholic philosopher who is a professor at Boston College and one of the world’s leading apologists, asks the question: “Why then does the atheist use that incredibly improbable explanation for the universe?” His answer is: “Clearly, because it’s his only chance of remaining an atheist. At this point we need a psychological explanation of the atheist rather than a logical explanation of the universe. We have a logical explanation of the universe, but the atheist doesn’t like it. It’s called God.”

Scientists who deny God’s existence, or at least deny that he designed and created the universe, must rely on some explanation that involves chance. Perhaps you have heard the story that if a monkey threw millions of letters up and let them fall millions of times that eventually by chance Shakespeare’s Hamlet would fall in place. Or the story of a tornado passing through a big junkyard millions of times producing a Boeing 747. To avoid giving God credit for anything, which is usually the most reasonable explanation for the cause of something, the

unbeliever posits absolutely absurd alternative explanations. One has to work very hard to be an atheist.

It just makes common sense that organs such as the human eye or brain are far too complex to have evolved by blind chance. The human brain is the most complex thing in the universe, and although it is risky to do so, in some ways, it is comparable to a computer. Computers do not spring in to existence or evolve by chance; they are designed and manufactured by human intelligence. How much more true is this of the universe! The design and creation of the universe would require a super intelligence and power.

Peter Kreeft, uses a syllogism to prove that there must be a universal designer. As we just discussed, the syllogism is a form of logic with which we strive to ascertain the truth of something. It starts out with a statement called a major premise that has proven to be universally true. It is followed by a statement called a minor premise that is a particular application of the universal truth. This then is followed with a conclusion logically based on the two premises. Following is a syllogism that proves logically that there must exist a universal designer. The intelligent design argument goes like this:

**Major Premise:** Where there is design, there must be a designer.

**Minor Premise:** Evidence of design exists throughout the universe.

**Conclusion:** Therefore, there must be a universal designer. We call this designer God.

**The Anthropic Cosmological Argument:** Kreeft offers us another uniquely strong aspect of the design argument; this is the so-called “anthropic principle” first formulated by Brandon Carter and promoted by John D. Barrow and Frank Tipler among others. He tells us that the universe seems to be specially designed from the beginning for human life to evolve. Kreeft assumes that the “Big Bang” hypothesis is a plausible explanation for the origin of the universe. He points out that if the temperature of the primal fireball that resulted from the “Big Bang” some 15-20 billion years ago at the beginning of our universe had been a trillionth of a degree colder or hotter, the carbon molecule, the foundation of all organic life, could never have evolved. He also tells us that the number of possible universes is trillions and trillions, and that only one of them could support human life: the earth. These examples could be multiplied many times.

The anthropic cosmological argument or principle suggests that basic facts, such as mankind's existence, are best explained by the existence of God. In astrophysics and cosmology, the anthropic principle (from Greek *anthropos*, meaning “human”) is the philosophical idea that observations of the physical universe must be compatible with the conscious and intelligent life that observes it. Some proponents of the anthropic principle reason that it explains why the universe has the age and the fundamental physical con-

starts necessary to accommodate conscious life. As a result, they believe it is “unremarkable that the universe's fundamental constants happen to fall within the narrow range thought to be compatible with life.” It appears if though our universe has “a privileged location in spacetime.” Physicist Paul Davies has called this “fine tuning” the “Goldilocks Enigma”, the idea that the universe had to be “just right” for life to develop, just as baby bear’s porridge had to be “just right” for Goldilocks to eat it. The rationale behind the anthropic principle is that the universe has the same laws operative throughout and that the development of intelligent life on our planet required a series of “coincidences” and that “the circumstances that permit the development of intelligent life throughout the universe are rare.”

Some individual scientists, theologians, and philosophers have argued that divine providence or creation is responsible for the universe’s fine-tuning. For example, one source quotes Christian philosopher Alvin Plantinga as arguing that “random chance, applied to a single and sole universe, only raises the question as to why this universe could be so 'lucky' as to have precise conditions that support life at least at some place (the Earth) and time (within millions of years of the present).” These scientists and scholars see these fine-tuned coincidences substantiating the theistic claim that the Universe has been created by a personal God. It appears as if though “there are a large number of dials that have to be tuned to within extremely narrow limits for life to be possible in our Universe. It is extremely unlikely that this should happen by chance, but much more likely that this should happen, if there is such a person as God.” William Lane Craig, a philosopher and Christian apologist, sees evidence for the existence of God or at least “some form of intelligence capable of manipulating (or designing) the basic physics that governs the Universe.” Scientists such as William A. Demski and Michael Behe are proponents of Intelligent Design who argue that “certain features of the Universe and of living things are best explained by an intelligent cause, not an undirected process such as natural selection.” Although there exists many dangers to life and limb to human beings on our earth, it appears obvious that it was designed for us. Without appropriate protection we would slowly die from depressurization and lack of oxygen a few miles above sea level. Going a mile below sea level without appropriate protection we would slowly burn up from the heat of the Earth’s interior. It has been estimated that less than one-half of 1 percent (0.46%) of the earth’s total volume is capable of sustaining human life—meaning that more than 99.54% of the earth's environment would kill us rather quickly.

The rest of the solar system does not look too good for the possibility of human life either. Outside of the earth’s atmosphere we would quickly die in the vacuum of space. In addition to the lack of air the scorching heat of the Sun, the freezing cold in the shade, or the cosmic radiation would quickly kill us. And we wouldn't do any better on any of the planets of the solar system. We would burn or freeze on Mercury, freeze on Pluto, and



[I]f the strong nuclear force were 2% stronger than it is . . . while the other constants were left unchanged, diprotons would be stable and hydrogen would fuse into them instead of deuterium and helium, drastically altering the physics of stars, and presumably preclude the existence of life similar to what we observe on Earth. The existence of the di-proton would short-circuit the slow fusion of hydrogen into deuterium. Hydrogen would fuse so easily that it is likely that all of the Universe's hydrogen would be consumed in the first few minutes after the Big Bang.

The mathematical formulations of fundamental physical constants necessary to accommodate life on earth can be very complex, and atheists and secular minded scientists and philosophers have tried to refute every one of them. Facts don't interpret themselves; they have to be interpreted by human beings, and all of us bring to our interpretations our preconceptions or presuppositions. People with materialistic leanings tend to interpret facts in an atheistic or agnostic manner, whereas those with spiritualistic leanings tend to interpret the same facts in a theistic manner. In accordance with Newman's thinking, those of us who believe in God's existence and that he created the universe and all that is in it shouldn't rely too heavily on scientific facts, because they are only a portion of the information needed to prove his existence or at least make it reasonable to believe that he does exist.

Besides, scientific "facts" change as new discoveries are made making earlier conclusions appear obsolete. Historical arguments, logical inferences such as cosmological (cause) and teleological (purpose) arguments, mystical experiences, miracles, and the existence of conscience (moral obligation) are among the many other arguments necessary to prove God's existence, or at least make it reasonable to believe that he does exist. The most that we can say about scientific discoveries is that they are not inconsistent with religious beliefs; they are simply additional motive of credibility for belief in God' existence if interpreted in a theistic manner.

**The Debate over Intelligent Design:** Now that we have completed a general discussion of scientific proofs for God's existence, let's look at the debate that has been going on in the country during the past several years over the issue of teaching Intelligent Design in the public schools. In fact, it has become an issue in our own state of Indiana. There has been a heated debate going on in the country over the past several years in the States of Kansas, Ohio, and others trying to require that intelligent design be taught in the public schools equally with scientific evolutionary hypotheses. The proponents claim that intelligent design is a powerfully logical and scientific explanation for the creation of the universe and all that is in it. On the other hand, the opponents of such a policy claim that intelligent design is just another version of creation science, which they say is nothing more than a religious explanation for the existence of the universe and what it contains. They argue that teaching Intelligent Design in the classroom violates the separation of

church and state. Perhaps our discussion will shed some light on this debate.

Why is there so much hostility among many in the scientific community to the idea of introducing Intelligent Design theory in high school biology classes? The public school system has been undergoing secularization for at least the past 50 years. What this means in the realm of biology is that God and religion have been taken out of the schools under the pretext of the separation of church and state and replaced by atheistic materialism in the form of Darwinian science. By atheism I mean that Darwinism as taught in the public schools is Godless at its philosophical foundation. Darwinism is not as value free and an objective pure science as its proponents would like for us to believe. Underlying Darwinism is a philosophy and an ideology used by secularists to instigate a cultural and political revolution, a revolution that has atheism as its philosophical foundation. This is part of a broader scheme to make secular humanism the official religion of the public school system. Opponents of introducing Intelligent Design theory in high school biology classes have a vested interest in this revolution. I believe this is why the proponents of Darwinism are not open to what we Catholics believe is a reasonable compromise between the Bible and the theory of evolution. It is why they portray scientists who are proponents of Intelligent Design as if they were indistinguishable from the simple-minded cartoon-like characters used to portray fundamentalist Christians in plays about the Scopes or “monkey trial”, such as *Inherit the Wind*.

I studied Charles Darwin in detail as a graduate student of history at the University of Illinois, and I recall that although he claimed to be an agnostic, his so-called theory of evolution is atheistic. His mechanism of evolution, mutation and natural selection, is Godless. Moreover, one of his leading defenders was Thomas Henry Huxley who coined the term agnostic to characterize those who claim not to know whether there is a God or not. His grandson Sir Julian Huxley was one of the most prominent atheist of the twentieth century. He was a noted biologist and was past president of the Godless American Humanist Association and signer of Humanist Manifesto II. The first principle of Darwinism's is that there is no God. It is essential to the Darwinian Theory that every living thing is the product of a purely material universe that functions without design or purpose and is driven by mindless accidents, such as is found in Darwin's theory of natural selection.

Darwinism provides the illusion of intellectual credibility. Whatever the truth that might exist in the Darwinian explanation for the origin and development or evolution of living things, to quote a proponent of Intelligent Design, “the champions of Darwinism in our schools hold to the philosophical belief that we live in a ‘Godless, morally neutral world’ and that we are ‘unable to define any act as intrinsically good or evil. The problem is they dishonestly promote this philosophical view as objective science.’” He says that if they are

going to posit a so-called scientific theory that development or evolution of living things is caused by blind forces of some type, proponents must have the presupposition that there is no God who designed, created and sustains the universe and all that is in it. He claims that this is philosophy, not science! I believe that this why proponents of the Darwinian theory stigmatize Intelligent Design theory as just another form of creation science promoted by religious fanatics. Even though Intelligent Design theory is promoted by competent scientists adhering to the scientific method, the same method used by scientists who posit an atheistic view of science, the opponents of Intelligent Design still dismiss the proponents as quacks. One proponent of design intelligence has said that the theory “challenges the metaphysics derived from exaggerating an extrapolation of the meager science to be found in Darwinism” and that “Many prominent biologists have challenged Darwin’s views on evolution.” He says that the facts simply don’t support the theory.



One of the most vociferous critics of Darwinian evolution was Australian philosopher of science David Stove. His work included criticisms of what he considered David Hume's inductive skepticism and that of others, and he was also a leading critic of Idealism and socio-biology, describing the latter “as a new religion in which genes play the role of gods.” Toward the latter part of his career, he became a trenchant critic of the Darwinian version of evolutionary biology, although he continued to believe in the evolutionary theory in general. His views on the subject are to found

in a collection of his articles in the book *Darwinian Fairytales*. His main problem with the Darwinians and sociobiologists was what he thought was their distorted view of human nature, including their views on kinship, and suspicion of human altruism, which he believed led to the growth of cynicism and selfishness. He argued that evolutionary theorists are wrong in their theory that there once existed a Darwinian fight for survival among “cave men”, but no longer exists in modern times. He believed that to the contrary, human beings survived more due to their altruism, i.e. their cooperation among themselves, rather than by any survival of the fit-test. He was also critical of the Darwinian claim that human populations continue to expand until they have eaten up all of their food supplies, which then results in massive deaths from starvation. In fact, the population growth of richer nations is typically slower than that of poorer nations. His book contains a devastating rebuttal of just about every major idea of evolutionary biologists, especially Richard Dawkins “Selfish Gene.”

Why do the atheists hold back from openly declaring their goals and instead use stalking horses such as Darwin? In answer to this question, one proponent of Intelligent Design asserts, “Because atheism ‘is an absurd belief,’ and the atheists sense that. They know it is a ‘system that cannot be developed from philosophical first principles. The ideological atheist must close his mind to the fact that he believes that absolutely nothing has caused itself to become something. The nonexistence of God is the atheists’ first principle and they are willing to sacrifice reason itself to that principle.”

In the final analysis, of what practical use is the Intelligent Design theory to prove God’s existence? If we already have adequate reason to believe that God exists, Intelligent Design makes it more reasonable to believe that God deliberately structured the universe to have the fine-tuned properties that we discussed, than it does to believe that the universe occurred by chance. Intelligent Design is another motive of credibility. However, I think that one must be careful when he or she proposes that Intelligent Design is a science that employs the scientific method. This is where the idea receives most of its criticism by the proponents of the evolutionary hypothesis. Perhaps we should think of Intelligent Design as more of a philosophical, a metaphysical approach to the problem of the origin of the Universe and all that is in it, including living things. After all, philosophy is a valid method of searching for the truth; the scientific method doesn’t have a monopoly on truth.

Perhaps in the public schools Intelligent Design should not be taught in the biology classroom, but in a philosophy course especially designed for the purpose. We didn’t have any problem with this at John Paul II Catholic High School where I taught for many years, because we were free to teach the full truth of any subject matter. I might add, that the proponents of evolutionary hypotheses are not as scientific as they would have us believe. David Stove astutely exposes this fact as does Edward Feser in *The Last Superstition*. As I pointed out earlier in this discussion, much of their theorizing is more philosophical or ideological than scientific.

**The Status of Intelligent Design in the Catholic Church:** Long before the advent of science, the Church held that we can know God through his creation. We have illustrated this by examining the teleological or design argument as proof of God’s existence and will consider below numerous causation arguments that prove God’s existence, or at least make it reasonable to believe that God exists from observing what he has created. For the Neo-Darwinists, as the proponents of the evolutionary hypothesis are sometimes called, the mechanisms of nature are sufficient to explain the diversity and complexity of animal species. For the proponents of Intelligent Design, the complexity of even relatively simple life forms shows a “design” beyond the power of mere chance. While Catholics may certainly agree with the conclusion of “Intelligent Design” theory, we should be careful that we don’t overlook a more fundamental way of knowing God through nature. The

Church has taught, at least from the time of St Paul that nature reveals God, quite apart from the scientific methods of the contemporary world.

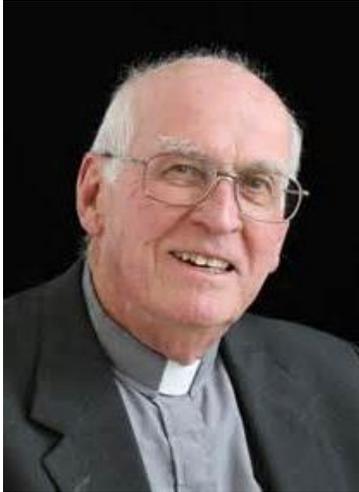
The Bible tells us that God is knowable from nature apart from the experimental science or advanced mathematics and technology. The Book of Wisdom declares that “Foolish by nature were all who were in ignorance of God, and who from the good things seen did not succeed in knowing the one who is, and from studying the works did not discern the artisan . . . For from the greatness and the beauty of created things their original author, by analogy, is seen” (13:1, 5). St. Paul makes the same point in his Letter to the Romans: “Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made” (Romans 1:20).

I recently read an interesting article on this subject by Dr. Arthur Hippler, who is the director of the Office of Justice and Peace in the Diocese of La Cross, Wisconsin. He says essentially what we have said where he writes: “Clearly, some knowledge of God's existence and attributes is available by intelligent reflection on our ordinary experience of nature.” Then he quotes St. Paul where he tells the pagans at Lystra that God has “left not Himself without testimony, doing good from Heaven, giving rains and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness’ (Acts 14:16), as if nature demonstrated a provident God.” To provide the Church’s official position on this matter, he cites the First Vatican Council as saying, “If anyone says that the one true God, our Creator and Lord cannot be known with certainty in the light of human reason by those things which have been made, [let him be anathema] *anathema sit* (Vatican I, “Canons on the Catholic Faith,” sec. 2, n. 1, DZ, 1806). He tells us that human reason in this statement should be understood very broadly, that it might include the reasoning we would call scientific, but not exclusively so.

The *Catechism* says of this matter: “The human mind is able to know God in certain ways that are not through the scientific method (No. 31). It goes on to say in the next paragraph that “The Church does not canonize a particular argument or set of arguments as valid, although it does indicate the starting points for such arguments in a general way: ‘starting from movement, becoming, contingency, and the world's order and beauty, one can come to a knowledge of God as the origin and the end of the universe’” (No. 32). Dr. Hippler says in this regard, “While one is not bound, as a matter of faith, to accept any particular proof such as those given in the ‘Five Ways,’ one is certainly bound to believe that from the creature, one can come to know the Creator by reason. Scripture asserts no less.”

There has been considerable debate within the Church over the past few years over this issue. For example, Fr. George V. Coyne S.J., former director of the Vatican Observatory, which has sites at Castel Gandolfo, south of Rome, and on Mount Graham in Arizona,

delivered a speech at Atlantic University in West Palm Beach, Florida entitled, “Science Does Not Need God, or Does It? A Catholic Scientist Looks at Evolution,” when he said that “Intelligent Design reduces and belittles God’s power and might” (Catholic Online [www.catholic.org](http://www.catholic.org)). He states in the speech that:



1) the Intelligent Design movement, while evoking a God of power and might, a designer God, actually belittles God, makes him too small and paltry; 2) that our scientific understanding of the universe, untainted by religious considerations, provides for those who believe in God a marvelous opportunity to reflect upon their beliefs.

He continues his speech by saying that, “science is and should be seen as ‘completely neutral’ on the issue of the theistic or atheistic implications of scientific results . . . that science and religion are totally separate human pursuits.” To make his point, he tells us that although Christianity is “radically creationist,” it is not best described by the “crude creationism” of the fundamental, literal, scientific interpretation of Genesis or by the Newtonian dictatorial God who makes the universe tick along like a watch.” Instead, he stresses that “God acts as a parent toward the universe, nurturing, encouraging and working with it.” He calls the belief that the Bible should be used “as a source of scientific knowledge a mistake. He believes this unnecessarily complicates the debate over evolution.

He quotes with agreement British Roman Catholic Cardinal, John Henry Newman, who stated in 1868: “The theory of Darwin, true or not, is not necessarily atheistic; on the contrary, it may simply be suggesting a larger idea of divine providence and skill.” This appears to me to be suggesting a version of the idea that evolution might be the way God created the universe that he designed and created the primal material from which the universe evolved in accordance with the laws he established. This process is known as secondary creation or causation. I’ll explain secondary causes later when we discuss another scholar’s view on Intelligent Design.

Fr. Coyne continues that modern science reveals to the religious believer a “God who made a universe that has within it a certain dynamism and thus participates in the very creativity of God . . . [and] that this view of creation is not new but can be found in early Christian writings, including from those of St. Augustine.” He goes on to say that for this reason “Religious believers must move away from the notion of a dictator God, a Newtonian God who made the universe as a watch that ticks along regularly.” Instead he proposes to describe God’s relationship with the universe as “that of a parent with a child, with God nurturing, preserving and enriching its individual character.” He says, “God

should be seen more as a parent or as one who speaks encouraging and sustaining words.” He stresses that the theory of Intelligent Design diminishes God into “an engineer who designs systems rather than a lover.” He concludes by saying, “God in his infinite freedom continuously creates a world which reflects that freedom at all levels of the evolutionary process to greater and greater complexity” . . . “God lets the world be what it will be in its continuous evolution. He does not intervene, but rather allows, participates, loves.”

On the other hand, Cardinal Christoph Schonborn of Vienna, Austrian came out a few years ago in support Intelligent Design. He wrote an article for the July 7, 2005 New York Times where he said “neo-Darwinian evolution is not compatible with Catholic doctrine,” while the Intelligent Design theory is. Fr. Coyne criticized the Cardinal for supporting Intelligent Design and stated in his speech that in his estimation, the cardinal is in error on several issues. Nonetheless, the cardinal is an extremely influential prelate in the Church, having studied under professor Joseph Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI) at Regensburg University and the principal author of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. What he says must carry some weight in the Church.

The Church hasn’t taken an official position on Intelligent Design. The closest that I have come to finding anything official about the Church’s position on Intelligent Design, as such, is an article in the Vatican’s official newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano* reported by the Catholic News Service entitled “Intelligent design not science, says Vatican newspaper article”. The article was written by Fiorenzo Facchini, a professor of evolutionary biology at the University of Bologna in Italy. In the article, Professor Facchini expresses his opposition to the teaching Intelligent Design as science in the schools? The fact that this article appeared in the official Vatican newspaper has to carry a lot of weight regarding the Church’s position on Intelligent Design as proposed for teaching in the schools.

Professor Facchini is opposed to teaching Intelligent Design as science in the schools because “[It] is not science and should not be taught as a scientific theory in schools alongside Darwinian evolution.” He explains that Intelligent Design is the idea that certain features of life and the universe are best explained by an intelligent designer rather than adaptive evolution. He goes on to say that “in pushing intelligent design some groups were improperly seeking miraculous explanations in a way that creates confusion between religious and scientific fields.” He says that a Pennsylvania judge was right when he ruled that Intelligent Design could not be taught as science in the schools, because “Intelligent design does not belong to science and there is no justification for the pretext that it be taught as a scientific theory alongside the Darwinian explanation.” The argument usually goes that Intelligent Design is a religious explanation; therefore, teaching it in the public schools violates the separation of church and state. Nonetheless, he says “scientists should recognize that evolutionary theory does not exclude an overall purpose in creation a

‘superior design’ that may be realized through secondary causes such as natural selection.” Secondary causation is defined in the *New Catholic Dictionary* as:

a created cause that is totally dependent on the First Cause, who is God. It is a cause that can produce a certain kind of effect but cannot produce the being or existence of the effect.” It states that “God as the first cause of all things, because he is the first in the series of all other causes. Also, God as immediately operating in all finite causality, as the underlying cause on which all other causes constantly depend for their activity.

Professor Facchini says, that the Church teaches that God created all things from nothing, but doesn't say how, which leaves open the possibilities of evolutionary mechanisms like random variation or mutation and natural selection. In other words, God could have created the Universe through secondary causes in the natural course of events, without having to miraculously intervene directly in every creative act. Another way of putting this is God worked through the evolutionary processes to create the universe and all that is in it. I've heard it phrased “It's the way God did it.”

This idea is hardly new in the Church, for Galileo, defending himself against his opponents who maintained that the Copernican theory was erroneous because it conflicted with Scripture, cited in a Letter to Madame Christine of Lorraine, Grand Duchess of Tuscany a quotation from St. Augustine's *De Genesi ad litteram* about the Holy Spirit's intent in inspiring the Bible. St. Augustine ended the discussion by writing, “The Spirit of God did not want to teach people things that would be of no help to their salvation.” Galileo interprets this as meaning that the Holy Spirit's intention is to teach us “how to go to Heaven, and not how the heavens go.” One scholar maintains that Galileo first heard the quotation from Cesare Cardinal Baronio with whom the saying is usually attributed.

Facchini points out though that the Church does insist that the emergence of humans supposes a willful act of God, and that man cannot be seen as only the product of evolutionary processes. The Church teaches that humankind's spiritual element isn't something that could have developed from natural selection, but required what he calls an “ontological leap”. Ontology has to do with man's nature or being. Man's being is qualitatively different than all other creatures, because he is created in God's very image and likeness. The Church teaches that humans have an eternal soul possessing the faculties or operations of intellect and will. The soul doesn't come from the parents or is it the product of evolution, but is created by God from nothing, *ex nihilo cratio*, probably at the instant of conception.

What has caused such an intense debate to emerge in the U. S. and elsewhere during the past few years over the teaching of Intelligent Design in the public schools? On this mat-

ter, Professor Facchini believes that the debate has been fueled by a tendency among most Darwinian scientists “to view evolution in absolute and ideological terms, as if everything—including first causes—can be attributed to chance.” He concludes by saying that the scientific method “can neither demonstrate nor exclude that a superior design has been carried out.” Moreover, he says, “From a religious viewpoint, there is no doubt that the human story has a sense and a direction that is marked by a superior design.”

Professor Facchini believes that the main problem with Intelligent Design is that “it turns to a ‘superior cause’—understood though not necessarily named as God—to explain supposed shortcomings of evolutionary science.” But that’s not how science should work, he writes. He states that “If the model proposed by Darwin is held to be inadequate, one should look for another model. But it is not correct methodology to stray from the field of science pretending to do science.” In other words, he is saying that Intelligent Design is not a scientific explanation for creation, but instead a religious or philosophical one. The main criticism that I have heard of Intelligent Design is that it doesn’t use the experimental method of science; therefore, it isn’t a science. However, many of the scientific arguments that we will discuss below were formulated by leading practitioners of Intelligent Design. Most of the claims of proponents of Intelligent Design appear to base their hypotheses on statistical analysis rather than employing the scientific method, as such.

**God of the Gaps:** Some critics of Intelligent Design claim it is nothing but a “God of the Gaps” argument for proof of God’s existence, that it is a type of theological argument in which gaps in scientific knowledge are taken to be evidence or proof of God’s existence. The term was originally coined by Christian theologians not to discredit theism, but rather to point out the fallacy of relying on teleological (design) arguments for God’s existence. The term can refer to a position that assumes an act of God as the explanation for an unknown phenomenon, which is a variant of an argument from ignorance fallacy. Such an argument can be reduced to a syllogistic form: There is a gap in understanding of some aspect of the natural world. Therefore the cause must be supernatural. An example of this type of reasoning applied to biological science is as follows: “Because current biological science can’t figure out exactly how life started, it must be God who caused life to start.” One source states:

God-of-the-gaps arguments have been discouraged by some theologians who assert that such arguments tend to relegate God to the leftovers of science: as scientific knowledge increases, the dominion of God decreases. The term was invented as a criticism of people who perceive that God only acts in the gaps, and who restrict God’s activity to such “gaps”. It has also been argued that the God-of-the-gaps view is predicated on the assumption that any event which can be explained by science automatically excludes God; that if God did not do something via direct action, God didn’t do it at all . . . From a scientific viewpoint, God-of-the-

gaps is viewed as the fallacy of claiming any gap in our scientific knowledge as evidence of God's action, as opposed to admitting that we do not currently have an answer or anticipating that, should an answer come, it will be a scientific one that leaves no role for God.

God-of-the-gaps arguments have also been criticized for doubting that, in a world created by God, the mechanics of how things happen can always be described by science. Some theistic scientists point out the danger of using a God-of-the-gaps argument and prefer the Intelligent Design argument

Edward Feser's criticism of Intelligent Design: Some critics of Intelligent Design claim that it is simply another variety of William Paley's Watchmaker analogy. Paley was an eighteenth century English clergyman, Christian apologist, and philosopher, who is best known for his natural theology exposition of the teleological or design argument for the existence of God in his work *Natural Theology or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity*. In this book he formulates the watchmaker analogy, which maintains that the regular movements of the solar system resemble the workings of a giant clock that had to be designed and created by a Super Watchmaker.

As science developed during the eighteenth century and onward, various views developed with the purpose of reconciling the Genesis creation account with modern science. The Creationists were the first in the twentieth century to adopt Paley's watchmaker analogy in their fight against the proponents of Darwinian evolution. Creationism is the belief that the Universe and living organisms originate from specific acts of divine creation as described in the Book of Genesis. The Biblical literalists were successful in their campaign against the teaching of evolution in the public schools during the 1920's. When teaching of evolution was reintroduced into the schools in the 1960's, the opponents of biological evolution first adopted what was called "creation science", which is similar to Paley's argument. In addition to the Biblical literalists, there emerged the proponents of "intelligent design", who presents basically Paley's same analogy "as an argument against evolution by natural selection without explicitly stating that the 'intelligent designer' was God."

Michael Behe, who is a professor of biochemistry at Lehigh University in Pennsylvania and is a senior fellow of the Discovery Institute's Center for Science and Culture, is best known for his argument for "irreducible complexity", which argues that some biochemical structures are simply too complex to be adequately explained by known evolutionary mechanisms and probably the result of intelligent design. Another notable proponent of intelligent design is William Dembski, who is a mathematician, philosopher and theologian and is a fellow of the Discovery Institute's Center for Science and Culture and has

been the Phillip E. Johnson Research Professor of Science and Culture at the Southern Evangelical Seminary near Charlotte, North Carolina. Johnson, who is a retired UC Berkeley law professor and author, is considered the father of the Intelligent Design movement.

Edward C. Feser, who is an associate professor of philosophy at Pasadena City College and a convert to Catholicism from atheism, wrote in an article entitled “The trouble with William Paley”:

In *The Last Superstition* and elsewhere, I have been very critical of both William Paley of ‘design argument’ fame and of contemporary Intelligent Design theory. These criticisms have had nothing whatsoever to do with a desire to conform to Darwinian orthodoxy. They have had to do instead with a rejection of the most basic metaphysical and methodological assumptions underlying by the “design inference” strategy shared by Paley and ID theorists. (I am aware that not all ID theorists are trying to do exactly what Paley was doing. But the differences are ir-relevant, because what I object to is what they have in common.)



He gives two reasons for his criticism. First, he claims that both Paley’s “design arguments” and Intelligent Design theory take for granted an essentially mechanistic conception of the natural world. He states that “What this means is that they deny the existence of the sort of immanent teleology or final causality affirmed by the Aristotelian-Thomistic-Scholastic tradition, and instead regard all teleology as imposed, “artificially” as it were, from outside.” Fr. Hardon defines mechanism in the *New Catholic Dictionary* as “The theory that all living things, not excluding the human soul, are only more or less complex machines. In this view all organic life is only a function or variant of matter, following the same basic laws of physics and chemistry.” Feser goes on to say:

And I emphasized that one of the objections the Aristotelian-Thomistic (A-T) tradition has to the mechanistic denial of final causality is that it makes efficient causality unintelligible. Causes and effects become “loose and separate”; any effect or none might in principle follow upon any cause. This not only paves the way for the paradoxes of Hume, but (more to the present point) undermines the possibility of showing how the very fact of causation as such presupposes a sustaining First Uncaused Cause. The metaphysically necessary connection between the world and God is broken; in principle the world could exist and operate just as it does apart from God. The most we can say is that this is so improbable a hypothesis that it can safely be ruled out; for as Paley and Co. assure us, it is far more likely that an ex-

tremely powerful and intelligent “designer” put together the “machine” that is the universe.

Where Hume is referred to in Feser’s above quotation, he is referring to Hume’s notion that humans can’t infer any causal connection between two events just because one event follows another, that the first necessarily caused the second (because causation can’t be perceived, only inferred), then the ability to reason to God’s existence by any chain of causes is shut off. There is left no avenue to ascend to God by the use of reason.

David Hume (1711-1776) was one of the British Empiricists of the Early Modern period, along with John Locke and George Berkeley. According to an article in *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, the three advocated similar empirical standards for knowledge, meaning that there are no innate ideas and that all knowledge comes from experience, but in addition Hume is famous for applying this standard rigorously to causation and necessity. It states, “Instead of taking the notion of causation for granted, Hume challenges us to consider what experience allows us to know about cause and effect.” The article says in this regard:

Hume shows that experience does not tell us much. Of two events, A and B, we say that A causes B when the two always occur together, that is, are constantly conjoined. Whenever we find A, we also find B, and we have a certainty that this conjunction will continue to happen. Once we realize that “A must bring about B” is tantamount merely to “Due to their constant conjunction, we are psychologically certain that B will follow A”, then we are left with a very weak notion of necessity. This tenuous grasp on causal efficacy helps give rise to the Problem of Induction— --that we are not reasonably justified in making any inductive inference about the world. Among Hume scholars it is a matter of debate how seriously Hume means us to take this conclusion and whether causation consists wholly in constant conjunction.

Feser appears to be in agreement with Fr. Coyne on this matter where he discusses the second problem with Paley’s argument:

[Paley and the proponents of ID] conceptualize this designer on the model of human tinkerers, attributing our characteristics (intelligence, power, etc.) to him in a univocal rather than an analogous way. To be sure, “design arguments” also emphasize that the differences between human artifacts and the universe indicate that the designer’s power and intelligence must be far vaster than ours. But we are necessarily left with a designer conceived of in anthropomorphic terms—essentially a human being, or at least a Cartesian immaterial substance, with the limitations abstracted away. The result is the “theistic personalism” (as Brian Davies has labeled it) which has displaced classical theism in the thinking of many contemporary philosophers of religion.

So what, Feser asked, if Paley’s and the ID arguments don’t get us with certainty “all the way to the God of classical theism. So they only get us part way, and only with probability. That’s something, isn’t it?” Isn’t it beneficial to go at least part of the way toward proving God’s existence? In spite of this, he says:

[The Paley or ID arguments don’t achieve] one degree of probability—to the God of classical theism, of Athanasius, Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas, of the Creeds and councils of the Church, the “I am who am” of Exodus. What you get instead is something like the Ralph Richardson Supreme Being character from *Time Bandits*. Really really powerful?—no doubt about it. Super smart too—wouldn’t want to play Trivial Pursuit against him! A snappy dresser. But not God. Because a god apart from whom the world might in theory exist anyway—as a mechanical conception of nature entails—is not, cannot be, the God of classical theism. Nor can a god who is powerful and intelligent in just the way we are, only more so.

Then Feser quotes the analytical Thomist philosopher Christopher F. J. Martin as saying in his book *Thomas Aquinas: God and Explanations*: “The Being whose existence is revealed to us by the argument from design is not God but the Great Architect of the Deists and Freemasons, an impostor disguised as God, a stern, kindly, and immensely clever old English gentleman, equipped with apron, trowel, square and compasses.”

Feser comments that “The Great Architect is not God because he is just someone like us but a lot older, cleverer and more skillful. He decides what he wants to do and therefore sets about doing the things he needs to do to achieve it. God is not like that.” He claims that “The argument from design fails, then, because [as Martin argues earlier in the book] it is an argument from ignorance, because it confuses the final and efficient modes of explanation, and because even if it succeeded it would not prove the existence of God but of some Masonic impostor.” Even though the design arguments have some validity, Feser believes that they “distract attention from arguments which really do establish the existence of God. Worse, they lead people to a false conception of God—God as an anthropomorphic tinkerer, God as a cosmic Boy Scout or Santa Claus, a god-of-the-gaps, a scientific posit on all fours with quarks and selective pressures.” He continues to argue:

That is not to say that I think naturalistic metaphysics is believable even for a moment. It isn’t. But the point is that the dispute concerns basic metaphysics, not empirical science. Where the dispute over theism, specifically, is concerned, it is a waste of time to try to beat the naturalists at their own game, viz. empirical theorizing on the basis of a mechanistic conception of nature. That sort of thing will only ever get you at best to very remote, unusual, even extremely unexpected and impressive—but still perfectly natural—phenomena. It will not get you in the slightest toward God, because God is not one natural object among others, not even the most powerful and intelligent natural object, not even an immaterial natural

object. (From a Scholastic point of view, “natural” does not entail “material”—angels and demons are immaterial, but still part of the natural, created order. Nor does the entailment seem to hold even from a naturalistic point of view.

Feser concludes by asserting that “The trouble with Paley-style arguments, then, is not that they are bad science—they may or may not be, depending on which ones we are talking about—but that they are bad theology. If you assume otherwise . . . your god is too small. It seems to me that Feser is in full agreement with Fr. Coyne on this matter. In the section below this one I’ll try to shed some light on what I believe Feser means by modern metaphysicians who eliminate formal and final causation from their arguments, something he claims the proponents of Intelligent Design do as well.

### ***The Debate over the Theory of Evolution***

Charles Darwin was the first to formulate an argument for the scientific theory of evolution by means of natural selection. He outlined in his book *On the Origin of Species* (1859) his theory of evolution based on what he thought were three facts about populations:

1. More offspring are produced than can possibly survive,
2. Traits vary among individuals, leading to different rates of survival and reproduction, and
3. Trait differences are heritable.

Darwin argued that when members of a population die, they are replaced by the offspring of parents better adapted to survive and reproduce in the biophysical environment in which natural selection takes place. Natural selection simply means that nature itself does the selection of what will survive. The species that better adapt to the environment are the ones that are more likely to survive. Evolutionary adaptation is the quality whereby the process of natural selection creates and preserves traits that are seemingly fitted for the functional roles they perform. Biologists claim that natural selection is the only known cause of adaptation, but in addition there are other causes of evolution such as genetic mutation and genetic drift. In the early twentieth century, Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection was integrated with the modern evolutionary discipline of population genetics.

While discussing the debate over Intelligent Design we kept encountering the Theory of Evolution. More correctly, I would call evolution a hypothesis rather than a theory. A hypothesis is an educated guess of what one considers the truth to be about some cause

and effect relationship. It does not exist at nearly the level of probability that does a theory. A theory is a tested hypothesis of a cause and effect relationship that has a higher level of probability that it is true. So, I believe, that since evolution is far from a proven fact, it should be referred to as a hypothesis rather than a theory.



We encountered the evolutionary hypothesis when we discussed Intelligent Design, because the two concepts are interrelated. Since the time of St. Augustine in the fourth century, Catholics have not found a conflict between religion and science, including the theory of evolution. Alister McGrath, who is an Oxford professor, theologian, Anglican priest, intellectual historian, scientist, and Christian apologist, has written an informative article about St Augustine entitled “Creation and Evolution” He describes how Augustine wove several themes in the Bible into his account of creation. Although God brought everything into existence in a single moment of creation, Augustine believed that he endowed it with the capacity to develop. He uses the image

of the dormant seed to help his readers grasp this point. God creates seeds, which will grow and develop at the right time. McGrath states:

Augustine asks his readers to think of the created order as containing divinely embedded causalities that emerge or evolve at a later stage. Yet Augustine has no time for any notion of random or arbitrary changes within creation. The development of God’s creation is always subject to God’s sovereign providence. The important thing is that these interpretations must not be wedded to prevailing scientific theories. Otherwise, the Bible becomes a prisoner of what was once believed to be scientifically true.

McGrath maintains that Augustine “stresses the importance of weaving the total witness of Scripture into a coherent doctrine of creation and not limiting this to Scripture’s first few dozen verses.” That he “does not limit God’s creative action to the primordial act of origination. God is, he insists, still working within the world, directing its continuing development and unfolding its potential.” He states:

There are two “moments” in the creation: a primary act of origination and a continuing process of providential guidance. Creation is thus not a completed past event. This two-fold focus on the creation allows us to read Genesis in a way that affirms that God created everything from nothing, in an instant. However, it also helps us affirm that the universe has been created with the intended capacity to develop, under God’s sovereign guidance. For Augustine God created a universe that was deliberately designed to develop and evolve. The blueprint

for that evolution is not arbitrary but is programmed into the very fabric of creation. God must be thought of as creating in that very first moment the potencies for all the kinds of living things to come later, including humanity.

McGrath is emphatic that Augustine didn't believe in the evolution of species in the modern sense. He says in this regard:

There were no reasons at that time for anyone to believe in this notion. Yet Augustine developed a theological framework that could accommodate this later scientific development, though his theological commitments would prevent him from accepting any idea of the development of the universe as a random or lawless process. For this reason Augustine would have opposed the strict Darwinian notion of random variations, insisting that God's providence is deeply involved throughout, directing a process in manners and ways that lie beyond full human comprehension.

A thousand years later, St. Thomas Aquinas judged that St. Augustine's understanding of the matter better defended sacred Scripture against its critics. Like Augustine, he was careful not to commit to any attempt at a scientific explanation that might later be refuted with new discoveries, and he looked for common ground within opposing views. Although Aquinas is certainly not thinking of evolution in the modern sense, he appears to agree with Augustine that the universe has been created with the intended capacity to develop and evolve under God's sovereign guidance. As one scholar comments, "Obviously he is not thinking of Darwinian evolution, but his thought is not incompatible with what modern science appears to confirm."

The Catholic Church issued no official statements on the evolutionary hypothesis for over two centuries, until what some believe was a statement of neutrality in the 1950s and then to more favorable statements during the past few years, especially comments of Pope John Paul II. Pope Pius XII commented on evolution in his encyclical *Humani Generis* in 1950. Although he wrote the encyclical to warn against several ideologies and philosophies that he believed were threatening the Catholic faithful at the time, he did make a few comments on the evolutionary hypothesis. His views expressed in the encyclical can be summarized as follows:

- The question of the origin of man's body from preexisting and living matter is a legitimate matter of inquiry for natural science. Catholics are free to form their own opinions, but they should do so cautiously; they should not confuse fact with conjecture, and they should respect the Church's right to define matters touching on Revelation.

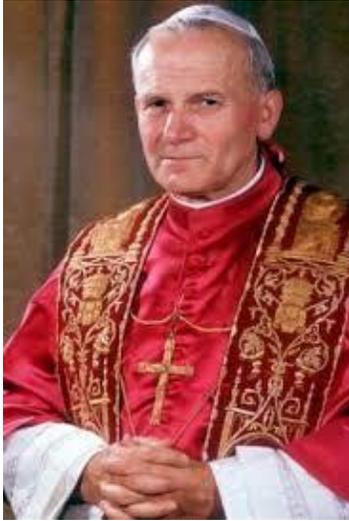
- Catholics must believe that the human soul was created out of nothing immediately
- by God. Since the soul is a spiritual substance it is not brought into being through transformation of matter, but directly by God, which explains the special uniqueness of each person.
- All men have descended from an individual, Adam, who has transmitted original sin to all mankind. Catholics may not, therefore, believe in “polygenism”, which is the scientific hypothesis that mankind descended from a group of original humans (that there were many Adams and Eves).

Concerning the doctrine on creation, Ludwig Ott in *his Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* identifies the following points as essential beliefs of the Catholic faith:

- All that exists outside God was, in its whole substance, produced out of nothing by God.
- God was moved by His Goodness to create the world.
- The world was created for the Glorification of God.
- The Three Divine Persons are one single, common Principle of the Creation.
- God created the world free from exterior compulsion and inner necessity.
- God has created a good world.
- The world had a beginning in time.
- God alone created the world.
- God keeps all created things in existence.
- God, through His Providence, protects and guides all that He has created.

The Church has taken no official position on the theory of creation or evolution, leaving the specifics of either theistic evolution or literal creationism to the individual within the restrictions established by the Church. Catholics are free to believe or not believe in any part of evolutionary theory.

Catholic schools in the United States and other countries teach the same evolution curriculum that secular schools teach. Bishop Francis X. DiLorenzo of Richmond, who was chair of the Committee on Science and Human Values of the USCCB, wrote in a letter sent to all U.S. bishops in December 2004 that, Catholic schools should continue teaching evolution as a scientific theory backed by convincing evidence. At the same time, Catholic parents whose children are in public schools should ensure that their children are also receiving appropriate catechesis at home and in the parish on God as Creator. Students should be able to leave their biology classes, and their courses in religious instruction, with an integrated understanding of the means God chose to make us who we are.



**John Paul II’s teaching on evolution:** Pope John Paul II commenting on the creation accounts in Genesis during a 1986 general audience said, “The theory of natural evolution, understood in a sense that does not exclude divine causality, is not in principle opposed to the truth about the creation of the visible world as presented in the Book of Genesis.” He went even further in a 1996 message to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences when he said that “fresh knowledge” requires one to realize that evolution is “more than a hypothesis”. He wrote for this occasion “It is indeed remarkable that this theory has been progressively accepted by researchers, following a series of discoveries in various fields of knowledge.”

Furthermore, he said that “The convergence, neither sought nor fabricated, of the results of work that was conducted independently is in itself a significant argument in favor of this theory.” However, in the same address, the Pope rejected any theory of evolution that provides a materialistic explanation for the human soul. In this regard, he said that “Theories of evolution which, because of the philosophies which inspire them, regard the spirit either as emerging from the forces of living matter, or as a simple epiphenomenon of that matter, are incompatible with the truth about man.” By epiphenomenon the Pope means a secondary phenomenon that is a by-product of another phenomenon. Although there was a great deal of debate at the time as to what the Pope actually said, it seems clear that he intended to hold the view that evolution is supported by the evidence, at least to some extent. I have heard it said that he was making a subtle distinction between a hypothesis and a theory. A hypothesis is simply a possible explanation of a phenomenon, whereas a theory is an explanation with some supporting evidence, usually based on testing and research. The pope appears to think there is some evidence to support evolution, at least enough to consider evolution “more than a hypothesis.”

**Cardinal Christoph Schönborn’s teaching on evolution:** In a July 9, 2005 *New York Times* article, Cardinal Christoph Schönborn of Vienna, Austria caused quite a stir by writing that “unguided, unplanned evolution is inconsistent with Catholic faith” and appeared to support the Intelligent Design view. I read several articles about his article in the *Times* as well as some other articles and interviews he gave on the subject. Most of the expert critics interviewed said the Cardinal’s view is useful if taken in the theological sense. As they pointed out, evolution has sometimes been used to justify atheism, immanentism (that God is a vague life force) or deism (that God designed and set the universe in motion and has nothing more to do with it). These critics say that to the extent

his point is that Christianity cannot accept a universe without an active personal God, his conclusions are essentially beyond dispute.

John Allen in an article in the *National Catholic Reporter* said that, most critics wouldn't dispute the Cardinal's statement that "The Catholic Church, while leaving to science many details about the history of life on earth, proclaims that by the light of reason the human intellect can readily and clearly discern purpose and design in the natural world, including the world of living things", or his statement "Evolution in the sense of common ancestry might be true, but evolution in the neo-Darwinian sense—an unguided, unplanned process of random variation and natural selection—is not."

Cardinal Schönborn published an article in the leading Catholic Journal *First Things* entitled "The Designs of Science" in which he said, Neo-Darwinism is "an unguided, unplanned process of random variation and natural selection." He points out how modern science has chosen to dismiss formal and final causes to the inclusion of efficient and material causes, which is a limited view of the completeness of truth or reality. The Cardinal's purpose is to alert us to the materialism and positivism found in modern science. Materialism is the ideology or philosophy that says that physical matter is the only reality and that everything, including thought, feeling, mind, and will, can be explained in terms of matter and physical phenomena. And positivism is the ideology or philosophy that bases all knowledge on perception, and denies the validity of intuition or revelation as valid methods of discovering reality or truth. Although he didn't say anything about Scientism here, it is pertinent to our discussion. Scientism is a belief that scientific knowledge is the foundation of all knowledge and that scientific argument should always be given more weight than knowledge derived by other methods. The Cardinal closes his article by asserting:



What frequently passes for modern science—with its heavy accretion of materialism and positivism—is simply wrong about nature in fundamental ways. Modern science is often, in the words of my essay, 'ideology, not science.' The problems caused by positivism are especially acute in the broad anti-teleological implications drawn from Darwin's theory of evolution, which has become (in the phrase of Pope Benedict XVI, writing some years ago) the new 'first philosophy' of the modern world, a total and foundational description of reality that goes far beyond a proper grounding in the descriptive and reductive science on which it is based. My essay was designed to awaken Catholics from their dogmatic slumber about positivism in general and evolutionism in particular. It appears to have worked.

I also read the transcript of an interview with Cardinal Schonborn where he distinguished between evolution as a science and what he calls evolutionism as a philosophy or ideology. In this regard, he said:

Evolution is a scientific theory. What I call evolutionism is an ideological view that says evolution can explain everything in the whole development of the cosmos, from the Big Bang to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. I consider that an ideology. It's not good for science if it becomes ideological, because it leaves its own field and enters the area of philosophy, of world views, maybe of religion. . . . Intelligent life can't be explained by material causes, that matter can't cause intelligence, only Intelligence can.

In answer to the question: "You've said that scientists have been arrogant in this debate," he answered:

There is almost a ban on debate. Critics of evolution theory are discriminated against and discredited from the start. What I would like to see in schools is a critical, open, and positive spirit so that we don't make a dogma of evolution theory but we say, 'Here is a theory. A lot speaks for it in many points, but there are points where it has no answer.' Of course, one should not claim to teach evolution [while] actually teaching the ideology of evolutionism. If one does it, this must be clearly stated.

In answer to the question, "Is the Christian view an alternative to Darwin?" he said:

Christian teaching about evolution is not an alternative to evolution theory. Evolution theory is a scientific thesis, while the teaching about creation is a tenet of faith. I think, as do many other people, that both are open to each other and that they should not put each other in question. There is not a wall of separation between them. I don't expect the Biblical teaching about creation should be presented as a rival scientific theory to evolution theory . . . . People have tried to box me into a corner by setting up an either-or proposition—it's either evolution or Intelligent Design—that I don't accept. Evolution, Intelligent Design, and Christian teaching on creation are not all on the same level. For me, the whole question of Intelligent Design is primarily a question of reason. The argument that the whole complexity of life can be explained as mere random process is unreasonable in my opinion. No person who experiences such complexity would say that it created itself. That's the point. The second step is to ask--OK, which intelligence [created this]? As a believer, I naturally think it is the intelligence of the Creator. And 90 percent of humanity thinks that too.

In answer to the follow-up question, "Why do you say this is a question of reason and not of belief?" he said "For 30 years, I've heard from the pope, from Professor [Joseph] Ratzinger [Pope Benedict's name before he assumed the papacy] that the church has the

task in these times of defending reason. It must defend reason against a reductionism that in the end, ideologically speaking, is a kind of materialism.”

And finally in answer to the question, “Does God belong in biology class?” he says:

The question of the Creator belongs in religion class. The question of the ‘intelligent project of the cosmos,’ as the pope put it, naturally belongs in with science. The questions that great scientists like Einstein and Heisenberg asked are questions that go beyond materialism. In the end, it's a question about intelligence. Is intelligence the product of matter? Is the information that intelligence shapes a product of matter? This is clearly a question that can quickly turn ideological or philosophical. So that belongs in school . . . . the evolutionary debate is “all about materialism. That's the key issue.

Cardinal Schönborn accepted with certain qualifications the “scientific theory of evolution” in his book *Chance or Purpose* (2007, originally in German), but attacked “evolutionism as an ideology”, which he said sought to displace religious teaching over a wide range of issues.

Cardinal Schönborn is not just any Cardinal. This is even obvious from his comments. He edited the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and serves on the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Also, he was a student of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger who served as head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith during the pontificate of Pope John Paul II and is currently Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, so what he says must carry a lot of weight in the Church. His views were influential in shaping the thinking of Pope Benedict’s pontificate on scientific matters.



**Pope Benedict’s view on evolution:** I read that Cardinal Schönborn told *The New York Times* that he wrote the article after being encouraged to look into the issue of evolution by then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, prior to his election as pope. In a telephone interview from a monastery in Austria the Cardinal said that his *New York Times* essay had not been approved by the Vatican, but that two or three weeks before Pope Benedict XVI's election in April, he spoke with the pope, then a Cardinal, about the Church's position on evolution. Cardinal Schönborn said I would like to have a more explicit statement about that matter, and he encouraged me to go on. Cardinal Schönborn said that the Pope had been “angry” for years about

writers and theologians, including many Catholics, who “misrepresented” the Church's

position as endorsing the idea of evolution as a random process. The Pope is quoted as saying “Evolution in the sense of common ancestry might be true, but evolution in the neo-Darwinian sense—an unguided, un-planned process of random variation and natural selection—is not.” Moreover, Pope Benedict made points similar to the Cardinal’s in his installation Mass homily on April 24, 2005 when he said “We are not some casual and meaningless product of evolution, each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary.”

Commenting on Genesis, in 1995 Cardinal Ratzinger wrote in his book *In the Beginning: A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall*:

The story of the dust of the earth and the breath of God, which we just heard, does not in fact explain how human persons come to be but rather what they are. It explains their inmost origin and casts light on the project that they are. And, vice versa, the theory of evolution seeks to understand and describe biological developments. But in so doing it cannot explain where the 'project' of human persons comes from, nor their inner origin, nor their particular nature. To that extent we are faced here with two complementary—rather than mutually exclusive—realities.

When Cardinal Ratzinger was head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith he issued a document through the International Theological Commission in 2004 on the subject of evolution entitled “Communion and Stewardship, Human Persons Created in the Image of God”. The document clearly distinguishes between a scientific and a theological analysis of evolution. This document and subsequent statements by Cardinal Schönborn and Pope Benedict led some to wonder whether or not the Church plans to retreat from the Church's traditional teaching that evolution and Catholic dogma are not in conflict.

The Church has deferred to scientists on matters such as the age of the earth and the authenticity of the fossil record. The Church accepted the findings of scientists on the gradual appearance of life. In fact, the International Theological Commission’s 2004 statement endorsed by Cardinal Ratzinger said:

According to the widely accepted scientific account, the universe erupted 15 billion years ago in an explosion called the 'Big Bang' and has been expanding and cooling ever since. Later there gradually emerged the conditions necessary for the formation of atoms, still later the condensation of galaxies and stars, and about 10 billion years later the formation of planets. In our own solar system and on earth (formed about 4.5 billion years ago), the conditions have been favorable to the emergence of life. While there is little consensus among scientists about how the origin of this first microscopic life is to be explained, there is general agreement

among them that the first organism dwelt on this planet about 3.5–4 billion years ago. Since it has been demonstrated that all living organisms on earth are genetically related, it is virtually certain that all living organisms have descended from this first organism. Converging evidence from many studies in the physical and biological sciences furnishes mounting support for some theory of evolution to account for the development and diversification of life on earth, while controversy continues over the pace and mechanisms of evolution.

The Church's stance is that any such gradual appearance must have been guided in some way by God, but the Church has thus far declined to define in what way that may be. Commentators tend to interpret the Church's position in the way most favorable to their own arguments. The ITC statement includes these paragraphs on evolution, the providence of God, and “intelligent design”:

In freely willing to create and conserve the universe, God wills to activate and to sustain in act all those secondary causes whose activity contributes to the unfolding of the natural order which he intends to produce. Through the activity of natural causes, God causes to arise those conditions required for the emergence and support of living organisms, and, furthermore, for their reproduction and differentiation. Although there is scientific debate about the degree of purposiveness or design operative and empirically observable in these developments, they have de facto favored the emergence and flourishing of life. Catholic theologians can see in such reasoning support for the affirmation entailed by faith in divine creation and divine providence. In the providential design of creation, the triune God intended not only to make a place for human beings in the universe but also, and ultimately, to make room for them in his own Trinitarian life. Furthermore, operating as real, though secondary causes, human beings contribute to the re-shaping and transformation of the universe.

Just a word about secondary causation before we continue. Primary causation is God directly bringing something into existence by a special act of creation. The Church teaches that God created all things from nothing, *ex nihilo*, but doesn't say how, which leaves open the possibilities of evolutionary mechanisms like random variation or mutation and natural selection. In other words, God could have created the Universe through secondary efficient causes in the natural course of events, without having to miraculously intervene directly in every creative act. Another way of putting this is God worked through the evolutionary processes to create the universe and all that is in it. I've heard it phrased “It's the way God did it.” Although God is the primary cause of all being, including miracles that affect being, he usually works through secondary causes. For example, he usually doesn't heal people directly, but works through doctors employing surgery, medicine, or therapy. God not only created humans in his image and likeness, but he also made them stewards of the earth and co-creators with him. A steward is “one who manages another's property or financial affairs; one who administers anything as the agent of another or others.” He

holds their property in trust; he doesn't own it. We are stewards of God's property—his creation—and we will be rewarded, in part, on how well we take care of it. One scholar has said of co-creation, "In the twentieth century, a line of reasoning that might be called creational has emphasized work as co-creation, that is, it is through work that human beings both shape and build the world. In doing so they fulfill the mandate of Genesis where Yahweh calls humankind to serve as a faithful steward of God's creation."

However, the Church does insist that the emergence of the human supposes a willful act of God, and that man cannot be seen as only the product of evolutionary processes. The Church teaches that humankind's spiritual element isn't something that could have developed from natural selection, but required what he calls an "ontological leap." Ontology has to do with man's nature or being. Man's being is qualitatively different than all other creatures, because he is created in God's very image and likeness. The Church teaches that humans have an eternal soul possessing the faculties or operations of intellect and free will. The soul doesn't come from any pre-existing soul or from the parents or is it the product of evolution, but is created by God from nothing, probably at the instant of conception.

On September 2–3, 2006 at Castel Gandolfo, Pope Benedict XVI conducted a seminar examining the theory of evolution and its impact on Catholicism's teaching of Creation. The seminar was an annual gathering with his former doctoral candidates he had mentored while a university professor at Regensburg University. The essays presented by his former students, including natural scientists and theologians, were published in 2007 under the title *Creation and Evolution*. In the Pope's own contribution he states that "I find it important to underline that the theory of evolution implies questions that must be assigned to philosophy and which themselves lead beyond the realms of science."

In July 2007 at a meeting with the clergy of two Italian dioceses, Pope Benedict XVI asserted that:

Currently, I see in Germany, but also in the United States, a somewhat fierce debate raging between so-called "creationism" and evolutionism, presented as though they were mutually exclusive alternatives: those who believe in the Creator would not be able to conceive of evolution, and those who instead support evolution would have to exclude God. This antithesis is absurd because, on the one hand, there are so many scientific proofs in favour of evolution which appears to be a reality we can see and which enriches our knowledge of life and being as such. But on the other, the doctrine of evolution does not answer every query, especially the great philosophical question: where does everything come from? And how did everything start which ultimately led to man? I believe this is of the utmost importance.

In commenting on statements by his predecessor, he writes “it is also true that the theory of evolution is not a complete, scientifically proven theory.” Though commenting that experiments in a controlled environment were limited as “we cannot haul 10,000 generations into the laboratory”, he does not endorse Young Earth Creationism or intelligent design. He defends theistic evolution, the reconciliation between science and religion already held by Catholics. In discussing evolution, he writes that “The process itself is rational despite the mistakes and confusion as it goes through a narrow corridor choosing a few positive mutations and using low probability. . . . This . . . inevitably leads to a question that goes beyond science . . . . Where did this rationality come from?” to which he answers that it comes from the “creative reason” of God.

Prominent professor of physics, astronomy, and historian of science Stephen M. Barr states in an October 2005 article in *First Things* entitled “The Design of Evolution” that:

A growing body of scientific critics of Neo-Darwinism point to evidence of design (e.g., biological structures that exhibit specified complexity) that, in their view, cannot be explained in terms of a purely contingent process and that Neo-Darwinians have ignored or misinterpreted. The nub of this currently lively disagreement involves scientific observation and generalization concerning whether the available data support inferences of design or chance, and cannot be settled by theology.

Recall that when discussing Intelligent Design, that while he was the Vatican's chief astronomer, Fr. George Coyne, issued a statement on November 18, 2005 saying that “Intelligent design isn't science even though it pretends to be. If you want to teach it in schools, intelligent design should be taught when religion or cultural history is taught, not science.” Cardinal Paul Poupard added that “the faithful have the obligation to listen to that which secular modern science has to offer, just as we ask that knowledge of the faith be taken in consideration as an expert voice in humanity.” He also warned of the permanent lesson we have learned from the Galileo affair, and that “we also know the dangers of a religion that severs its links with reason and becomes prey to fundamentalism.” Fiorenzo Facchini, professor of evolutionary biology at the University of Bologna, called intelligent design unscientific, and wrote in the January 16–17, 2006 edition *L'Osservatore Romano*: “But it is not correct from a methodological point of view to stray from the field of science while pretending to do science.... It only creates confusion between the scientific plane and those that are philosophical or religious.”

Kenneth R. Miller is another prominent Catholic scientist widely known for opposing Young Earth Creationism and Intelligent Design. He writes, concerning Emeritus pope Benedict XVI, that “The Holy Father's concerns are not with evolution per se, but with how evolution is to be understood in our modern world. Biological evolution fits neatly

into a traditional Catholic understanding of how contingent natural processes can be seen as part of God's plan . . . a careful reading suggests that the new pope will give quarter neither to the enemies of spirituality nor the enemies of evolutionary science. And that's exactly as it should be.”

In a book released in 2008, Cardinal Ratzinger's comments prior to becoming Pope were recorded as:

The clay became man at the moment in which a being for the first time was capable of forming, however dimly, the thought of "God". The first Thou that—however stammeringly—was said by human lips to God marks the moment in which the spirit arose in the world. Here the Rubicon of anthropogenesis was crossed. For it is not the use of weapons or fire, not new methods of cruelty or of useful activity, that constitute man, but rather his ability to be immediately in relation to God. This holds fast to the doctrine of the special creation of man . . . herein . . . lies the reason why the moment of anthropogenesis cannot possibly be determined by paleontology: anthropogenesis is the rise of the spirit, which cannot be excavated with a shovel. The theory of evolution does not invalidate the faith, nor does it corroborate it. But it does challenge the faith to understand itself more profoundly and thus to help man to understand himself and to become increasingly what he is: the being who is supposed to say Thou to God in eternity. (Creation and Evolution: A Conference With Pope Benedict XVI in Castel Gandolfo, S.D.S. Stephan Horn (ed), pp. 15–16— Joseph Ratzinger)

A five-day conference, “Biological Evolution: Facts and Theories”, held in March 2009 by the Pontifical University in Rome, marking the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of the *Origin of Species*, generally confirmed the lack of conflict between evolutionary theory and Catholic theology, and the rejection of Intelligent Design by Catholic scholars. Pope Benedict's main concern appears to be moral relativism, which is the main idea he expressed in his inauguration speech. Wrongly interpreting evolution can and has led to some scientists and philosophers to reach atheistic and morally relative notions. I think that the Church learned a lesson from the Galileo affair not to indiscriminately mix science and religion. In fact, Pope John Paul II received a study in 1992 acknowledging that the Church erred in condemning Galileo. This is in keeping with the Church's practice the past two centuries to leave the evaluation and endorsement of specific scientific theories to scientists. The Church has always agreed with scientists on matters such as the age of the earth and the authenticity of the fossil record. Moreover, Papal pronouncements, along with commentaries by cardinals, have accepted the findings of scientists on the gradual development of life.

The International Theological Commission issued a document in 2002 called “Commun-

ion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God” states in Paragraph 63 that:

According to the widely accepted scientific account, the universe erupted 15 billion years ago in an explosion called the 'Big Bang' and has been expanding and cooling ever since. Later there gradually emerged the conditions necessary for the formation of atoms, still later the condensation of galaxies and stars, and about 10 billion years later the formation of planets. In our own solar system and on earth (formed about 4.5 billion years ago), the conditions have been favorable to the emergence of life. While there is little consensus among scientists about how the origin of this first microscopic life is to be explained, there is general agreement among them that the first organism dwelt on this planet about 3.5 - 4 billion years ago. Since it has been demonstrated that all living organisms on earth are genetically related, it is virtually certain that all living organisms have descended from this first organism. Converging evidence from many studies in the physical and biological sciences furnishes mounting support for some theory of evolution to account for the development and diversification of life on earth, while controversy continues over the pace and mechanisms of evolution. While the story of human origins is complex and subject to revision, physical anthropology and molecular biology combine to make a convincing case for the origin of the human species in Africa about 150,000 years ago in a humanoid population of common genetic lineage. However it is to be explained, the decisive factor in human origins was a continually increasing brain size, culminating in that of *homo sapiens*. With the development of the human brain, the nature and rate of evolution were permanently altered: with the introduction of the uniquely human factors of consciousness, intentionality, freedom and creativity, biological evolution was recast as social and cultural evolution.

The most pertinent statement in the document is found in paragraph 68, which says:

In freely willing to create and conserve the universe, God wills to activate and to sustain in act all those secondary causes whose activity contributes to the unfolding of the natural order which he intends to produce. Through the activity of natural causes, God causes to arise those conditions required for the emergence and support of living organisms, and, furthermore, for their reproduction and differentiation. Although there is scientific debate about the degree of purposiveness or design operative and empirically observable in these developments, they have de facto favored the emergence and flourishing of life. Catholic theologians can see in such reasoning support for the affirmation entailed by faith in divine creation and divine providence. In the providential design of creation, the triune God intended not only to make a place for human beings in the universe but also, and ultimately, to make room for them in his own trinitarian life. Furthermore, operating as real, though secondary causes, human beings contribute to the re-shaping and transformation of the universe.

Furthermore, Paragraph 69 states:

A growing body of scientific critics of neo-Darwinism point to evidence of design (e.g., biological structures that exhibit specified complexity) that, in their view, cannot be explained in terms of a purely contingent process and that neo-Darwinians have ignored or misinterpreted. The nub of this currently lively disagreement involves scientific observation and generalization concerning whether the available data support inferences of design or chance, and cannot be settled by theology. But it is important to note that, according to the Catholic understanding of divine causality, true contingency in the created order is not incompatible with a purposeful divine providence. Divine causality and created causality radically differ in kind and not only in degree. Thus, even the outcome of a truly contingent natural process can nonetheless fall within God's providential plan for creation.

Next, the document warns against the philosophical abuse of evolutionary theory by saying . . . Any evolutionary mechanism that is contingent can only be contingent because God made it so," "An unguided evolutionary process—one that falls outside the bounds of divine providence—simply cannot exist." One expert tells us that the document provides a basis for Catholics to accept evolution as modern scientists understand it, without surrendering belief in God as the ultimate cause of life. Another expert who worked on the document, Jesuit Fr. Shunichi Takayanagi of Sophia University in Tokyo, says, "There's quite a strong element in the natural sciences who simply don't approve of any transcendental cause as a matter of philosophy," but "That doesn't mean, however, that evolution as such is incompatible with Christianity." He concludes by saying, "We are not against evolution as such, but the materialist use of evolutionary theory."

The document argues that Catholic theology does not commit the Church to one side or the other in a strictly scientific dispute between evolution and design. It asserts that even if evolution appears "random and undirected" from an empirical point of view, it could still be part of God's plan or providence. This view agrees well with the view of many Catholic scientists, who say the problem with evolution is not so much the theory itself, but the philosophical applications some make of it. Nicola Cabibbo, president of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, which is a 78-member body of academics who advise the pope on scientific matters, and who is a professor of particle physics at Rome's La Sapienza University, says, "The theory of evolution can be disturbing to Christians because it seems to clash with the idea of divine creation . . . However, this clash is false. What clashes with divine creation is an extension of the theory of evolution into materialistic interpretations, so-called 'evolutionism . . . That's not science, it's metaphysics.'" He goes on to say, "We are not against evolution as such, but the materialist use of evolutionary theory. Any evolutionary mechanism that is contingent can only be contingent because God made it so. An unguided evolutionary process—one that falls outside the bounds of divine providence—simply cannot exist." He concludes by saying, "We

know that God wanted to create man by revelation, but we don't know how he did it. This is what science attempts to explain. There should be no clash between science and religion, because they do different things." So we can confidently say that belief in mutation and natural selection is compatible with Catholicism, as long as the underlying premise is that God set it up that way.

Cardinal Ratzinger said in a commentary on Genesis entitled "In the Beginning: A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall" that there exists an inner unity of creation and evolution and of faith and reason and that these two realms of knowledge are complementary, not contradictory. He states, "We cannot say: creation or evolution, inasmuch as these two things respond to two different realities. The story of the dust of the earth and the breath of God, which we just heard, does not in fact explain how human persons come to be but rather what they are. It explains their inmost origin and casts light on the project that they are. And, vice versa, the theory of evolution seeks to understand and describe biological developments. But in so doing it cannot explain where the 'project' of human persons comes from, nor their inner origin, nor their particular nature. To that extent we are faced here with two complementary—rather than mutually exclusive—realities."

The *Catechism* say about evolution:

Faith and science: methodical research in all branches of knowledge, provided it is carried out in a truly scientific manner and does not override moral laws, can never conflict with the faith, because the things of the world and the things of faith derive from the same God. The humble and persevering investigator of the secrets of nature is being led, as it were, by the hand of God in spite of himself, for it is God, the conserver of all things, who made them what they are. (No. 159).

The question about the origins of the world and of man has been the object of many scientific studies which have splendidly enriched our knowledge of the age and dimensions of the cosmos, the development of life-forms and the appearance of man. These discoveries invite us to even greater admiration for the greatness of the Creator, prompting us to give him thanks for all his works and for the understanding and wisdom he gives to scholars and researchers.... (No. 283).

The great interest accorded to these studies is strongly stimulated by a question of another order, which goes beyond the proper domain of the natural sciences. It is not only a question of knowing when and how the universe arose physically, or when man appeared, but rather of discovering the meaning of such an origin...." (No. 284).

## CAUSATION ARGUMENTS PROVING GOD'S EXISTENCE

Fr. Hardon defines cosmology in the *New Catholic Dictionary* as [The] study of the universe as an orderly creation, and of the causes that operate in the world of space and time. It presumes that the world was made according to an all-wise plan and is being directed by an infinite Mind.” The cosmological argument is the term given a closely related set of arguments for the existence of a First Cause or an Uncaused cause) of the universe, usually identified as God. It is traditionally known as an argument from universal causation, an argument from first cause, the causal argument or the argument from existence.

### *The Four Causes*

Since cosmological arguments are causation arguments, I'll try to shed some light on the meaning of causation. Fr. Hardon defines cause in the *New Catholic Dictionary* as “A principle from which something originates with consequent dependence. It is a being that in some way directly affects the being or change of something else. It is that which gives existence in some way to another or is the reason for the existence of another being.” In other words, a cause is something, such as a person or condition that is responsible for producing an effect or consequence. For centuries there existed a method of ascertaining the cause of things, which accounted for all aspects of their existence. I believe it was first the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle who formulated the method and it was refined in the Middle Ages by the Scholastics or Schoolmen, especially St. Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century.

In the history of philosophy numerous explanations have been given to account for causation. The most famous and lasting of these was Aristotle's in the fourth century B.C. He identified four elements to completely account for the cause of something:

1. **Material Cause:** The material cause or matter is the basic stuff out of which a thing is made. Matter is characterized by qualities such as gravity, extension, divisibility, size, weight, mass, and volume and can be measured in time and space. The matter or material cause of a house, for example, would include the wood, metal, glass, and any other building materials used in its construction. These things are necessary to build a house, because it couldn't exist without them. In the section dealing with Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy in this website, we distinguish between first or prime matter and secondary matter.
2. **Formal Cause:** The formal cause is the pattern or essence in conformity with which these materials are assembled; it is the pattern or essence determining the

creation of a thing; it is that which makes something what it is; it is that which makes something one thing and not another. Form is more than the shape of something, because things with the same nature can take many different shapes. All human beings have the same essence, but they come in many different shapes. Thus, the blueprints are the formal cause of the house we are describing. They are an essential part of this particular house, because otherwise there would exist nothing more than piles of materials. I once helped a brother of mine frame his house. There was nothing but several semi-trailer loads of materials lying on the ground when we started. He built his home in accordance with a particular set of blueprints. The materials had the capacity to be used to build many different other types of houses, or even things other than houses.

3. **Efficient Cause:** The efficient cause is the agent or force immediately responsible for bringing the matter and form together in the production of a thing, in the case that we have been using, our particular house; it is the agent that imposed this form on that matter; it is the force or agent producing an effect. In our section of this website Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy we describe efficient cause as that which moves matter from potency to act; matter that is potentially something that actually becomes something. Efficient cause is what we ordinarily think of as cause; that which has a cause and effect relationship. A cause is that which is responsible for an effect or change in something. Thus, the efficient cause of the house would include the carpenters, electricians, masons, plumbers, and other workers who used these materials to build the house in accordance with the blueprints for its construction. Clearly the house would not be what it became without their contribution.
4. **Final Cause:** Lastly, the final cause is the end or purpose for which a thing exists; so the final cause of our house would be to provide shelter for human beings; in my brother's case, his wife and family. This is part of the explanation of the house's existence because it would never have been built unless someone needed it as a place to live.

Philosophers also identify a **First Cause** defined in the *New Catholic Dictionary* as “God . . . the first cause of all things, because he is the first in the series of all other causes. Also, God as immediately operating in all finite causality, as the underlying cause on which all other causes constantly depend for their activity.”

Aristotle believed, and the schoolmen afterwards, that all four elements are necessary in any adequate account of the existence and nature of things, since the absence or modification of any one of them would result in the existence of something else or nothing. An

explanation that includes all four causes completely captures the significance and reality of the things themselves. It gives us a complete picture of reality.

To illustrate further, let's use a chair as an example. The material cause of a particular chair is the wood out of which it is made, the formal cause is the shape into which it was fashioned, the efficient cause is the carpenter by whom the chair was made, and the final cause is the sitting for the sake of which it was designed.

Scholastic theory of causation has been used to explain the Sacraments. Most older Catholics will have heard of the terms matter and form used when applied to the Sacraments. These terms are an application of Aristotelian or Scholastic philosophy to the Sacraments. The material cause or matter of a sacrament is the materials used to perform the sacrament. The formal cause or form is the actualizing principle of the sacrament.

For example, water is the matter or material cause of the Sacrament of Baptism. Theologians have distinguished between, remote and proximate matter. For example, the remote matter of Baptism is water and the proximate matter is the pouring of (or immersion in) water. The remote matter of the anointing of the sick is the oil of olives blessed by the Bishop and the proximate matter is the application of the oil. The remote matter of Confirmation is holy chrism, which is a mixture of olive oil and balm, blessed by the Bishop and the proximate matter consists in the imposition of hands and anointing with chrism.

The form of the Sacrament of Baptism, the actualizing principle, is the words: "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Thus the Trinity is the efficient cause of the effects of the Sacrament. The final cause of the Sacrament of Baptism is the purpose for which the Sacrament is administered. For example, the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity washes away Original Sin and infuses Sanctifying Grace at Baptism. The final cause is to make the baptized person a child of God the Father, and a brother or sister of his son Jesus as well as an heir to Heaven.

Penance differs somewhat from the other Sacraments in that while the matter of the other Sacraments is a thing of some kind, water, chrism, etc., the matter of the Sacrament of Penance is the acts of the penitent, such as contrition, confession and satisfaction. The Council of Trent declared that "sins which are destroyed by Penance may properly be called the matter of Penance." The form, the actualizing principle of the sacrament is the words, "I absolve you from your sins. . . "The efficient cause of the Sacrament is Jesus Christ who speaks through his priest acting in his person (*in persona Christi*). The final cause of the Sacrament is to restore the penitent once again to God's friendship and to provide the graces necessary to maintaining that friendship. Furthermore, the Council of

Trent stated that “since the Sacraments signify what they effect, the words, I absolve thee, signify that remission of sin is effected by the administration of this Sacrament.” We could apply this same reasoning to all of the Sacraments.

During the Renaissance of the sixteenth century, a different perspective began to develop in regard to causation. With the development of scientific interest in nature, cause was usually conceived merely as an object, a thing that could be perceived with the senses, often with the aid of a microscope or telescope. Today, causation is generally interpreted as energy or action, whether or not connected with matter, which is a much narrower perspective. This narrower perspective was to have serious implications for education.

Modern science, for the most part, eliminated formal and final causation from the formula of causation and generally has included only material and efficient causes. Material causes or matter can be perceived with the senses and only things that can be seen, heard, smelled, tasted, and touched are considered real. Final causes are teleological (from the Greek *telos*) which means an ultimate end of something, which science claims we can't know, because it isn't something that can be perceived by the senses. Edward Feser has written brilliantly on this subject in his book *The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism*. We explain why eliminating formal and final causes in change shuts man off from ascending to God by rational means in our section on Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy. This type of thinking has led to positivism and scientism.

Positivism is a philosophy or ideology that bases all knowledge on perception, and denies the validity of intuition or revelation as valid methods of discovering reality or truth. Positivism maintains that metaphysical questions are unanswerable and that the only knowledge is scientific knowledge. It is often coupled with the conception of progress or improvement as necessary and brought forth by technological development.

Scientism is a belief that scientific knowledge is the foundation of all knowledge and that scientific argument should always be given more weight than knowledge derived by other methods. This view holds that the validity of all fields of inquiry should be evaluated by standard scientific methods of investigation. To illustrate my point; Once when I was describing the miracles at Lourdes and other places to a skeptical cousin of mine, who happens to be a very prominent scientist, and he claimed that science would one day find a natural answer to these phenomena. The attitude that science is the only valid method of searching for the truth and that anything that is not observable for all practical purposes does not exist, and that the only reality is matter, leads to materialism, subjectivism, relativism, and other ideologies that leaves God out altogether. I believe that this is the dominant philosophy or ideology that permeates our educational system. Just because something can't be put under a microscope or telescope doesn't mean that it doesn't exist

or that it isn't real.

At John Paul II Catholic High School where I taught until retirement, we taught the same biology, physics, and chemistry that are taught in the public schools. The difference is we were free to consider all of the elements in the causes of things, and not just that which is perceivable. There we were free to consider the philosophical and theological aspects of causation as well as the perceivable or empirical, that is, we considered formal and final causation as well as material and efficient causation. But even at John Paul we left most of the philosophy and theology to the religion and humanities courses. A well educated person needs religious and humanities courses as well as the science and technology courses to get a complete understanding of reality or truth.

### ***St. Thomas' four arguments for causation of existence***

Now that we have considered the argument for God's existence from design and the meaning of causation, let's look at the arguments from causation. Again I want to remind you that St. Thomas Aquinas developed five ways for proving God's existence from an observation of nature. Essentially his five arguments can be broken down into two. The first one that we discussed is the argument of intelligent design or the teleological argument; now we will discuss the second, the argument from causation, of which four of the Thomas' five ways or arguments are examples.

The basic argument is fairly simple: Everything has a reason or a cause for its existence. Nothing exists without a cause, even the universe. With regard to the universe, it either had a beginning caused by something, a first cause, an uncaused cause that started the process, or it is the result of an infinite link of causes in a cosmic chain that has no beginning. This is called "infinite regress" of causes. If there was a beginning, it had to be caused by something. Such a First Cause would have to be God. If we can prove there is such a First Cause, we will have proved there is a God.

On the other hand, if there is no First Cause, then the universe must explain itself. Peter Kreeft says that this is like a railroad train moving without an engine, that each car's motion is explained by the motion of the car in front of it: The caboose moves because the boxcar pulls it: the boxcar moves because the cattle car pulls it, and so on down the line. But if there were no engine to pull the first car, it would be impossible for the train to move. He says that this is what the universe would be like if there were no First Cause.

Kreeft tells us that if there is no First Cause, no Being who is eternal and self-sufficient, who has existence by his own nature and does not have to borrow it from someone else—

if there's no such Being, then the gift of existence can never be passed down the chain to the others, and no one will ever get it. But as he says, we did get it! We do exist. We got the gift of existence from our causes, down the chain, and so did every actual being in the universe from atoms to archangels. Therefore, there must be a First Cause of existence—a God.

Now that we have examined the basic idea of causation of existence, let's look at the first of St. Thomas' four causation arguments.

**The Argument from Motion:** St. Thomas' first argument from causation is the Argument from Motion. This argument is sometimes called the First Cause, Prime Mover, or Cosmological Argument. Motion in our discussion means any kind of change, not just change of place. St. Thomas, studying the works of the fourth century B.C. Greek philosopher Aristotle, concluded from common observation that any chain of movers must have a First Mover, because nothing can move itself. If a whole chain of moving things had no First Mover to get things started, it couldn't be moving now. Put another way, an object that is in motion (e.g. the planets, a rolling stone) must have been put in motion by some other object or force. From this, Aquinas concluded that ultimately there must have been an Unmoved Mover who first put things in motion. We call this Unmoved or Prime Mover God. To put the argument in the form of a syllogism:

**Major Premise:** Nothing can move itself.

**Minor Premise:** If every object in motion had a mover, then the first object in motion needed a mover.

**Conclusion:** Therefore, this first mover is the Unmoved Mover, called God.

**The Causation of Existence:** A second argument from causation used by St. Thomas to prove God's existence is Causation of Existence. This argument deals with the issue of the beginning of existence itself. From proving the cause of motion, Aquinas expands the argument to prove the cause of existence. He argues that if there were no cause for the universe coming into being, then there could be no second causes or third causes coming down a chain of causes, since second causes or caused causes are dependent on a First Cause. But second, third, and many other levels of causes do exist; therefore, there must be a First Cause. We call this First cause God.

To put the argument another way, Aquinas concluded that common sense observation tells us that no object creates itself. In other words, some previous object had to create it. Aquinas believed that ultimately there must have been an Uncaused First Cause or an Unmoved First Mover who began the chain of existence for all things. For example, if the "Big Bang" theory of the creation of the Universe that we discussed is true, something had

to cause it to come into existence in the first place; that something is God. Follow the argument this way:

**Major Premise:** There exist things that are caused (created) by other things.

**Minor Premise:** Nothing can be the cause of itself (nothing can create itself.) There cannot be an endless string of objects causing other objects to exist.

**Conclusion:** Therefore, there must be an uncaused first cause called God.

**Contingent (Dependent) and Necessary Objects of Beings:** A third argument from causation used by St. Thomas to prove God's existence is Contingent (Dependent) and Necessary Objects or beings. This argument defines two types of objects in the universe: contingent (dependent) beings and necessary being. A contingent being is an object that cannot exist without a necessary being causing its existence. In other words it is a being dependent upon another for its existence. Aquinas believed that the existence of contingent beings would ultimately necessitate a being that must exist for all of the contingent beings to exist. This being, called a necessary being, is what we call God.

Another way of putting it is dependent beings cannot cause themselves. They are dependent on their causes. If there is no Independent Being, then the whole chain of dependent beings is dependent on nothing and could not exist. But they do exist. Therefore there is an Independent Being. This Independent Being is what we call God. The argument can be stated in a syllogism this way:

**Major Premise:** Contingent beings are caused.

**Minor Premise:** Not every being can be contingent.

There must exist a being that is necessary to cause contingent beings.

**Conclusion:** Therefore, this necessary being is God.

**Degrees of Perfection:** A fourth argument from causation used by St. Thomas to prove God's existence is Degrees of Perfection. This argument is also known as First Cause of Perfection. Sometimes it is referred as the ontological argument. St. Thomas formulated the argument from degrees or First Cause of perfection from a very interesting observation about the qualities of things. For example, one may say that of two marble sculptures one is more beautiful than the other. So for these two objects, one has a greater degree of beauty than the next. This is referred to as degrees or gradation of a quality. From this fact, Aquinas concluded that for any given quality (e.g. goodness, beauty, truth, justice, and knowledge) there must be a perfect standard by which all such qualities are measured. These perfections are contained only in God.

Peter Kreeft gives another explanation that further clarifies the First Cause or Degrees of

Perfection argument for proof of God's existence. He says that there must also be a First Cause of "perfection" or "goodness", or "value." He states that we rank things as more or less perfect, good or valuable. Unless this ranking is false, unless souls don't really have any more perfection than let's say worms, there must be a real standard of perfection to make such a hierarchy possible. He says that something is ranked higher on the hierarchy of perfection only insofar as it is closer to the ideal. Unless there is a Most Perfect Being to be that real standard of perfection, he says all our value judgments are meaningless. Such a Most Perfect Being, or real-ideal standard of perfection, is another description of God.

St. Thomas' four arguments of causation prove God's existence indirectly, rather than directly. They do this by refuting the possibility that God doesn't exist, which is atheism. His arguments start out with the possibility that God doesn't exist and refutes them. This leaves the only other possibility that he does exist. I'll sum up the argument for God's existence from causation by quoting Peter Kreeft:

Each of the four "ways" makes the same point for four different kinds of cause: first, cause of motion; second, cause of a beginning to existence; third, cause of present existence; and fourth, cause of goodness or value. The common point is that if there were no First Cause, there could be no second causes, and yet there are second causes (moved movers, caused causers, dependent and mortal beings, and less-than-wholly perfect beings). Therefore, there must be a First Cause of motion, beginning, existence and perfection.

I priest told me several years ago that he had never found using these cosmological arguments to prove God's existence to be very effective. I think it depends on who you are trying to convince. These arguments probably won't be very effective for someone who already believes in God, but have proven very effective for some who don't. For example, Antony Flew, who was one of the world's leading philosophical atheists until his death in 2010, renounced his lifetime atheism in 2004, because "the argument to Intelligent Design is enormously stronger than it was when I first met it." He stated in an interview that "It now seems to me that the findings of more than fifty years of DNA research have provided materials for a new and enormously powerful argument to design." He also said that "it seems to me that the case for an Aristotelian God, who has the characteristics of power and also intelligence, is now much stronger than it ever was before." In addition, he claimed the big bang cosmology to be convincing.

Although he had become convinced before his death of God's existence, his belief was more akin to deism than theism. According to Fr. Hardon in *New Catholic Dictionary* deism is:

The theory that accepts the existence of God on purely rational grounds but denies (with Blount or Tindal) or doubts (with Hume) or rejects as incredible (with Voltaire and Rousseau) Christianity as a supernatural religion. Accordingly revelation, miracles, grace, and mysteries are excluded from acceptance by what is called “the rational man.” Yet deism differs from rationalism in stressing its acceptance of a personal God and adherence to what is called natural religion, but with no recognition of a supernatural order.

It appears that Flew had not come to believe in the existence of a personal good God who is involved in the lives of human beings, because of the problem of evil. His idea of God was very much like the deistic God of Einstein and Spinoza, who created the universe and life on earth and then separated himself from his creation. Unsurprisingly, Flew hadn't come to believe in an afterlife. He died on April 8, 2010 at age 87. It's quite possible that had he more time, he would have eventually come to see how reasonable it is to believe in the personal God of Christianity.

Nonetheless, it should be comforting for us to know that there are powerful arguments of a philosophical nature that strongly favor our religious beliefs, even though we don't necessarily need them for our personal faith. It would be disturbing and unsettling to our faith if there were strong arguments that refute our faith. The burden is on the atheist to prove that there is no God, which I believe is a formidable, if not impossible task.



### ***Other Arguments that Prove God's Existence***

Now that we have completed looking at St. Thomas' proofs for God's existence, there are many other arguments that prove his existence, or at least make it reasonable to believe that he does exist. For instance, Fr. Aidan Nichols, O.P., an Englishman, who is one of my favorite theologians, discusses several others proofs for God's existence that are worth mentioning.

**The Experience of Wonder:** He starts this argument by stating the wonder that there is a world in the first place. He goes on to state how we wonder at the beauty of a sunrise or sunset, the grace and prowess of athletes, or the complex operation of an organ such as the eye. However, sometimes we generalize this sense of wonder and extend it to the fact that there is a world at all. From this there emerges the argument that since the world is not self-explanatory or self-sufficient, we must presume that there is a reason for it. Such a reason would have to be something, a ground he calls it, transcendent or above

and beyond the world; in other words, that something must be greater than the world itself. He concludes that the idea of the transcendent ground of the world is at any rate a part of what people mean by God.

**The Experience of Moral Obligation or the Existence of Conscience:** Another argument posited by Fr. Nichols, Fr. Thomas DuBay, Peter Kreeft, and others is The Experience of Moral Obligation or the Existence of Conscience. Fr. Dubay tells us that every normal adult has a sense of “oughtness” that he did not acquire and he cannot shake off. He says that it is imperious in its demands and it operates whether he is observed by other human beings or not. After some actions he feels happy and after others he feels guilty, and he cannot easily strip himself of the feelings. In this regard, he quotes scientist Thomas Lewis as saying, “As I understand it, a human being cannot tell a lie, even a small one, without setting off a kind of smoke alarm somewhere deep in a dark lobule of the brain, resulting in the sudden discharge of nerve impulses, or the sudden outpouring of neurohormones of some sort, or both . . . Lying, then, is stressful, even when we do it for protection, or relief, or escape, or profit, or just for the pure pleasure of lying and getting away with it.” Lewis goes on to say, lying “is, in a sure physiological sense, an unnatural act . . . We are a moral species by compulsion. A moral compulsion can come only from a person, and in this case the person must be a lawgiver over and above the human race. Who else could so speak? Newman was much impressed with this evidence for the existence of a supreme Governor, the holy God of the universe. For him conscience was the echo of the loving Lord speaking from the depths of each human person.” I think the efficiency in lie detector tests is empirical proof that lying is unnatural.

I think that the Experience of Moral Obligation or the existence of Conscience is a very important argument for God’s existence. There are times when we do things not necessarily required of us or even in our best interest, but we do them because we believe them to be the right thing to do. In fact, it would bother us if we didn’t do them. This is the voice of conscience prompting us to do the right thing.

**The experience of our own dissatisfaction:** Fr. Nichols tells us that the experience of our own dissatisfaction is a proof of God’s existence. He says that dissatisfaction with any of the objects that we can acquire in this life is surely the greatest single source of religious belief. We aren’t programmed genetically to know at the beginning what objects will bring us satisfaction in life. We can find these things out only by experience. He is here talking about life’s fundamental questions, such as, “What is the meaning of life?” and “Where will I find lasting happiness?” and not the satisfaction of our basic drives for food and water and intimacy. When we satisfy these basic drives we are still left with life’s fundamental questions. We won’t find lasting answers to these questions in this life. If we can’t find lasting answers in this life, then perhaps the goal of our striving lies outside and

beyond this world, which various religions have considered an argument for God's existence.

**The experience of hope:** Another proof for God's existence offered by Fr. Nichols is the experience of hope. Here Fr. Nichols is not talking about hope for particular things, such as for peace in our time or for good friends. What he has in mind is a "general attitude of hopefulness as a response to the future, which so many people evince in quite impossible situations, and which seems almost a necessary condition for the survival of humanity in hard times." He says that "people hope against hope that tyranny will be ended; that their children's children will live to inherit this planet. But even if the worst happened, even if an evil government possessed itself of the world or a nuclear holocaust devoured the earth tomorrow, people would still go on hoping amidst the ruins. They would crawl out of the holes and burrows and start to pick up the pieces." He says that this is natural to us because it is natural for us to hope. In this regard, he asked the question, "Does this point to anything metaphysical? It could be argued, as did French philosopher and dramatist Gabriel Marcel, that it suggests an unconscious grasp of the reality of God as the ground and guarantor of human history, of human destiny."

**The epistemological argument:** Fr. Nichols tells us that this argument is associated with the late Fr. Bernard Lonergan of the Society of Jesus. Epistemology is a branch of philosophy that deals with how things are known. Lonergan proposed that the main proof of God's existence is found in the very knowability of the world. For some reason, the world has a design that makes it possible for the human mind to penetrate it by its own thought processes. It is a fact that there is considerable harmony between the human mind and the world as is evident from the fruits of science and technology. In addition to the fit between the human mind and the world, I would add the fact that the human senses are oriented to comprehending the world. In this regard, Fr. Nichols asked, how can we account for these facts? He concludes that the intelligibility of the world requires us to posit the existence of a creative mind, analogous to but infinitely greater than the human mind, by which the cosmos was brought into being. This super creative mind is God.

**The argument of mystical experience:** This is my favorite one, probably because of my interest in mystical prayer and its relationship to holiness. Many people in various cultures have claimed that they have had mystical experiences. Some were, no doubt insane or deluded and others might have been for self-gain, but most mystics appear to have been persons of integrity, whether they be Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, American Indian, or Christian mystics. No matter what the religion or their conception of the divine, all genuine mystics share the belief that they have encountered God or established union with the divine in some manner.

Of course, we are here mostly interested with Christian mystical experiences. Many associate union with God with various types of mystical experiences, such as ecstasy, rapture, levitation, auras, locutions, visions, stigmata, fragrances, bilocation, apparitions, private revelations, and the like, and so they might be. Many great saints have experienced these types of mystical phenomena. Each of the preceding listed experiences is associated with a highly intense union with God whereby the faculties of the will, intellect, memory, and imagination are absorbed by God. Does this mean that one at this height of holiness always has mystical experiences? No! Ordinarily, only saints who possess heroic virtue and lead extraordinarily holy lives experience these extraordinary types of mystical experiences and reach the summit of mystical experience, but not all saintly people do. For instance, although St. Teresa of Avila did (big Teresa as one holy priest used to refer to her), St. Therese of Lisieux didn't (little Teresa), nor did another saintly Teresa, Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Nonetheless, we are all called to holiness in this life and each of us is capable of experiencing a close friendship with God if we become holy enough, enough like Jesus. We can do this only by doing God's will and with the help of his grace, which he offers us freely.

Fr. Thomas Dubay identifies several benefits of reaching the heights of holiness and union with God in *Fire Within* as follows:

- Peace and refreshment of mind and soul
- Heroic virtue; the ability to practice virtue in an extraordinary way
- Innocence of evil
- Cessation of inner suffering
- Cessation of imperfections
- Remarkable delight in God's creation
- A constant awareness of God's presence
- All actions are performed for God
- Fullness of joy

The main thing to remember is that these gifts are purely gifts from God; we do not deserve them, but we can cooperate with God's grace to receive them. God offers each of us the grace to lead holy lives; however, we must use our will to make the decision to accept it. We can prepare for the infusion of God's grace by emptying ourselves of vices and sin. The recipient of such blessings knows that God truly exists. Those who experience these benefits of union with God simply know with absolute certainty that God exists.

### ***Additional Arguments that Prove God's Existence***

**The Argument from Miracles:** The argument is simple: if miracles exist, then God exists. For an event to be classified as a miracle it must be extraordinary, that is, not an occurrence in the ordinary course of events. Moreover, the context in which a miracle occurs must be religious and cannot have a natural explanation. Otherwise, extraordinary events that are not in a religious context or can be explained by natural occurrences are mere “oddities,” “curiosities,” or “strange happenings” as is found in *Ripley’s Believe it or Not*. The logic of a miraculous event is as follows:

**Major premise:** A miracle is an event whose only adequate explanation is the extraordinary and direct intervention of God.

**Minor premise:** There are numerous well-attested miracles.

**Conclusion:** Therefore, there are numerous events whose only adequate explanation is the extraordinary and direct intervention of God. Therefore God exists.

Miracles directly show the presence of God, for a miracle, in the ordinary sense of the word, is a deed done by supernatural, not natural, power. They demonstrate God's existence as clearly as rational speech shows the existence of thought. Peter Kreeft, a Professor of Philosophy at Boston College and I believe formerly an atheist himself, says that if he were an atheist, he would study all published interviews of any of the 70,000 who saw the miracle of the sun at Fatima; that he would ransack hospital records for documented, “impossible,” miraculous cures.

Kreeft states that atheists argue against nearly all miracles on philosophical grounds, rather than on historical grounds. They are convinced in advance, by argument, that miracles can't happen. As a consequence, they don't waste their time on empirical investigation to verify whether or not they exist. He says that those who do soon cease to be atheists—like the skeptical scientists who investigated the Shroud of Turin, or like Frank Morrison, who investigated the evidence for the “myth” of Christ's resurrection with the careful scientific eye of the historian—and became a believer. There is hardly a scientist who opens his mind to the truth that remains an atheist.

The Bible accounts many miracles attributed to God. Many miracles are reported in the Old Testament that occurred among the Chosen People, the Hebrews. For example, God speaking to Moses in the Burning Bush (Exodus 2:23-25; 3:1-15, the 10 plagues that God inflicted on the Egyptians because of Pharaoh's hardened heart (Exodus 7-14; 8:19), the parting of the Red Sea during the Exodus to save the Israelites from the Egyptian army (Exodus 14:21-28; Psalms 106:7-11; 1 Maccabees 4:9; Acts 7:36; Hebrews. 11:27), the pillar of fire by night and of smoke by day to guide the Israelites (Exodus 13:21; 14:19-20), the feeding of the Israelites manna and quail (Exodus 16), the watering of the Israelites by Moses striking his rod on rocks (Exodus 17:1-7, the walls of Jericho tumbling down as

the Israelites marched around it (Joshua 6), God's lighting of the wood in Elijah's triumph over the priests of Baal (1Kings 18), and many others.

Moreover, the New Testament describes many miracles. Jesus himself performed many miracles out of love and compassion for his fellow man and so that his disciples might believe in him. The Apostles performed many miracles as reported in the Acts of the Apostles, and the early Church Fathers performed numerous miracles so that unbelievers might believe. Moreover, countless miracles have been recorded during the Middle Ages. All of these miracles occurred within a religious context and could not have had a natural explanation.

Of course one will not believe in the biblical accounts of miracles unless he or she believes in the truth of the Bible. Protestants might say that, "Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so", but Catholics would say that, "Jesus loves me this I know for the Church tells me so", because the Church witnessed the events therein, and wrote them down, and preserves, transmits, and interprets the Bible. St. Augustine, himself an unbeliever until his conversion in the fourth century A.D., said he could not believe in the Bible without the witness of the Catholic Church. After his conversion he went on to become one of the greatest philosophers and theologians of all time.

Moreover, miracles still happen today, and if they happen today, it is reasonably certain that the stories we have heard about them in the past are true. They are a continuation of the loving compassion of Jesus begun in the Gospels. Many thousands of attested and documented miracles have occurred in the twentieth century, events that simply cannot be explained by a natural occurrence. Moreover, they happened in a religious context. Although God does perform miracles among non-Catholics, the great majority of miracles has happened to Catholics or are due to the intercession of Catholics, dead or alive. We could literally take hundreds of pages describing the miracles that have been due to Our Lady's intercession at Lourdes, Fatima, Guadalupe, and elsewhere or the miracles that resulted from the intercession of St. Padre Pio, Fr. Solanus Casey, Blessed Brother Andre, and many hundreds of other holy people.

Among the types of miraculous events that have occurred are cures of hopelessly sick people—people suffering from terminal cancer and other deadly diseases, the restoration of body organs such as eyes and lost bone, the restoration of hearing and eyesight, the preservation of the dead from corruption, and even raising the dead to life. Most of the miracles occurring in history have taken place in the Catholic Church, which is logical since it is the Mystical Body of Christ, the source of all miracles. Miraculous events provide irrefutable evidence of the claims of the Catholic Church that it is the Church founded by Jesus Christ himself.

A description of other types of miracles would literally take a book; there are many reliable books written on the subject. Among the types of well documented supernatural occurrences or mystical experiences are ecstasy, rapture, levitation, auras, locutions, visions, stigmata, fragrances, bilocation, apparitions, private revelations, and the like.

Modern science has been employed to verify the occurrence of countless miracles during the twentieth century. For example, the Shrine at Lourdes, France has a committee of distinguished medical doctors who carefully examine every claimed miracle at the Shrine. Although there have literally been thousands of instantaneous cures of every imaginable disease and infirmity at the site, only 75-80 of them have passed the rigorous scrutiny of the committee. However, only one miracle is enough to prove that God exists, one occurrence of an event that only the intervention of God can explain.

The dead who are undergoing causes for beatification or canonization must have miracles attributed to their intercession. These processes are used to verify and declare that the souls of faithfully departed are in Heaven, that they are saints. Beatified saints are venerated by the faithful in a locality, whereas canonized saints are venerated throughout the universal Church. Miracles that are due to the intercession of saints in Heaven are incontestable proof that God exists. Miracles are God's way of telling us that the dead person under consideration for beatification or canonization is in Heaven. A committee of medical doctors must verify that there is no other possible explanation for miracles attributed to the intercession of candidates for beatification or canonization than the intervention of God. Of course, the most important consideration of sainthood is that the candidates lived lives of heroic virtue and holiness.

The process for verifying the occurrence of miracles is a very rigorous one. In order for a miracle to be verified by the Church, the following conditions must be satisfied:

- The malady must be grave and impossible or very difficult to cure.
- The malady must not be in a state of decline.
- There must be no use of a possibly effective medicine.
- The cure must be instantaneous.
- The cure must be complete.
- There must be beforehand no noteworthy decline of the symptoms or anything that might provide a natural explanation.
- The cure must be permanent.

Are miracles absolute proofs for God's existence? Surprisingly enough, No! Miracles are not as incontestable as mathematical logic; their acceptance is not as certain as is  $2+2 = 4$ . In the final analysis acceptance of the truth of miracles is a matter of faith or belief. If

this were not true everyone would believe in God who witnessed or heard of them. Many who see or hear of them do not believe. Although the Scribes, Pharisees, and Chief Priests saw Jesus perform many miracles, the great majority of them refused to recognize him as the Messiah, but attributed their cause to the devil or magic. Unbelievers try to explain miracles away in some manner or another. In spite of this, miracles are still the most powerful motives of credibility.

After a careful study of these arguments, we are forced to conclude that it is reasonable to believe that God exists. His existence is simply powerfully logical; it is reasonable; it just makes sense; it is as clear as  $2+2 = 4$ . There are several other logical arguments that are used to prove God's existence, among them are the historical argument and the moral argument.

**The Historical Argument:** The fact that the peoples of all societies and times have had some form of religious beliefs has led some to the conclusion that God exists. Sociologically and anthropologically speaking religion tries to offer answers to the universal questions of mankind: how and why do we exist; what meaning and purposes does life hold for us; what is our destiny; what, if any, control do we have over our lives and destiny; what are the causes of suffering, sorrow, and death in the world; what are the causes of evil in the world; are there any reasons for hope in a world of darkness and despair. The fact that all men have sought answers to these and other fundamental questions over the ages is reasonable proof that God exists.

In addition, Peter Kreeft identifies eight different arguments for the existence of God from history, not just one.

1. First, he says that history, both human and prehuman, shows a story line. It is not just random. Furthermore, he says that a story points to a Storyteller. This general argument from history appear to be a version of the argument from design.
2. A second argument concentrates on history's moral design. Kreeft tells us that the historical books of the Old Testament are an argument for the existence of God from the justice displayed in the history of the Jewish people: He says that their experience is the perfect invitation to see the hand of God in human affairs. Whenever God's laws are followed, the people prosper. When his laws are violated, the people perish. This is known as the Deuteronomist Old Testament theme. In fact, the Jews were almost wiped out at least four times in their Old Testament history, because they broke their covenant with God. Kreeft points out that history shows that moral laws are as inescapable as physical ones. Just as one can't flout the laws of gravity or he falls, one can't flout God's laws or he falls. To illustrate this he gives

an example of great tyrants like Hitler who flourish for a time, then perish. On the other hand, great saints seem to suffer failure, then triumph. The same goes for nations. He says that history proves that individuals or nations can't violate the moral law without suffering bad consequences. The only satisfactory cause for such effects is God. Having been a teacher of history at the college and high school levels, I am acutely aware of the truth of this argument for God's existence. One could easily find hundreds of examples to illustrate the truth of this argument.

3. A third argument offered by Kreeft flows from providential "coincidences," like the Red Sea parting (moved by an east wind, according to Exodus) just at the right time for the Jews to escape Pharaoh's approaching army. He describes how our own individual histories usually have similar bits of curious timing. He says that unprejudiced examination of these "coincidences" will bring at least a suspicion, if not the conviction, that an unseen divine hand is at work. Many times in my life I have seen the hand of God in events that affected my life. The occurrences were too well timed to be nothing more than coincidences.
4. A fourth argument from history, the strongest of all, is miracles. We discussed this above, but for here we will just say that miracles directly show the presence of God, for a miracle, in the ordinary sense of the word, is a deed done by supernatural, not natural, power. Kreeft tells us that if miracles happen, they demonstrate God's existence as clearly as rational speech shows the existence of thought. Kreeft says that if he were an atheist, he would study all published interviews of any of the 70,000 who saw the miracle of the sun at Fatima; that he would ransack hospital records for documented, "impossible," miraculous cures. He states that atheists argue against nearly all miracles on philosophical grounds, rather than on historical grounds. They are convinced in advance by argument that miracles can't happen. As a consequence, they don't waste their time on empirical investigation. He says that those who do, soon cease to be atheists—like the skeptical scientists who investigated the Shroud of Turin, or like Frank Morrison, who investigated the evidence for the "myth" of Christ's resurrection with the careful scientific eye of the historian—and became a believer. There is hardly a scientist who opens his mind to the truth that remains an atheist.
5. Kreeft's fifth argument is Christ Himself, a man who lived among us and claimed to be God. If Christ was God, then, of course, there is a God. But if Christ was not God, he was a madman or a devil—a madman if he really thought he was God, but was not; a devil if he knew he was not God and yet tempted men to worship him. Kreeft asks the question: Which is he—Lord, lunatic, or liar? He tells us that part of the data of history is the Gospel record of Jesus' life, that an absolutely unforgettable character

emerges from reading the Gospels. He says that Christ's personality is compelling even to unbelievers, even to enemies like the atheistic German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche of the late nineteenth century. Kreeft says that the character revealed in the Gospel accounts is utterly unlike that of a lunatic or a liar, that it is impossible for a lunatic to be so wise or a liar so loving; therefore Jesus must be who he claims to be—God.

6. A sixth argument is the saints, especially their joy. Kreeft quotes G.K. Chesterton as saying that the only unanswerable argument against Christianity was Christians. By this he meant bad and sad Christians. Similarly, Chesterton said that the only unanswerable argument for Christianity is Christians—saintly Christians. Kreeft says that one can argue against Mother Teresa's theology if he is skeptical of mind, but one can't argue against Mother Teresa herself, unless he is hopelessly hard of heart. Kreeft asked that if there is no God, how could life's most fundamental illusion cause its greatest joy? If God didn't do it, who put smiles on the lips of martyrs? "By their fruits you shall know them." He concludes by saying that illusions don't have the staying power that the faith has.
7. Kreeft's seventh argument from history is the conversion of the world. In this regard, he asked: How can we explain the success of the faith in winning the hearts of men? He says that hard-hearted Romans gave up worldly pleasures and ambitions and often life itself, to follow Jesus. How can we explain worldly men pinning their hopes on otherworldly goals and doing it consistently, *en masse*, century after century, until the whole civilized Western world is converted—if Christianity is not true and there are no miracles. He says that this record is an even greater miracle. To drive his point home, Kreeft says that Greek philosophy won converts through rational proofs, and Mohammed through force of arms in the jihad or holy war; however, Christ won hearts by the miracle of "amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me." Of course, he is here quoting John Newton's famous song of that name.
- 8 The eighth and last argument from history is from our own life experiences. Kreeft tells us that the Christian faith is verifiable in a laboratory, but it's a subtle and complex laboratory: it is the laboratory of one's life. He says that he always tells a skeptic to pray "The Prayer of the Skeptic" if he really wants to know whether God exists. He says that it is the scientific thing to do: to test a hypothesis by performing the relevant experiment. He states that if God exists, he wants to get in touch with us and reveal himself to us, and that he has promised that all who seek him will find him. He concludes then that all the agnostic has to do is to sincerely seek, honestly and with an open mind, and he will find, in God's way and in God's time.

That's part of the hypothesis.

How can the skeptic find God? Kreeft says not just by arguing, but also by praying, not just by talking about God, but also by talking to God. His advice to the unbeliever is to go out into his back yard some night and say to the empty universe above him: “God, I don't know whether you exist or not. Maybe I'm praying to nobody, but maybe I'm praying to you. So if you're really there, please let me know somehow, because I do want to know. I want only the truth, what-ever it is. If you are the truth, here I am, ready and willing to follow you wherever you lead.” Kreeft believes that if our faith is not a pack of lies, then whoever sincerely prays that prayer will find God in his or her own life, no matter how hard, long or complex the road. He completes his discussion on historical proofs for God's existence by quoting St. Augustine's *Confessions*: “All roads lead to Rome”—if only we follow them.”

## SCIENTIFIC PROOFS FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE

Some historians, scientists, and philosophers have posited a dichotomy or conflict between religion and science. In this regard, the *Catechism* says that “Though faith is above reason, there can never be any real discrepancy between faith and reason. Since the same God who reveals mysteries and infuses faith has bestowed the light of reason on the human mind, God cannot deny himself, nor can truth ever contradict truth.” It goes on to say:

Consequently, methodical research in all branches of knowledge, provided it is carried out in a truly scientific manner and does not override moral laws, can never conflict with the faith, because the things of the world and the things of faith derive from the same God. The humble and persevering investigator of the secrets of nature is being led, as it were, by the hand of God in spite of himself, for it is God, the conserver of all things, who made them what they are” (No. 159).

It has been claimed that the more a person is involved in scientific research, the less likely he or she is to be a religiously minded person. Fr. Thomas DuBay, who has carefully studied the matter, says that this seems not to be the case. He says that people engaged in the fields of biology, astronomy, geology and physics for the most part believe in God because of their work in these and other fields. He cites as proof a survey taken in 1974 that found that 63 % of 51,204 professors of physical science said they were 'open' to religion. Seventy-five percent of men and women of science were affiliated with some church. Moreover, professors in the physical sciences were more religiously inclined than those in the humanities and social sciences.

Nonetheless, science has had an indirect influence on unbelief among the masses of human beings in modern societies. For one, human nature being what it is—fallen—humans with knowledge of science are inclined to believe that science offers the only valid answer to the causes of natural phenomena. What's more, there is reason to believe that science has an indirect influence on unbelief insofar as it provides men and women with a comfortable and pleasurable lifestyle, which “given our fallen nature, we easily pursue to the neglect of the intangible, divine order of reality.” Fr. DuBay says that “In undermining religious belief, social factors are much more influential than scientific ones.” However, he says that the “greatest impact on belief and unbelief comes from the area of family life, including sexual behavior, marriage, child-rearing and family life-style.” He concludes that:

These findings echo what we already find in the New Testament analysis of unbelief. Nowhere do we read that information or education or one's intelligence quotient determines belief or unbelief. But we do read that one's manner of life

prevents a person from following through and maturing in the divine word he has heard. Jesus himself has it that wealth and cares and the pleasures of life suffocate the word” (Luke 8:14).

In spite of this, modern scientific evidence has given us reasons to believe beyond a reasonable doubt that God exists. Although this is a hotly debated topic today, the accumulated evidence is overwhelming proof that the universe was designed, created, and sustained by an intelligent designer and creator as outlined in the Book of Genesis. Although there are valid criticism of the intelligent design theory as it is presented today, those who criticize it simply aren't familiar with how sophisticated this argument has become. They still equate intelligent design with creation science. Phillip E. Johnson popularized the intelligent design movement in his book *Darwin on Trial*, which he published in 1991. Let's examine several scientific disciplines to see how consistent the findings are with God's existence. We will consider, in turn, the following scientific fields for evidence of God's existence:

- The Evidence of Cosmology
- The Evidence of Physics
- The evidence from Astronomy
- The Evidence of Geology
- The Evidence of Biochemistry
- The Evidence of the Science of Biological Information
- The Evidence of Consciousness (Psychology)

**The Evidence of Cosmology:** As a science cosmology is a branch of astronomy that deals with the origin, structure, and space-time relationships of the universe. As a branch of philosophy called metaphysics it is a theory dealing with the nature and order of the universe. Cosmologists reason as follows:

**Major Premise:** Whatever begins to exist has a cause.

**Minor Premise:** The universe appears to have had a beginning.

**Conclusion:** Therefore, the universe had to have a cause.

Almost all contemporary cosmologists agree that the evidence suggests that the universe began with a Big Bang at some specific point in the past, perhaps 12-15 billion years ago. If the universe had a beginning it follows that something had to cause it to come into existence that already existed; nothing can come from nothing. This would be a violation of what philosophers call the principle that everything has a Cause. Many cosmologists have drawn the reasonable conclusion that an intelligent being had to design and put the universe into motion, an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent being called God.

**The Evidence of Physics:** Physics is a science that deals with matter and energy and their interactions. Modern physicists have discovered that the laws and constants of physics provide the optimal conditions to make the universe habitable for life. One scientist has concluded from his research that gravity is fine-tuned to the staggering figure of one part in a hundred million billion billion billion billion billion. Another scientist has discovered that the cosmological constant, which represents the energy density of space, is “as precise as throwing a dart from space and hitting a bulls-eye just a trillionth of a trillionth of an inch in diameter on Earth.” Yet another says that there are over thirty physical properties that require precise sets of measurement required to produce a universe that can sustain life, which reasonably can be accounted for only by intelligent design. The accumulated evidence for intelligent design is so powerful that some scientists have given up atheism.

**The Evidence from Astronomy:** Astronomy is the study of objects and matter outside the earth’s atmosphere and their physical and chemical properties. Similar to the fine-tuning of physics, geological and chemical processes work together with Earth’s position in the universe to create a safe place for the development and sustaining of life. Life can exist only if the precise properties exist to create and sustain it, which include the following unique properties relative to our sun and moon; the right mass; the right light; the right age; the right distance; the right orbit; the right galaxy; and many other factors that create optimal conditions in our solar system and our location in the universe for a habitable environment. It is unreasonable to believe that the precise order required in the universe to create and sustain life is the result of blind chance and impersonal forces.

**The Evidence of Geology:** Geology is a science that deals with the history of the earth and its life, especially as recorded in rocks; it is a study of the solid matter of the earth or moon. Geologists have discovered that the earth is much more than a large solid spinning rock; it has an 8,000-mile diameter interior with a solid iron core surrounded by iron liquefied by extreme heat and pressure. Earth possesses many conditions that are necessary to sustain life. For one, the earth has exactly the precise minimum mass required to create and maintain an atmosphere that freely exchanges the chemicals needed for life and to protect inhabitants from cosmic radiation. For example, large brained creatures like humans require an atmosphere that contains about 20% oxygen. Furthermore, the earth is the minimum size necessary to keep the heat from the interior from being lost too quickly. The radioactive decaying interior regulates the critically important mantle convection inside the Earth. If it were just a little smaller or larger, the earth would cool down too quickly or slowly. Moreover, if the earth were much larger, surface gravity would fracture the mountains and eventually the earth would be a smooth sphere covered entirely with about 10,000 feet of water. Although water is necessary to sustain life, a water-covered planet would not possess tides and weathering required to

wash the nutrients from the continents to feed organisms in the water. In addition, the salt concentration in the ocean would be too high to sustain life, because the tides regulate the amount of salt in the oceans by depositing large quantities of salt along the coasts. What's more, geologists have discovered that the earth possesses large solid tectonic plates that float on the earth's mantle. The oceans lubricate and facilitate the movement of the plates. The drifting of these plates is necessary in the creation of landmasses and mountains that keep the earth's surface above sea level. In addition, plate tectonics drives the Earth's carbon dioxide-rock cycle, which is critical in regulating the environment by balancing greenhouse gases and keeping the temperature of the planet at a level conducive to life. The process is a complex one acting like a thermostat that keeps greenhouse gases in balance and surface temperatures under control. Also, the plate tectonic system generates the planet's magnetic field, which is necessary to shield the earth from dangerous radiation. In addition, the proportion of sunlight reflected by the earth by polar ice caps, deserts, and continents help to regulate the earth's temperature and climate. There are many other phenomena that help to regulate the earth's temperature and climate making it habitable for life, but the point to remember is that it is reasonable to believe that life on earth could be possible only with the existence of an omniscient and omnipotent Being who designed, created, and sustains it.

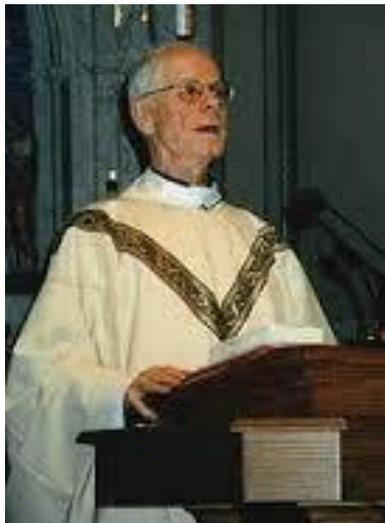
**The Evidence of Biochemistry:** Biochemistry deals with the study of chemical compounds and processes occurring in organisms. Evolution scientists claim that complex organisms have been formed by numerous, successive slight modifications over many generations. Moreover, they claim that these modifications were caused by impersonal blind forces of mutations and natural selection. There are a growing number of biochemists who have made discoveries that challenge the evolutionary hypothesis. For example, Michael Behe has demonstrated that complicated, microscopic organisms, such as cilia and bacterial flagella, are extremely unlikely to have been built in a piece-by-piece manner, because they had to be fully present in order to function. Other examples include the extremely complex system of transporting proteins within cells and the intricate process of blood clotting. He and other prominent biochemists believe that the complexity of these types of organisms point to "a purposeful, intentional design by an intelligent agent." To the contrary, some argue that evolution explains everything without a divine Designer. Peter Kreeft says that just the opposite is true. He tells us that evolution is a beautiful example of design, a great clue to God. There's very good scientific evidence for the evolving, ordered appearance of species, from simple to complex ones. Kreeft says that there is no scientific proof of "natural selection" as the mechanism of evolution. Natural selection "explains" the emergence of higher forms without intelligent design by the "survival of the fittest" principle. But he dismisses this as sheer theory without a shred of scientific proof.

**The Evidence of the Science of Biological Information:** Biological Information is the study of any of various nucleic acids that are usually the molecular basis of heredity, are localized especially in cell nuclei, and are constructed of a double helix held together by hydrogen bonds. Scientists have discovered that within every one of our one hundred trillion cells is a six-foot DNA coil containing a four-letter chemical alphabet that spells out precise assembly instructions for all the proteins from which our bodies are made. A prominent scientist claims that no hypothesis has been proposed that even comes close to explaining how information got into biological matter by naturalistic means; that the complexity of the information system points to design by super intelligence. Millions of years ago many new life forms appeared on earth almost overnight. This phenomenon is called the Cambrian explosion, a time when new life forms suddenly appeared fully formed in the fossil record, with no prior transitions. The explosion of new life forms would have required the infusion of massive amounts of new biological information. Scientists tell us that information is the product of intelligence. One can conclude from this fact that “from the evidence of genetics and biology, we can infer the existence of a mind that's far greater than our own—a conscious, purposeful, rational, intelligent designer who's amazingly creative.”

**The Evidence of Consciousness (Psychology):** Catholics believe that God created man in his image and likeness. By image we mean that man has an eternal soul with the faculties of intellect, free will, imagination, and memory. The soul contains our consciousness. Like God we have the ability to reflect on our own existence. Another way of putting it is that man has consciousness or awareness of his own person. Each human possesses a pattern of reflexive attitudes toward his own person social psychologists call the self. Moreover, the soul forms the body and gives it life. Death is the separation of the soul from the body. The body is created in accordance with the laws of nature established by God at the beginning. He creates the soul from nothing at the moment of conception. For decades psychologists, social scientists, and other scientists have tried to convince us that consciousness is merely a physiological process; it is nothing more than a function of the brain. However, today many scientists are telling us that the laws of chemistry and physics cannot adequately explain our experience of consciousness. Consciousness has been defined as “our introspection, sensations, thoughts, emotions, desires, beliefs, and free choices that make us alive and aware.” One researcher has shown that consciousness can continue after a person's brain has stopped functioning. Others have found that the soul is a separate entity from the brain. At the philosophical (meta-physical) level the question is “How do we get something from nothing?” “How could consciousness come from inanimate matter?” If the universe began with lifeless matter having no awareness of itself, “how, then, do we get conscious creatures who live, think, feel, and believe from lifeless materials. Even some unbelieving scientists admit that there must be a super-

natural origin of the self-conscious mind or soul. Christians believe that it is reasonable to believe that the origins of human consciousness is the omniscient mind of God.

Fr. Aidan Nichols, O.P., one of the world's greatest contemporary theologians, sheds light on this subject that is worth considering. Of human consciousness, he says how could the design that obviously exists now in man and in the human brain come from something with less or no design? He says that this violates the principle of causality, which states that you can't get more in the effect than you have in the cause. If there is intelligence in the effect (man), there must be intelligence in the cause (God). However, a universe ruled by blind chance has no intelligence. He concludes that there must be a cause for human intelligence that transcends the universe: a Mind behind the physical universe. This great Mind is God. In this regard, he points out that the greatest scientists over the centuries have believed in such a Mind, even those who did not believe any revealed religion.



### ***Our Amazing Universe***

Fr. Thomas DuBay in his book *Faith and Certitude* treats this topic about as well as any that I have read from a Catholic perspective. He says that people vary not only in their intelligence, but also in their capacity to wonder. At one end of the amazement spectrum are the satiated who are impressed by nothing, and at the other end are the vibrant who are fascinated by a simple daisy. He points out that boredom of the visible universe is not a trait of a normal child or a healthy adult. He says that the better educated one is in the arts and sciences, the more he or she should find breathtaking “the complexity, the order, the magnitude and the beauty of creation.” He writes that the more one becomes educated, one is likely to reach the point where his or her imagination goes limp, the point where one realizes that he or she is utterly unable to visualize what he or she knows to be true. He says that to appreciate the impact of this argument for God's existence, we must first get an inkling of complexity and magnitude.

Fr. DuBay goes about demonstrating the complexity and magnitude of God's creation by telling us that the best way to do this is to provide numbers that show the complexity and magnitude of the universe. He says that we need numbers for two reasons. One is that our modern scientific world is immersed in them. Another is that we cannot get a feel for the power of the argument without them. How big is big? It is impossible for our minds to cope with large figures. We have trouble even grasping what one billion really means, and

so people who try to impress us with magnitude use images. For example, they say, that one billion dollars made up of one-dollar bills would make a stack 125 miles high. Or since the time of Jesus' death on the cross, only a little over one billion minutes have passed. Nonetheless, a billion is an extremely small number when one deals with the complexity and size of the universe, both on the microscopic and the macroscopic levels. Father says that when we get up into the teens and twenties of digits the magnitude surpasses our ability to cope with it. For example, he cites numbers that maintain the drops of water in all the oceans of the world would equal a 26-digit number, and all the subatomic particles in the billions of galaxies each with its billions of huge stars would be an 81 digit number.

The microscopic universe is as amazing in its complicated smallness as the macroscopic universe is in its astounding magnitude. Essentially an atom is an infinitesimally small solar system, made up of even extremely smaller particles whirling about a nucleus. I've read that the atoms in an element are relatively so far apart that what we might feel as solid is made up almost of nothing but space. We are told that there exist small particles that can pass right through the 8,000 miles of our planet without touching anything. Furthermore, the number of particles in our universe is incomprehensible. For example, scientists tell us that a mere thimbleful of air contains trillions upon trillions of atoms. Fr. DuBay says that "It boggles the mind to consider what one pound of iron would contain. Or a cubic mile of lead. Or the whole earth. Or our sun. Or the billions of galaxies of billions of suns. How incredibly vast is that modest looking figure expressing the number of particles in the entire universe," a figure containing 81 zeros, I believe. I recall reading years ago that there are stars that are so dense, that even though they were made up mostly of space, a teaspoon full contained material that weighs millions of pounds by the earth's gravitational pull.

How about the complexity and magnitude of the big picture, the macroscopic universe? To begin close to home, our earth is approximately 8,000 miles in diameter. Fr. DuBay says that this might sound manageable enough until we reflect a moment on what it means. To illustrate his point, he says, if one could board a jet airplane and flew at the rate of 500 miles per hour from the surface to the earth's core, it would take him approximately eight hours to reach the center and another eight hours to reach the other side. Then he alludes to the fact that water pressure at a mere one mile below the surface of the oceans is already crushing, and muses what must it be at 4,000 miles into the planet? He concludes that even though the earth is a relatively large piece of matter, it is small compared with other heavenly bodies in the universe.

For example, Jupiter is 80,000 miles in diameter and the Sun is 800,000 miles. Compared with the Sun, our earth is like the head of a straight pin next to a basketball. It would take a jet airplane over thirty-three days to fly from the surface of the Sun to its core.

Father tells us that the Sun is so large of an atomic furnace that although it burns 4.2 million tons of its own substance each second, it would take six billion more years for it to use one forty-thousandth of its mass. In spite of these facts, the Sun is only an average sized star among billions and billions and billions of stars in the universe.

Take our own Milky Way galaxy, it is made up of about 200 billion stars, and there are at least 10 billion galaxies like our own, each consisting of hundreds of billions of stars. Fr. DuBay gives us an example to better grasp the enormity of the universe by telling us that there are approximately 10,000 grains of sand in a handful and that America alone has 84,000 miles of coastline plus many more thousands of miles of lake beaches. However, there exist more stars in the universe than grains of sand found on all beaches of the earth.

How about the complexity of living things? Living beings are far more amazing than inanimate creation. Fr. DuBay tells us that scientists have discovered that the most simple protein molecule that could be called living is composed of at least 400 linked amino acids, and each amino acid is a special combination of four or five fundamental elements, and each element is a unique structure of more basic particles. And this is the simplest life form. He says that we are rightly impressed with the complexity of computer silicon chips, but compared with living systems, they are insignificant. He quotes a scientist as saying, "When you look at genes and molecular structures, you find information systems that are unimaginably more compact than the microchip. Each cell in your body has stored within it your complete genetic history and instructions on how to create another you; a wealth of information perhaps equivalent to thirty volumes of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*." And this is only one living cell. Father says that scientific books and periodicals dealing with astronomy, physics, chemistry, and biology overflow with information that staggers the imagination when they describe the inner workings of visible creation, especially of living organisms. Father says it so well, he is worth quoting here at some length:

The more deeply we delve into the natural world with powerful microscopes the more astonishing we find it. The surface of a leaf or of the human tongue or of a chicken egg, the structure of a speck of dust or a pebble or an amoeba or a snowflake are all of them incredibly more spectacular than what we see with the naked eye." [He asked, how is this amazing universe to be explained? He answers by saying,] "There are two conceivable answers to this question, chance and design. The second is an explanation, the first is not. To say that a complex being, a cat for example, happened by chance is simply to refuse to explain its origin. . . . Common people reach their certitude about God's existence because they see in their straightforward manner that design is the only possible way to account for the complexities that lie in profusion around us. To assert that the complexities in a simple leaf, let alone the entire universe, are due to mindless change is much like saying that a thousand-bed hospital complete with all its computers, medical

equipment, food services and medical record department all just happened with no intelligent plan or direction. Any normal adult would laugh at the absurdity of such an ‘explanation’. Hence, no one would think of offering it. With their own tools scientists are showing that a chance universe is an impossibility.

Then Father goes on to describe the work of several prominent scientists, such as Fred Hoyle, to prove his point.



### **Fr. Spitzer’s *New Proofs for the Existence of God***

Fr. Robert J. Spitzer, who is a Jesuit priest, philosopher, and retired President of Gonzaga University, and founder and President of the Magis Center of Reason and Faith informs us that significant updates in rational approaches to God have been achieved in five major areas over the last seventy years:

1. Evidence from physics and cosmology about an initial singularity (implying a creation event transcending universal space-time asymmetry, usually referred to as Big Bang Cosmology).
2. Evidence of the extremely high improbability of an anthropic universe (one that will allow the emergence of any life form), implying the possibility of supernatural design.
3. Development of the notions, and corroboration of the reality, of causation and simplicity in quantum theory and cosmology, which can be applied to what was traditionally conceived as the “uncaused Cause argument” (Chapter 3),
4. An ontological grounding for Bernard Lonergan’s proof for the existence of God in *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*.
5. Contemporary developments in the ontological explanation of time and the Hilbertian prohibition of “infinities hypothesized within finite structures,” which has led to a credible contemporary formulation of the long-discarded proof of the impossibility of infinite past time.

We will consider 1-3 below, but 4 is discussed under Lonergan’s epistemological proof for God’s existence above.

**No. 1. Big Bang Cosmology:** Regarding the first area, Fr. Spitzer begins by telling us that since the time of Aristotle, 40 philosophers have given considerable thought to nature having purpose. St. Thomas Aquinas called this teleological idea the final cause and used it as a basis for proof of God’s existence, or at least making it reasonable to believe that he does exist. This is the Intelligent Design or Teleological argument for proof of his existence. As we discussed above in our discussion of Intelligent Design, this insight was considered seriously in post-Renaissance thought by philosophers such as William Paley, who was among those who believed that the universe had a beginning and that it was designed, created, and maintained by a Super Intelligence of some sort. If the universe was infinite and had no beginning, then there is no need for there to be a designer and creator.

Fr. Spitzer states that “Despite a long period of criticism from Descartes to Nietzsche, the intuition of design worked its way back into both philosophical and scientific thought in the mid-twentieth century as evidence began to accumulate for the finitude of our universe in both mass and time.” If the universe is finite, then it must have had a beginning, and if it had a beginning, it must have had a cause great enough to design and create it. Fr. Spitzer describes how in Chapter One “the current state of cosmological evidence indicating a beginning of the universe, set out the conditions that would be necessary to get around this evidence, and evaluated the current state of alternative proposals. The main scientific consensus was and had been for centuries that the universe was infinite and that it had always existed.” He goes on to say that “in view of the extensive applicability and preponderance of evidence for a beginning of the universe (and the narrow and tenuous path which must be taken to get around it), it can be concluded that the evidence currently supports a reasonable likelihood of a beginning—a point at which the universe came into existence.”

Fr. Spitzer informs us that since Einstein’s work in the early twentieth century, developments in astrophysics have substantiated his intuition in remarkable ways:

1. Determination of the age of the observable universe (13.7 billion years),
2. Determination of the distribution of matter and energy in the universe: visible matter (4.6%), dark matter (23%), and dark energy (72.4%),
3. determination of the visible mass of the observable universe (10<sup>53</sup> kg), and
4. the identification of most universal constants. These developments reflect the universe’s intrinsic parameters, which were not recognized by Newton and the modern philosophers who were heavily dependent upon him (e.g., Hume, Kant, Nietzsche, etc.). Prior to Einstein’s publication of the *General Theory of Relativity*, one could have thought that supernatural design was completely unnecessary because it was believed (in accordance with Newton’s postulates) that the universe existed for an infinite amount of time with an infinite amount of space and an infinite amount of inter-

acting content. Therefore, there would have been an infinite number of “tries” to bring about virtually any degree of complexity.

According to Fr. Spitzer, Standard Big Bang cosmology totally changed these postulates, and reduced the total number of “tries” in the observable universe to a very finite number; that is: 13.7 billion years and 13.7 billion light years in radius from its theoretical originative center). This and lot of other data supplied by Fr. Spitzer “produced a remarkable openness on the part of some physicists to the prospect of supernatural design. Contemporary physicists such as Arno Penzias, Roger Penrose, Owen Gingerich, John Polkinghorne, Fred Hoyle, and Paul Davies have since adduced the plausibility of a designing intelligence from the evidence of contemporary physics.” He quotes Paul Davies as saying in his *God and the New Physics*:

[T]he numerical coincidences [necessary for an anthropic universe] could be regarded as evidence of design. The delicate fine-tuning in the values of the constants, necessary so that the various different branches of physics can dovetail so felicitously, might be attributed to God. It is hard to resist the impression that the present structure of the universe, apparently so sensitive to minor alterations in the numbers, has been rather carefully thought out. Such a conclusion can, of course, only be subjective. In the end it boils down to a question of belief. Is it easier to believe in a cosmic designer than the multiplicity of universes necessary for the weak anthropic principle to work? . . . Perhaps future developments in science will lead to more direct evidence for other universes, but until then, the seemingly miraculous concurrence of numerical values that nature has assigned to her fundamental constants must remain the most compelling evidence for an element of cosmic design.

Some scientists didn’t like the implications that the Big Bang cosmology posed—that is if the universe began with a “big bang”—it needed something to cause it to come into existence, implying it was God. Although the classical Big Bang model seemed to indicate a beginning of the universe at a “Hawking-Penrose singularity”, scientists who didn’t like the implications posited various multiverse theories, which in Fr. Spitzer’s words, “opened up the possibility of an early quantum cosmological era and an inflationary dynamic (allowing our universe to be but one amidst a multiplicity of possible universes within a theoretical multiverse).” There is the belief among scientists who don’t like the implications that the Big Bang cosmology offers, that if there exists countless universes, then surely at least one would have struck on the right combination of variables to have created a universe like our own by pure chance. There is absolutely no proof that universes exist outside our own, so all such desperate attempts to offer alternative hypotheses is purely speculative.

Fr. Spitzer tells us that the multiverse view was itself subsequently mitigated by the dis-

covery of Borde, Guth, and Vilenkin that stated:

[E]very inflationary model universe (and/or multiverse) must have a beginning. Since this indicates an edge of time (prior to which there is no time), the conclusions of Borde, Guth, and Vilenkin point strongly to a creation of the universe (from no previously existing physical matter-energy). The cause of such a creation would then have to transcend our universe (and any multiverse in which it may be situated).

He continues elsewhere in this regard:

One important linguistic point should be made. There is much loose talk, even among physicists and philosophers, of “many universes.” In all the theories we have been talking about, there is really just one universe, if we mean by universe the entirety of physical reality that is in any way physically connected to the world we experience. In “multiverse” models, the universe has many “domains,” but they are all parts of the same structure that is governed, ultimately, by one set of fundamental laws. Those fundamental laws may be realized in different ways in different domains, but the fundamental laws are the same in every domain, and the domains physically interact with each other in ways governed by those laws. Similarly, in bouncing or cyclic universe scenarios, there may be different cycles, but all those cycles are all part of a single process governed by one set of fundamental laws. In scenarios with many “branes” in a higher-dimensional universe, those “branes” are not really other universes, but all parts of one physical reality.

In other words, even if scientists who posit various multiverse hypotheses are found to be true, each of the universes would have to be accounted for by a cause, a First Cause we call God.

Fr. Spitzer uses quite a bit of space explaining why the multiverse hypotheses offered so far are woefully inadequate. He states that the “preponderance of cosmological evidence favors a beginning of the universe (prior to which there was no physical reality whatsoever). This beginning of physical reality marks the point at which our universe came into existence. There are currently no truly satisfactory alternatives to this beginning of physical reality.” He asserts that if theorists are to construct a cosmological model which does present an alternative to a beginning, they will have to meet at least four major conditions:

1. Assure that the model avoids the first fundamental problem—inconsistency with cosmological observation.
2. Assure that the model avoids the second fundamental problem—internal inconsistency and nonworkability.

3. Assure that the model is not subject to the BVG theorem (does not have an average Hubble expansion greater than zero).
4. With respect to a bouncing proposal, assure that the model avoids the buildup of entropy, Tolman's Limit, and Carroll's paradox of "extreme fine-tuning for no apparent reason."

He claims that "So far, no models have succeeded in doing all these things. Accomplishing them in the future will be quite difficult because of the extensive general applicability of the BVG theorem and the Second Law of Thermodynamics." He says that even if such a model does meet the criteria, it doesn't mean it will resemble or even remotely resemble reality, that:

Just because a hypothetical proposal meets the above conditions does not mean that it corresponds to the past and present nature of the universe. Therefore, the hypothesis may only be a testimony to human ingenuity. This means that the model will have to be verified, which will likely entail probing the domain of quantum gravity, higher-dimensional space, or even beyond. This will be quite difficult.

Fr. Spitzer concludes by saying: "In view of the extensive applicability and preponderance of evidence for a beginning of the universe (and the narrow and tenuous path which must be taken to get around it), it can be concluded that the evidence currently supports a reasonable likelihood of a beginning—a point at which the universe came into existence. He discusses several multiverse hypotheses and points out their weaknesses."

**No. 2. Anthropic Universe and the emergence of life:** One source states that "The fine-tuned Universe is the proposition that the conditions that allow life in the Universe can only occur when certain universal fundamental physical constants lie within a very narrow range, so that if any of several fundamental constants were only slightly different, the Universe would be unlikely to be conducive to the establishment and development of matter, astronomical structures, elemental diversity, or life as it is understood. The premise of the fine-tuned Universe assertion is that a small change in several of the dimensionless fundamental physical constants would make the Universe radically different." He quotes Stephen Hawking as saying in this regard, "The laws of science, as we know them at present, contain many fundamental numbers, like the size of the electric charge of the electron and the ratio of the masses of the proton and the electron . . . The remarkable fact is that the values of these numbers seem to have been very finely adjusted to make possible the development of life." Some examples include:

If the strong nuclear force were 2% stronger than it is (i.e., if the coupling constant

representing its strength were 2% larger), while the other constants were left unchanged, diprotons would be stable and hydrogen would fuse into them instead of deuterium and helium. This would drastically alter the physics of stars, and presumably preclude the existence of life similar to what we observe on Earth. The existence of the diproton would short-circuit the slow fusion of hydrogen into deuterium. Hydrogen would fuse so easily that it is likely that all of the Universe's hydrogen would be consumed in the first few minutes after the Big Bang. However, some of the fundamental constants describe the properties of the unstable strange, charmed, bottom and top quarks and mu and tau leptons that seem to play little part in the Universe or the structure of matter.

For the more scientifically minded reader, the distinguished British cosmologist Martin Rees formulates the fine-tuning of the Universe in terms of the following six dimensionless physical constants:

- $N$ , the ratio of the strength of electromagnetism to the strength of gravity for a pair of protons, is approximately 1036. According to Rees, if it were significantly smaller, only a small and short-lived universe could exist.
- Epsilon ( $\epsilon$ ), the strength of the force binding nucleons into nuclei, is 0.007. If it were 0.006, only hydrogen could exist, and complex chemistry would be impossible. If it were 0.008, no hydrogen would exist, as all the hydrogen would have been fused shortly after the big bang.
- Omega ( $\Omega$ ), also known as the Density parameter, is the relative importance of gravity and expansion energy in the Universe. It is the ratio of the mass density of the Universe to the "critical density" and is approximately 1. If gravity were too strong compared with dark energy and the initial metric expansion, the universe would have collapsed before life could have evolved. On the other side, if gravity were too weak, no stars would have formed.
- Lambda ( $\lambda$ ) is the cosmological constant. It describes the ratio of the density of dark energy to the critical energy density of the universe, given certain reasonable assumptions such as positing that dark energy density is a constant. In terms of Planck units, and as a natural dimensionless value, the cosmological constant,  $\lambda$ , is on the order of  $10^{-122}$ . This is so small that it has no significant effect on cosmic structures that are smaller than a billion light-years across. If the cosmological constant was not extremely small, stars and other astronomical structures would not be able to form.
- $Q$ , the ratio of the gravitational energy required to pull a large galaxy apart to the

energy equivalent of its mass, is around  $10^{-5}$ . If it is too small, no stars can form. If it is too large, no stars can survive because the universe is too violent, according to Rees.

- D, the number of spatial dimensions in spacetime, is 3. Rees claims that life could not exist if there were 2 or 4.
- Triple-alpha process § Improbability and fine-tuning
- The Hoyle state, which is the third-lowest energy state of the carbon-12 nucleus, with an energy of 7.656 MeV above the ground level. According to one calculation, if the state's energy were lower than 7.3 or greater than 7.9 MeV, insufficient carbon would exist to support life; furthermore, to explain the universe's abundance of carbon, the Hoyle state must be further tuned to a value between 7.596 and 7.716 MeV. A similar calculation, focusing on the underlying fundamental constants that give rise to various energy levels, concludes that the strong force must be tuned to a precision of at least 0.5%, and the electromagnetic force to a precision of at least 4%, to prevent either carbon production or oxygen production from dropping significantly.

I don't pretend to know much about this type of scientific data. I simply have to consider the credibility and truthfulness of the sources I consult. In other words, I believe this data, because I think the sources I consulted should know the facts and are honest in reporting them.

I believe this is among the of types of data Fr. Spitzer means when he says there exists ample scientific evidence for an “extremely high improbability of an anthropic universe, one that allows the emergence life forms, which implies the possibility of supernatural design.” He tells us that prior to Sir Isaac Newton, design arguments were common, because:

[I]t was grounded in the idea that the number of higher-order complexes (producing higher-order activities such as self-motion, eyesight, intelligence, etc.) which could be produced by the interaction of simpler constituents is extremely remote by comparison to the number of non-productive combinations of those simpler constituents. From the vantage point of both physics and probability theory, this is not an erroneous idea. However, when Newton theorized that space, time, and mass points were infinite (and his theories were virtually dogmatically accepted), philosophers began to reason that even though “higher-order complexes giving rise to higher-order activities” were extremely improbable, literally

any highly improbable event could occur in an infinite amount of time, in an infinite amount of space, with an infinite amount of mass. Once an infinite number of possibilities is inserted into the probability equations, improbability disappears—and literally anything becomes possible. Thus, the teleological argument slipped from the horizon for nearly 270 years.

But then, he says, came two remarkable developments in cosmology:

1. The classical and then later contemporary models of Big Bang cosmology.
2. The discovery of additional universal constants.

Fr. Spitzer defines a universal constant as “a fixed quantity that mathematically governs the fundamental equations of physics throughout the observable universe during its duration, such as 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.” He states in this regard:

Big Bang cosmology put an end to the Newtonian assumptions of infinite time and mass in our observable universe. Now the universe was thought to be only 13.7 billion years old and to have  $10^{53}$  kg of visible mass, and a finite amount of dark matter and vacuum (dark) energy. It was all quite finite, and that meant that the probability equations would once again have to be taken seriously. When this eventuality was combined with the discovery of additional universal constants, a host of exceedingly improbable “cosmic coincidences” were discovered.

According to Fr. Spitzer, “Both standard and revised Big Bang models imply a beginning of the universe (a point before which there is no physical reality). This, in turn, provides a rational basis for a supernatural cause which coincides with evidence of supernatural design of the universe.” Then he quotes the Nobel-prize-winning physicist Arno Penzias as saying: “Astronomy leads us to a unique event, a universe which was created out of nothing, and delicately balanced to provide exactly the conditions required to support life. In the absence of an absurdly improbable accident, the observations of modern science seem to suggest an underlying, one might say, supernatural plan.”

Nonetheless, our universe should not be capable of sustaining any kind of life form, “because the range of anthropic values for our universe’s constants is exceedingly small by comparison to the immense range of non-anthropoc values.” Fr. Spitzer informs us:

This meant that a random occurrence of the anthropic values of our universe’s constants is so remote as to be virtually impossible. As a result, physicists began to advocate that it might be just as reasonable, if not more reasonable, to believe in a super-Intellect “setting the values of the constants at the inception of the universe,”

as to believe in their random occurrence. Even persistent atheists like Fred Hoyle changed their minds and openly declared their belief in such a “super-Intellect.”

Fr. Spitzer identifies and discusses seven of these cosmological coincidences that demonstrate “the unbelievably high improbability of an anthropic universe emerging from the big bang by pure chance.” He cautions us that he isn’t “talking about the emergence of life as we know it, but about the very conditions necessary for the possibility of any life form. It is this universality that makes the teleological argument more powerful than it ever could have been in any previous age.” Also, he reveals that he isn’t responsible for the research set out in his book, but is “deeply indebted to the fine work of Roger Penrose, Arvind Borde, Alan Guth, Alexander Vilenkin, Brandon Carter, Walter Bradley, Fred Hoyle, Paul Davies, and many others whose insight and research have contributed so much to unveiling the mystery behind our anthropic universe.”

Fr. Spitzer provides ample evidence for the exceedingly high improbability of our low-entropy universe, one that requires a particular direction for time, sometimes called an arrow of time and provides a measurement of distinguishing the past from the future. and its anthropic constants. Anthropic constants are part of the fine-tuned universe we discussed in this essay regarding Intelligent Design. The fine-tuned universe in the words of one source:

[I]s the proposition that the conditions that allow life in the Universe can only occur when certain universal fundamental physical constants lie within a very narrow range, so that if any of several fundamental constants were only slightly different, the Universe would be unlikely to be conducive to the establishment and development of matter, astronomical structures, elemental diversity, or life as it is understood.

From an examination of the evidence, Fr. Spitzer concludes that “it would not be reasonable or responsible to conclude that our universe arose by pure chance, and therefore, there would have to be some natural or supernatural cause for its occurrence.” Then using John Henry Newman’s informal inference (synthesizing probabilistic evidence from multiple sources of data), or the illative sense that we discussed above in this essay, Fr. Spitzer concludes with renowned physicist Fred Hoyle and others “to the reasonable likelihood of a transcendent cause which is a Superintellect capable of remarkable fine-tuning.”

Referring to Newman’s idea of “an informal inference,” Fr. Spitzer maintains that the facts presented has shown that “the preponderance of cosmological evidence points to a beginning of the universe, which, when combined with a metaphysical premise, implies a transcendent cause of the universe. This probable conclusion combines with an argument given in Chapter Five from the philosophy of mathematics (David Hilbert) which

demonstrates the same conclusion.” Hilbert is considered one of the most influential and universal mathematicians of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Fr. Spitzer states that these conclusions converge with the conclusion that “shows the exceedingly high improbability of explaining our low-entropy universe and the anthropic values of our cosmological constants by pure chance.”

Fr. Spitzer concludes that if we take seriously the convergence of probabilistic data that he has presented:

Then belief in a supernatural cause of fine-tuning emerges as more probative, because a transcendent cause of physical reality (manifest in a beginning) can also be the cause of the apparent fine-tuning of our low-entropy universe and our anthropic constants. This convergence of data is not only mutually corroborative, but also revelatory, because it suggests that the cause of the universe is not only transcendent, but also “super intelligent.

**Differences between Intelligent Design and Anthropic Coincidences or constants:** Elsewhere in this essay we examined Edward Feser’s criticism of Paley’s and Intelligent Design arguments. He was very critical of both William Paley “design argument” and of contemporary Intelligent Design theory. He asserts that his criticisms had nothing whatsoever to do with a desire to conform to Darwinian orthodoxy. Instead they had to do with a rejection of the most basic metaphysical and methodological assumptions underlying by the “design inference” strategy shared by Paley and ID theorists.

He gives two reasons for his criticism. First, he claims that both Paley’s “design arguments” and Intelligent Design theory take for granted an essentially mechanistic conception of the natural world. He states that “What this means is that they deny the existence of the sort of immanent teleology or final causality affirmed by the Aristotelian-Thomistic-Scholastic tradition, and instead regard all teleology as imposed, “artificially” as it were, from outside.” His second objection is that “the Being whose existence is revealed to us by the argument from design is not God but the Great Architect of the Deists and Freemasons, an impostor disguised as God, a stern, kindly, and immensely clever old English gentleman, equipped with apron, trowel, square and compasses.” Fr. Coyne’s objections we discussed are similar to those of Feser’s.

Fr. Spitzer’s argument turns on the values of universal constants, and is therefore different from the arguments constructed by the Intelligent Design Movement. The latter presume an anthropic universe and seek an explanation for how highly complex integrated biochemical and biological systems could arise from far less complex ones. Pure chance (random occurrence) does not seem to be reasonable, because a random emergence of a highly complex system from a far less complex one is highly improbable. He states that

his argument for supernatural design doesn't address these biochemical and biological "leaps" in complexification:

Instead, he focuses solely on the incredibly high improbability of an anthropic condition of the universe itself. It therefore does not focus on the process of evolution so much as on the initial underlying conditions (in the universe) that make such anthropic processes possible. It focuses almost exclusively on physics (particularly the physics of the early universe) and leaves the explanation of highly improbable leaps in biochemical and biological complexification to other domains of inquiry.

Perhaps as Feser claims the proponents of Intelligent Design give too much to the adversaries, i.e., isn't metaphysically sound, but I still believe that Intelligent Design complexity arguments are useful and provide motives of credibility for God's existence.

**No. 3, the "uncaused Cause argument:** Since God's existence can't be proven by using physics, Fr. Spitzer has to resort to metaphysical analysis to do so. In this regard, he says at the end of Chapters 1 and 2:

It would be necessary to make recourse to metaphysical method in order to unpack two conclusions of contemporary Big Bang cosmology, namely, (1) the high likelihood of an initial singularity implying a creative power transcending universal space-time asymmetry, and (2) the reasonable and responsible belief that this transcendent creative power possesses a "super-Intellect" capable of cosmological design on a grand scale.

To conduct his analysis, Fr. Spitzer applies St. Thomas Aquinas's uncaused Cause argument. He points out that this argument has its roots in Aristotle's unmoved Mover argument. He informs us that this argument suffered greatly from the seventeenth and eighteenth century view of causation, which was concerned more with "bodies and forces" than with Aristotle's four causes. However, the early twentieth century completely transformed the view of the physical universe from Newton's "mechanics of bodies" to the "activity of fields", such as quantum fields, electromagnetic fields, space-time fields, plasma fields, etc., which "changed the view of both physical reality and causation." He maintains that "These new views of causation and physical reality shed new light on the metaphysical argument (the uncaused Cause argument)." Instead of using the word causation, because it carries too much historical baggage, Fr. Spitzer uses "conditioned reality conditions" [contingent being?] and "unconditioned Reality" [necessary being? meaning God].

Associated with this discussion, is the notion of simplicity, which Fr. Spitzer claims is useful not only in physics, but also in metaphysics; because it can be used "to explain the

highest level of power or activity, namely, an unconditioned Reality (which does not depend on anything for its existence). As will be proved, an unconditioned Reality must be absolutely simple [which is one of God's attributes], and that absolute simplicity must be unique (one and only one) [another of God's attributes] and unrestricted. This requires that it also be the continuous Creator of all else that exists.

The research points to a limited (finite) universe. According to Fr. Spitzer, in General Relativity Theory, time is not merely a measure, it is something which could have an effect on the emission and interaction of various forms of energy. There not only seemed to be a minimum interval of time (duration), but also a minimum unit of space, and even a minimum unit of energy emission." He states:

When this reality of time was combined with an important development in mathematics (i.e., the Hilbertian prohibition of "infinities hypothesized to be actual within finite or aggregative structures"), the impossibility of infinite past time in any standard universe manifested itself. Hilbert's prohibition must also apply to the hypothesis of infinite past time, making infinite past time impossible. This makes the argument for a Creator of past time quite probative.

### ***A belief must be considered reasonable and responsible***

God's existence can't be proved with physics; it must be proved with metaphysics, for as Fr. Spitzer explains:

Science, unlike philosophy and metaphysics, cannot deductively prove a creation or God. Science is an empirical and inductive discipline, meaning that it cannot be certain that it has considered all possible data that would be relevant to a complete explanation of particular physical phenomena or the universe itself. Nevertheless, it is reasonable and responsible to attribute qualified truth value to long-standing, rigorously established theories until such time as new data requires them to be changed. This is what enables science to (1) identify, aggregate, and synthesize evidence indicating the finitude of past time in the universe, and (2) to identify the exceedingly high improbability of the random occurrence of conditions necessary to sustain life in the universe

Fr. Spitzer maintains that a belief may be considered reasonable and responsible only if the following conditions are satisfied:

- It can be affirmed by rigorous public corroboration, or
- its denial leads to an intrinsic contradiction,
- Its denial leads to a contradiction of publicly corroborated fact.

One of these forms of evidence is sufficient to ground the truth of a proposition. More than one would provide additional corroboration, but is not necessary. Standards for the reasonable and responsible definition of terms will be given below.

With respect to (1), “It can be affirmed by rigorous public corroboration”, Fr. Spitzer says:

Rigorous corroboration means an agreed-upon criterion for corroboration that is sufficient to make a preponderance of reasonable and responsible people believe that a denial of the claim is far more unreasonable and irresponsible than an affirmation of it. In the domain of sense description (e.g., Bob Spitzer is coming into his office) this corroboration could occur through agreement on sensorial apparitions from multiple persons having multiple perspectives. In science, rigorous corroboration could occur through different kinds of experimentation, repetitions of experiments, different kinds of measuring devices, etc. In social sciences, this might come from multiple approaches to a single problem or statistical analysis (using correlation coefficients, T tables, etc.).

With respect to (2), “Its denial leads to an intrinsic contradiction”, Fr. Spitzer writes:

I will consider it reasonable and responsible to claim that intrinsic contradictions (e.g., “a square-circle of the same area in the same respect at the same place and time,” [a violation of the principle of non-contradiction] “an object that acts like both a proton and an electron in the same respect at the same place and time,” or “an infinite-finite in the same respect at the same place and time”) are impossible states of affairs. Therefore, all such intrinsic contradictions could not be reasonably and responsibly held to be true for real states of affairs.

What Fr. Spitzer is leading to is that “any hypothetical state of affairs that inevitably and logically leads to an intrinsic contradiction will also be held to be an impossible state of affairs.” He is attempting to prove logically the statement that “past time is infinite” is contradictory in light of the enormous amount of modern scientific research that “proves” beyond a reasonable doubt that “past time is finite”, not infinite. In other words, if the universe is infinite—that it always existed—there would no need for the existence of an omniscient and omnipotent God to explain the existence of the universe and all that is in it. It would be like saying “square-circles of the same area in the same respect at the same place and time” could exist, which, of course, is impossible. To say so would be a violation of the most basic metaphysical principle of all, the principle of non-contradiction.

With respect to (3), “Its denial leads to a contradiction of publicly corroborated fact”, Fr. Spitzer states:

I will consider any hypothetical state of affairs that contradicts a rigorously corroborated fact (such as well-corroborated experimental evidence) to be false. (By the way, this is the ground of scientific method.) I will consider terms to be reasonably and responsibly defined when those definitions adequately allow for public corroboration, demonstrate non-contradiction, or demonstrate that a hypothetical state of affairs contradicts a rigorously corroborated fact. Terms need not be perfectly defined with respect to all possible states of affairs or all possible hypothetical conditions in order to achieve the above objective. They do not even have to be comprehensive. Terms need only have sufficient meaning to successfully complete corroboration or demonstration.

Fr. Spitzer maintains that if one accepts these three grounds of reasonable and responsible belief, as well as the requirements for adequate definition, he will likely also accept the three elements of metaphysical method that flow directly from them. He constructs his argument in a syllogistic form. The first premise is based on the substantial scientific evidence for a beginning of the universe, viz, the “Big Bang” theory of the beginning of the universe. This second metaphysical premise is the ancient saying of the Greek philosopher Parmenides: “From nothing, only nothing comes.” The conclusion combines the first premise from physics with a second premise from metaphysics. He states: “(1) If there is a reasonable likelihood of a beginning of the universe (prior to which there was no physical reality whatsoever), and (2) if it is *a priori* true that “from nothing, only nothing comes,” then it is reasonably likely that the universe came from something which is not physical reality. This is commonly referred to as a “transcendent cause of the universe (physical reality)” or “a creator of the universe”, viz God. On the other hand:

Conversely, if you do not accept the three grounds of reasonable and responsible belief, you will not only have trouble with metaphysics and proofs for God’s existence, but also with every form of logical demonstration, scientific method, and application of mathematical principles to reality, for all four of these intellectual enterprises depend equally on the three grounds for reasonable and responsible belief. Metaphysics and proofs for God’s existence do not require any more belief or force of will than an application of mathematics or logic to the world.

He closes this discussion by asserting that “All four of these intellectual enterprises depend equally on the three grounds for reasonable and responsible belief. Metaphysics and proofs for God’s existence do not require any more belief or force of will than an application of mathematics or logic to the world.”

This is not an easy book for those of us who aren’t trained in physics, but nonetheless a careful study of the book offers many scientific motives of credibility that what we believe has substantial support for our faith. Scientific discoveries are not needed for our faith, but it is comforting to know that our faith is consistent with them.

## CATHOLICISM AND THE RISE OF MODERN SCIENCE

During much of the twentieth century it was fashionable among many scholars to maintain the notion that there is an intrinsic intellectual conflict between religion and science, especially the Catholic Church and science. John William Draper's *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science* (1874) and Andrew Dickson White's *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (1896) are the most influential books positing the "conflict thesis" between religion and science. Ever since the work of physicist and historian of science Pierre Duhem in the early twentieth century, the trend among historians of science has been to emphasize the Church's crucial role in the development of science. He argued that the theology of the Catholic Church, far from being an impediment, led directly to the development of modern science. Although the conflict thesis is still generally popular, it has largely been discredited by numerous historians of science.

For the last fifty years, virtually all historians of science—including such imminent scholars as A. C. Crombie, Don O'Leary, David Lindberg, Ronald L. Numbers, Edward Grant, Thomas Goldstein, J. L. Heilbron, Anthony Ricci, Marshall Clagett, Owen Gingerich, John Polkinghorne, Benjamin Wiker, Francis S. Collins, John Haught, J. P. Moreland, Stephan Barr, Fr. Robert Spitzer, Gerald Schroeder, Fr. Paul Haffner, Peter Hodgson, Christopher Kaczor, Ian G. Barbour, Richard G. Olson, Gary B. Ferngren, and James Hannam among others have concluded that the Scientific Revolution was indebted to the Church—Catholic and Protestant. Scholars, such as Winton U. Solberg, Robert K. Merton, Perry Miller, Raymond P. Stearns, Edmund S. Morgan, and others have shown the relationship of science and the Anglicans and Puritans. The Catholic contribution to science went well beyond ideas—including theological ideas—to accomplished practicing scientists, many of whom were priests. These and other historians maintain that it is no coincidence that modern science developed in a largely Christian milieu, and that there was something about Christianity, especially Catholicism itself that enabled science to succeed.

The relationship between the Catholic Church and science has long been debated, but historically, the Church has continuously been a patron of sciences. It founded countless schools, universities, and hospitals over the centuries and many clergy have been active in the sciences. Many historians of science have followed Duhem's lead in giving credit to medieval Catholic mathematicians and philosophers, such as John Buridan, Nicole Oresme, and Roger Bacon, as the founders of modern science, all Catholic priests. Duhem concluded that "the mechanics and physics of which modern times are justifiably proud to proceed, by an uninterrupted series of scarcely perceptible improvements, from doctrines professed in the heart of the medieval schools." The Catholic Church has always taught that the Christian faith and science are complementary. The first Vatican Council

(1869/70) declared that “Faith and reason are of mutual help to each other.”

**The Duhem-Jaki-Merton Thesis:** Before the mid twentieth century, most historians believed that Christianity hindered the development of science, and many intellectuals still believe that it did. As proof they cite the Galileo affair in the seventeenth century over geocentrism (in spite of the fact that Galileo was a devout Catholic), the debate between Thomas Henry Huxley and Bishop Wilberforce over evolution in 1860, and the Scopes or so-called “monkey” trial in 1925, also over the evolution controversy. In spite of these aberrations, scholars affirm that modern science arose among the theologians, monks, and professors of Medieval and Renaissance Catholic universities and monasteries.

Scholars have asked the question that if Christianity and science are supposedly so incompatible, what explains the fact that science gradually developed during the Medieval and Renaissance periods in Europe? Pierre Duhem, Fr. Stanley Jaki, and to some extent Robert K. Merton tried to show with the findings of their research that the Christian worldview was necessary for the rise of modern science.

Duhem and Fr. Jaki argue essentially that modern science would not have developed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as it did without developments in medieval Europe. Another way of putting this is that modern science could have risen only in a Christian society. Duhem maintained that the flowering of modern science in that period was a direct consequence of development in medieval Europe. He demonstrated that the Catholic Church hadn’t opposed science, but instead had encouraged and participated in it. One scholar has said of Duhem that his “work was ignored and derided. Even in the 1970’s, historians felt the need to distance themselves from him. No longer! Duhem is now recognized as a titanic figure in the history of science and the founder of the entire subject of medieval science.” Robert K. Merton detected certain seventeenth-century Puritan moral values as encouraging scientific work. He lists various values that promoted science among Puritan Englishmen, both in England and the American colonies. Historians such as Raymond P. Stearns and Winton U. Solberg, both former professors of mine at the University of Illinois, provide substantial proof that the Puritans who founded the American colonies were also intensely interested in modern science.

According to Duhem and Jaki, a civilization must have certain ideas for science to keep developing instead of dying out after a few centuries of progress. Eric V. Snow has gleaned these ideas from their books, which follow:

1. Time should be conceived as linear and potentially quantifiable. This understanding of time allows the cause-effect relationships of nature to be much more readily noticed since it clearly distinguishes past, present, and future. In the Judeo-

Christian tradition, this idea stems from the act of God in creating the material universe from nothing at some specific moment in the past. Time is seen as then marching forward through the present on into the future to the Day of Judgment. In other words, time must be considered linear, with a beginning and an end. The alternative pagan view sees time as cyclical or repeating itself. The concept of the “Great Year” maintained that centuries-long time cycles exist, which made permanent progress of any kind theoretically impossible. The ancient world's conception of time believed the future repeated the past. This bred a sense of complacency, hindering the development of science. Both reincarnation and the transmigration of souls reflect this view of time.

2. If science is to exist, explanations of natural phenomena must avoid *a priori*, pseudo-scientific "explanations" that really do not describe the actual causes of events.
3. The organismic view of nature hinders the development of science. Believing the whole universe is alive, it perceives the world as one huge organism that undergoes the above mentioned cyclical process of birth, maturity, death, and rebirth. Its tie to pantheism—believing everything is God, a view common in Hinduism (and “New Age” environmentalism)—is obvious. Today, most Westerners consider rocks, stars, oceans, etc. to be inanimate objects. Nature needed to be objectified so that things could be counted, measured, and weighed (Wisdom 11:20).
4. Denying the reality and basic orderliness of the universe hampers the development of science. Humans seldom will investigate carefully what they don't think really exists, or what the gods or nature herself will change unpredictably at whim.
5. As a subset of the organismic view of nature issue, a scientific astronomy can only develop if the heavens are not believed to be alive or divine.
6. A balance between reason and faith is necessary. The religious people must not totally reject natural laws while the scientists must not deny the possibility of religious truth.
7. Man needs to be seen as fundamentally different from the rest of nature, having a mind that makes him qualitatively different from the animals. In the Judeo-Christian worldview, Genesis implicitly makes this point, since man and woman were made in God's image and were given dominion over the animals (Genesis 1:26-29). Reincarnation denies this by claiming the souls of animals enter humans and vice versa as they die and are reborn.

***Pierre Duhem***

Pierre Maurice Marie Duhem, who lived from 1861 to 1916, was a French physicist mathematician, historian and philosopher of science, and was a major contributor to the science of his day, particularly in the fields of hydrodynamics, elasticity, and thermodynamics. He is best known for his writings on the development of science in the Middle Ages, which resulted in the ten volume *Le Systeme du Monde* (The System of the World: A History of Cosmological Doctrines from Plato to Copernicus). He was unusual for his time in that instead of denigrating the Middle Ages as was popular among Enlightenment writers like Voltaire and Condorcet, he strived to show that the Roman Catholic Church

had helped foster Western science during this period.

His work in this field was originally prompted by his research into the origins of statics, where he encountered the works of medieval mathematicians and philosophers such as John Buridan, Nicole Oresme, and Roger Bacon, whose sophistication surprised him. He consequently came to regard them as the founders of modern science, having in his view anticipated many of the discoveries of Galileo Galilei and later thinkers. Duhem concluded that “the mechanics and physics of which modern times are justifiably proud to proceed, by an uninterrupted series of scarcely perceptible improvements, from doctrines professed in the heart of the medieval schools.”

In addition, Duhem was inspired by Thomas Aquinas, who wrote, regarding eccentrics and epicycles, that “Reason may be employed in two ways to establish a point: firstly, for the purpose of furnishing sufficient proof of some principle. Reason is employed in another way, not as furnishing a sufficient proof of a principle, but as confirming an already established principle, by showing the congruity of its results, as in astronomy the theory of eccentrics and epicycles is considered as established, because thereby the sensible appearances of the heavenly movements can be explained; not, however, as if this proof were sufficient, forasmuch as some other theory might explain them.”

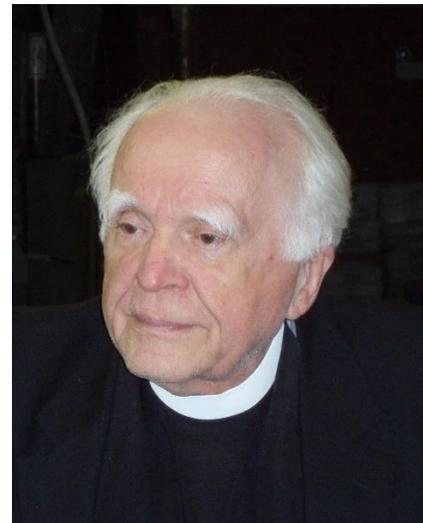
Snow maintains that as long as a great majority of a given culture's intellectuals believe all or most of the seven false ideas listed above, a self-sustaining science can't arise, especially a true science of physical objects in the external real world. He writes:

Christianity's worldview contained ideas about the nature of the universe which

drove out pagan concepts that had prevented the development of science. For these reasons, in his majestic ten-volume work, *Le Systeme du Monde*, Pierre Duhem declared that the birth of science came in 1277 with the Bishop of Paris' condemnation of 219 assorted (Aristotelian) philosophical conceptions. Some civilizations had all or most of these false ideas (such as Hindu India), some had fewer (China), and one or two still fewer (Islam). Correspondingly, the last progressed further in science compared to the first two since it accepted these ideas less, and the second more than the first. For instance, the Chinese lacked the delusion that the heavens were divine and/or living. But this idea appears in *On the Heavens*, a very influential work by the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle. This idea inhibited indigenous Islamic science permanently. But almost all these faulty intellectual ideas ultimately combined to crush Hindu science: It denied the external real world and its orderliness, it espoused eternal cycles and the organismic view of nature, and it proclaimed the divinity of the heavens. To the extent Hindu ideas influenced Chinese thought through Buddhism, Chinese science was strangled in its cradle. Islamic science might have become self-sustaining, if its holy book, the Quran, had not emphasized God's will and power above His reason, and if Muslim scientists had not been so uncritical of Aristotle's physics while their top theologians remained so mystical. It is vitally important to realize that new ideas of Leonardo da Vinci and Galileo didn't just pop out of thin air. Instead, they built upon the writings of such medieval predecessors as Buridan and Oresme. Duhem and Jaki strongly emphasize that these two men took the first steps in forming the conceptual foundations of modern physics by starting to break with Aristotle's physics.

### ***Fr. Stanley Jaki***

Following Duhem's lead, Fr. Stanley Jaki, who was an historian of science and a physicist himself, contended that scientific progress occurred in Christian cultures where there existed a belief in a law of nature and in a rational, transcendent creator. Jaki shows how once a civilization accepted the idea of an unmoving and absolute origin of all things by God, modern science could develop. He maintains that experimental science got its start during the Middle Ages in the idea of "impetus" and that the idea of impetus was rooted in the impetus of secondary causation imputed to nature by God the first cause. Added to this is Jaki's thesis that the contingency of the world as one of many possible creations, rather than as an eternal, necessary emanation of divinity as found in many pantheistic religions, such as Gnosticism and Manichaeism, was crucial to inspiring scientific exploration. He claims that this ancient belief that an eternal universe that experiences endless cycles and



collapses and rebirth impeded the development of science. Furthermore, the Christian belief in the goodness of matter, as opposed to its evil held by many religions, inspired Christians to delve into it as stewards created in God's image.

Fr. Jaki examined the great ancient civilizations of Greece, China, India, Egypt, Rome, and the early Muslim empire and found that all of them had failed to sustain science even though they had earlier all made considerable scientific and technological achievements. He gives credit to non-Europeans for their achievements and that such achievements contributed to the advance of Western Civilization. For example, he points out that although the Ancient Egyptians achieved great advances in architecture and irrigation, their obsession with animal worship and death halted their concept of transcendence. He credits the Ancient Hindus with creating the decimal system and other advances; however, their view of a cyclical cosmos stunted their civilizations. He credits the Moslems with the development of Arabic numbers, geometry, algebra, and medicine, but they failed to develop a clear concept of cause and effect because of an overly "conservative" rigorous interpretation of the Koran. Moreover, he concedes that Islam, Judaism, and Christianity had some common characteristics.

Thomas D. Watts outlines Jaki's thesis in an article entitled Stanley L. Jaki, "Cosmology, and the History of Science" that in his book *Christ and Science*:

Jaki argues persuasively and profoundly that Enlightenment philosophes, thinkers and writers (on down to the present) have been mistaken about Christianity and science. For them, Christianity supposedly inhibited, and even oppressed, science. But Jaki, along with his great mentor Pierre Duhem, knew that the opposite had occurred. In *The Savior of Science* (2000), Jaki revealed the Christian foundations of modern science. He examined the failed attempts at a sustained science on the part of the ancient cultures of Greece, China, India, and the early Muslim empire. Christian monotheism alone provided epistemological underpinnings for scientific endeavour.

Watts informs us that in *Christ and Science* Fr. Jaki identifies four reasons for the unique birth of modern science in Christian Western Europe:

1. The Christian belief in the Creator provided a basis for thinking about nature. He argues that only a truly transcendental Creator could be powerful enough to create a universe that incorporated autonomous laws without diminishing his power. The world's other great religions held that the universe always existed and had no beginning, eliminating the need of an all-powerful creator God.
2. There could be no divine bodies in the Christian cosmos (unlike the Greek cosmos

with its many gods). Christianity repudiated both polytheism, which is the belief in many gods and in pantheism, which is the belief that everything in nature is god.

3. Humankind was created in the image of God, with an intelligence that somehow shares in God's own intelligence.
4. Humankind, created by God, cannot dictate to nature what it should be. Jaki maintains that the rise of the scientific method owes much to these Christian ideals: that a rational belief in the existence of a Creator, and of an ordered universe which God has created and governs, played a crucial role in the rise of science in Western civilization and in all of its great creative advances.

Historians of science, including Fr. Jaki, claim that there is something in the biblical worldview that is receptive to the development of science. For example, Oxford historian Peter Harrison argues that a biblical worldview was significant for the development of modern science. He and others have claimed that literal readings of the Genesis narratives of the Creation and Fall motivated scientific research in seventeenth century England. The author remembers studying the history of seventeenth and eighteenth century science while in graduate school at the University of Illinois of how scientists studied nature to reveal the glory of God and with which to benefit humankind. Many of seventeenth century scientists sought to restore "a human dominion over nature that had been lost as a consequence of the Fall." Oxford University historian and theologian John Hedley Brooke wrote that "when natural philosophers referred to laws of nature, they were not glibly choosing that metaphor. Laws were the result of legislation by an intelligent deity." The seventeenth French philosopher René Descartes insisted that he was discovering the "laws that God has put into nature" and Isaac Newton claimed that the regulation of the solar system presupposed the "counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being."

Catholic scientists, both religious and lay, have led scientific discovery in many fields since ancient times. For love and glory of God and love and benefit of neighbor, from the beginning the Church has provided nursing care and hospitals and remains the single greatest private provider of medical care and research facilities in the world. Following the Fall of Rome, monasteries and convents remained centers of scholarship and clergymen were the leading scholars of the age—studying nature, mathematics, and the motions of the stars for religious purposes. During the Middle Ages, the Church founded Europe's first universities, producing scholars such as Robert Grosseteste, who was the first man to write down a complete set of steps for performing a scientific experiment; Albert the Great (Albertus Magnus c.1206–1280), who is patron saint of natural sciences; Roger Bacon (c. 1214–1294), who was a Franciscan friar and early advocate of the scien-

tific method; Jean Buridan (c.1300–after 1358), who was a French priest who developed the theory of impetus; and Nicole Oresme (c.1320–1382), who wrote influential works on economics, mathematics, physics, astrology and astronomy, philosophy, and theology.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth century Renaissance, a few of the many Catholic scientists include: Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543), a priest who first formulated a comprehensive heliocentric cosmology; Bartolomeo Eustachi (c.1500–1574), one of the founders of human anatomy; Georgius Agricola (1494–1555), Father of mineralogy; Hieronymus Fabricius (1537–1619), who is Father of embryology; Galileo Galilei (1564–1642), Father of modern science; Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), an anatomist, scientist, mathematician, and painter; Pierre Gassendi (1592–1655), a French astronomer and mathematician who studied the transit of Mercury and named the aurora borealis; Mateo Realdo Colombo (1516–1559), who discovered the pulmonary circuit, which paved the way for Harvey's discovery of circulation; Bonaventura Cavalieri (1598–1647), a mathematician known for his work in optics and motion, calculus, and for introducing logarithms to Italy; Andrea Cesalpino (c.1525–1603), a botanist who also theorized on the circulation of blood; Marin Mersenne (1588–1648), who is the Father of acoustics and mathematician for whom Mersenne primes are named; Jan Baptist van Helmont (1579–1644), who was founder of pneumatic chemistry.

Catholic scientists of the modern period include: René Descartes (1596–1650), Father of modern philosophy and analytic geometry; Blaise Pascal (1623–1662), a French mathematician, physicist, inventor, writer, and philosopher; Francesco Maria Grimaldi (1618–1663), a Jesuit who discovered the diffraction of light; Roger Joseph Boscovich (1711–1787), who was a Jesuit priest known for his atomic theory and many other scientific contributions; Antoine Lavoisier (1743–1794), who is the Father of modern chemistry; Louis Pasteur (1822–1895), who is the Father of bacteriology; Friar Gregor Mendel (1822–84), who pioneered genetics; Jules Henri Poincaré (1854–1912), who was a French mathematician, theoretical physicist, engineer, and philosopher of science; Wilhelm Roentgen (1845–1923), who discovered X-rays. Fr. Georges Lemaitre (1894–1966), who proposed the Big Bang cosmological model; Jérôme Lejeune (1926–1994), a Pediatrician and geneticist, best known for his discovery of the link of diseases to chromosome abnormalities.

**The Jesuits and Science:** Moreover the Jesuits have been particularly active, notably in astronomy. The Jesuits have also been pioneer in modern astronomy having 35 craters on the moon named after Jesuit scientists. Church patronage of sciences continues through elite institutions like the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and Vatican Observatory, which first had observatories in Rome, and then at Castel Gandolfo and Arizona. By the eighteenth century, the Jesuits had contributed to the development of pendulum clocks, pantographs, barometers, reflecting telescopes and microscopes, and to scientific

fields as various as magnetism, optics and electricity. They theorized about the circulation of the blood (independently of Harvey), the theoretical possibility of flight, the way the moon affected the tides, and the wave-like nature of light. Star maps of the southern hemisphere, symbolic logic, flood-control measures on the Po and Adige rivers, introducing plus and minus signs into Italian mathematics—all were typical Jesuit achievements, and scientists as influential as Fermat, Huygens, Leibniz and Newton were not alone in counting Jesuits among their most prized correspondents [Jonathan Wright, *The Jesuits*, 2004, p. 189].

The Jesuits were also the first to introduce Western science into such far-off places as China and India. In seventeenth-century China in particular, Jesuits introduced a substantial body of scientific knowledge and a vast array of mental tools for understanding the physical universe, including the Euclidean geometry that made planetary motion comprehensible. Jesuits made important contributions to the scientific knowledge and infrastructure of other less developed nations not only in Asia but also in Africa and Central and South America. Beginning in the nineteenth century, these continents saw the opening of Jesuit observatories that studied such fields as astronomy, geomagnetism, meteorology, seismology, and solar physics. Such observatories provided these places with accurate time keeping, weather forecasts (particularly important in the cases of hurricanes and typhoons), earthquake risk assessments, and cartography. In Central and South America the Jesuits worked primarily in meteorology and seismology, essentially laying the foundations of those disciplines there. The scientific development of these countries, ranging from Ecuador to Lebanon to the Philippines, is indebted to Jesuit efforts.

**Catholic Nobel Prize Winners:** Dozens of Catholic scientists from various scientific fields have been Noble Prize winners, including: Enrico Fermi (1901–1954), awarded the Nobel Prize in physics for his work in induced radioactivity; Henri Becquerel (1852–1908), who was awarded the Nobel Prize in physics for his co-discovery of radioactivity; Peter Grünberg (1939–), who won the Nobel Prize in Physics; Karl Landsteiner (1868–1943), a Nobel Prize winner who identified and classified the human blood types; Alexis Carrel (1873–1944), who was awarded the Nobel Prize in Medicine for pioneering vascular suturing techniques; Guglielmo Marconi (1874–1937), who is the Father of long-distance radio transmission; Joseph Murray (1919–2012), who was awarded the Nobel Prize in Medicine; Vladimir Prelog (1906–1998), who was awarded the Nobel Prize for chemistry.

The Nobel Prize is an annual, international prize first awarded in 1901 for achievements in Physics, Chemistry, Physiology or Medicine, Literature, and Peace. An associated prize in Economics has been awarded since 1969. According to Baruch Shalev's *100 Years of*

*Nobel Prize* (2005), 65.4% of Nobel Prize Laureates awarded between 1901 and 2000 identified themselves as Christians in its various forms as their religious preference. Overall, Christians have won a total of 78.3% of all the Nobel Prizes in Peace, 72.5% in Chemistry, 65.3% in Physics, 62% in Medicine, 54% in Economics and 49.5% of all Literature awards. Of the three primary divisions of Christianity: Protestantism, Catholicism, and Eastern Orthodoxy, between 1901 and 2000 654 revealed themselves as Christian, of which 32% identified themselves as Protestant in its various forms (210 prizes), 20.3% were Christians with no information about their denominations (133 prizes), 11.6% identified themselves as Catholic (78 prizes), and (1.6%) have identified as Eastern Orthodox. According to study done by the University of Nebraska–Lincoln in 1998, 60% of Nobel Prize laureates in physics from 1901 to 1990 had a Christian background.

### ***Technological Advance Does Not Equal Science***

A theme of both Duhem and Fr. Jaki is that technological advances doesn't equal scientific progress. One source claims that skeptics who deny Christianity's role in the rise of science use a weak definition of science, equating inventions that affect daily life in the pre-modern world were "empirical" discoveries by craftsmen, not scientists searching for the laws of nature. Our source states that "Although the Greeks, Chinese, Indians, and Arabs all had what could be called "science," their science soon fizzled out, clearly lacking the rigor and vigor that characterized Christendom's science from Galileo onwards." In this regard, Fr. Jaki says

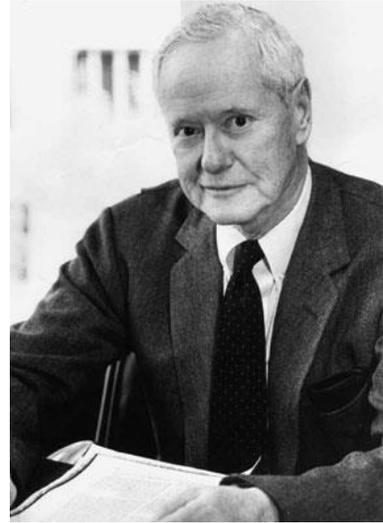
This historiography of science has still to face up honestly to the problem of why three great ancient cultures (China, India, and Egypt) display, independently of one another, a similar pattern vis-à-vis science. The pattern is the stillbirth of science in each of them in spite of the availability of talents, social organization, and peace—the standard explanatory devices furnished by all-knowing sociologies of science on which that historiography relies ever more heavily.

Snow states that although all of these conditions may be necessary to allow a civilization to develop science, they are not sufficient. To explain why only one particular civilization generated a self-sustaining, modern science and not another, we must also look at their intellectual and philosophical climates.

Duhem and Fr. Jaki insisted that the philosophical beliefs of Christianity drove out the anti-scientific conceptions of paganism so that modern science could be born. They argue that the beliefs found in the Bible ultimately freed Christian scientists from the pagan dogmas that prevented the development of a self-sustaining science.

**Robert K. Merton**

Robert K. Merton was a renowned sociologist who put forward the argument that the popularity of science in England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the largely Protestant membership of the Royal Society of London (many of whom were Puritans) can be explained by a correlation between Protestantism and scientific values. This was a takeoff from Max Weber's famous *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, which stressed the relationship between Protestantism and the rise of modern capitalism. Merton focuses on English Puritanism and German Pietism as responsible for the development of the scientific revolution. He explains that the connection between religious affiliation and interest in science is a result of a significant synergy between the ascetic Protestant values and those of modern science. He lists various values that he believed contributed to the development of science among seventeenth-century English Puritans, as follows:



First, a Christian was to glorify God and serve Him through doing activities of utility to the community as a whole, not the contemplative, monastic ideal of withdrawal from the community that characterized much of Medieval Catholicism. By emphasizing a vocation, again something collectively useful to the community, Puritanism encouraged diligence, industry, and hard work. Consequently, the individual chooses the vocation that best suits his abilities. Reason and education were both praised in this context. Education, however, was to be practical and not highly literary in content. The scientific method needs both an empiricist ("practical") and rationalist ("theoretical") approach to gaining knowledge to work properly, which is an issue Jaki repeatedly returns to. Puritanism provided both while promoting empiricism by encouraging the search for the knowledge needed to serve one's calling (i.e., "career") and to be useful to the community as a whole.

It is easy to document the religious values and beliefs of many English scientists of this period. For example, forty-two of the 68 founding members of the Royal Society, which was England's premier scientific organization, are believed to have been Puritans. This is significant, because England's population was largely Anglican; therefore, the high proportion of Puritans in the society implies their values encouraged scientific endeavors. Although Isaac Newton was an unconventional Anglican (for example he was not a Trinitarian), Sir Robert Moray, Sir William Petty, Robert Boyle, John Wilkins, John Wallis, and Jonathan Goddard were all prominent Puritan leaders of the Royal Society. John Ray (1627-1705), who was a great biologist with Puritan leanings, told a friend that

time spent investigating nature was well used. He said that “What time you have to spare you will do well to spend, as you are doing, in the inquisition and contemplation of the works of God and nature.”

A main criticism of the Merton Theses is that it largely ignores the Catholic contribution to the development of modern science. It was very popular when the author was attending the University of Illinois in the 1960's as a graduate student in history. Several of my professors were well known for their promotion of this thesis, especially Raymond P. Stearns and Winton U. Solberg. The author studied under Professors Stearns and Solberg from 1965-1973, both of whom were renowned experts on this subject. Stearn's “Colonial Fellows of the Royal Society in London, 1661-1788” and especially his *Science in the British Colonies of America*, which was a winner of a National Book Award in 1971, documents the contribution of Puritans to the development of modern science. His *Science in the British Colonies of America* is a scholarly history of the sciences extant in the colonies from about 1500 to 1782. I took several courses and graduate seminars with them, and came to the conclusion that there was a strong connection between the development of modern science and Protestantism, especially the English Puritans both in England and the American colonies. My major area of study was intellectual history, especially of seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe. My minor was in sociology, so I was also very familiar with Merton's works, which confirmed my conclusion arrived at by my study of intellectual history. After my studies over the past several years, I have come to the conclusion that there is something exceedingly powerful with the Duhem-Jaki thesis stressing the role of Catholicism in the development of modern science, something that Merton apparently knew too little about. Probably all of these scholars gave too much credit to Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant, in the development of science, and too little to cultures in Egypt, China, India, and the Middle East. I believe that there is considerable truth to the theses of all of these capable scholars, but the role of the other cultures certainly made their contribution as well.

### **Conclusion for Evidence that Proves God's Existence**

Now that we have finished looking at arguments that prove beyond a reasonable doubt from a scientific point of view that God exists, no single argument is sufficient to prove his existence. Fr. Nichols is extremely helpful on this point as well. He says that a number of individually less than convincing arguments taken together may make a convincing case for God's existence. He points out that this is John Henry Newman's strategy in his essay *Aid of a Grammar of Consent*, published during the First Vatican Council, in 1870. He says that Newman offered a new context in which to display the various argumentative strategies and the strata of experience that are relevant to belief in God. He says that in

the *Grammar of Assent*, Newman further refined this idea in relation to the basic tenets of Christian theism, calling such a manner of arriving at certitude about something or someone the “illative sense.” To illustrate this point, Fr. Nichols uses the example of a jigsaw puzzle in which one spreads out the pieces on a table looking like an accidental collection of bits and pieces that tell us nothing. However, when one puts them together, they form a picture. In this regard, Fr. Aidan tells us that “Newman's suggestion is that we can defend belief in God by putting together a number of experiential signals and lines of thought, which converge on the conclusion that there is a God.” He concludes that while none of these arguments taken singly might be wholly compelling, taken cumulatively they amount to a very strong case. He admits that this case may fall short of strict demonstration, but at least it shows that it is more reasonable to believe in God's existence than not.

I might add that Newman didn't receive a very good reception from the neo-Scholastics who then dominated the Church's theology, but later he was vindicated when Pope Leo XIII elevated him to the Cardinalate for his contributions to theology. Newman was to have considerable influence on the New Theology of the 1950's of which Pope John Paul II and our present Pope, Benedict XVI became a prominent part.

## ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

The 1913 edition of the *Catholic Encyclopedia* defines the Divine Attributes in this manner: “In order to form a more systematic idea of God, and as far as possible, to unfold the implications of the truth, God is All-Perfect, this infinite Perfection is viewed, successively, under various aspects, each of which is treated as a separate perfection and characteristic inherent to the Divine Substance, or Essence. A certain group of these, of paramount import, is called the Divine Attributes.” One way at looking at God’s attribute is to look at them as his qualities or perfections.

Once we have proven that God exists, it is reasonable to believe that we can know many of God’s attributes, qualities, or perfections from logical proofs of his existence. Not only can we prove that God exists by this logic, but we can conclude a lot about who he is. For example, we can conclude from our observation of nature certain attributes (properties or qualities) of God, such as, he is:

- **Infinite:** Of God’s infinity, Fr. John Hardon states, “Among the attributes of the Deity, none is more crucial than his infinity. On it everything else depends, and against it every form of atheism has been opposed. Three aspects of infinity are specified ‘in intellect, will, and in every perfection.’ The Fathers of the Church furnished the vocabulary for this attribute. They speak of God as infinite, boundless, uncircumscribed. For Gregory of Nyssa (c. 330- c. 95), ‘he is in every way without limit.’ Theologically this goes beyond affirming that God has no limitations. It says that he has within himself the fullness of all perfection, whether knowledge or power or being.”
- **Eternal:** God has always existed; he lives in the eternal present. Fr. John Hardon says of this attribute of God, “The eternity of God is a dogma which asserts that he possesses the divine being without beginning and without end, and without succession in a constant, undivided now. In their conflict with the genealogies of paganism, the ancient Fathers frequently spoke of God’s eternity. According to Augustine, ‘The eternity of God is his essence itself, which has nothing mutable in it. In it there is nothing past, as if it were no longer; nothing future, as if it were not yet. In it there is only ‘is,’ namely, the present.”
- **Spiritual:** Neither composed of nor dependent on matter. A material being by nature has potency and can change. Since God has no potency, he must be spiritual. By definition then something spiritual is immaterial. Concerning God’s spirituality or immateriality, Fr. Hardon says, “The spiritual substance of God may be understood in two different ways, and both are necessary to a sound grasp of the divine nature. Since he is pure spirit, God is therefore immaterial. He has no body or corporeal dimensions.

- **Unchangeableness or Immutability:** Regarding God’s unchangeableness or immutability Fr. Hardon tells us that, “His unchangeableness is likewise a matter of faith. The Psalms are filled with references to God's immutability, and more than once the Scriptures bluntly affirm the fact. Speaking of himself, in the prophet Malachi, God says, "I, Yahweh, do not change" (Mal. 3.6), and the apostle James encourages the Christians to confidence in the "Father of all light," with whom ‘there is no such thing as alteration, no shadow of a change’ (Jm. 1.17). Not even the Incarnation effected any change in God. If we analyze more closely why he must be changeless, the reason is that he eternally possesses the fullness of being, whereas all that changes ceases to be what it was and begins to be what it was not. Not so God. When he acts outside of his own being, as in creating the world, he is not performing a new action but entering on a new realization of his eternal will to bring into existence something out of nothing.”
- **Omnipotent:** God is all-powerful. Since God is the cause of all things, he can do all things. Of God’s omnipotence, Fr. Hardon says, “Divine omnipotence is attested by all of revelation: ‘With God all things are possible’ (Mt. 19.26). It was described in the Old Covenant by the sacred name El, especially in the composition of El Shaddai (God almighty), and says that nothing is impossible to God, except, of course, what would contradict his nature. Thus God cannot change, cannot lie, cannot effect anything that is contradictory in itself. In other words, he cannot disown his own being.”
- **Omniscient:** God is all knowing. Since God designed and is the cause of all things, he must know all things.
- **Omnipresent:** God is everywhere. Since he is the cause of the existence of all things, He must be present in them as their act of existence.
- **Pure act:** God cannot change, therefore he has no potency, no ability to change. If he could change, he wouldn’t be perfect. Since he is the cause of all existence, there is nothing for him to change to.
- **Unique:** Only one necessary being exists. To have two beings there must be a distinction between them. Therefore one must have a potency the other did not have and would thus not be a necessary being. Of God’s uniqueness, Fr. Hardon says, “Above his oneness is the divine uniqueness. To bring out the significance of this perfection, Church writers since the second century have restated the doctrine in a clear dilemma. Revelation unambiguously teaches that God is the Highest Greatness. It follows, then, that ‘the Highest Greatness must stand unique and must have no equal, in order not to cease to be the Highest Essence. Since God is the Supreme Essence, our ecclesiastical truth with justice declares: If God is not One, there is no God.’”

- **Simple:** God has no parts. If a being has parts, some other being must have put the parts together. The being that has parts would therefore be dependent on the other being and couldn't be a necessary being. Fr. Hardon tells us of the simplicity of God: "In vernacular language, simplicity is an ambiguous word. Doctrinally it means that there are no components or parts in God—say, of body and soul, of bodily members, of substance and accidents, or essence and existence, of nature and person, of power and action, of passivity and activity, or genus and specific difference. In revelation, God's essence simply is equated with his attributes. Christ said of himself, 'I am the way, the truth and the life,' and St. John says that 'God is love' (Jn. 14.6).
- **Perfect:** No limits on his perfection. A being that is imperfect can change and become better. But God has no potency, so he must be perfect.
- **Immensity or measurelessness:** Fr. Hardon says that, "God's immensity or measurelessness is another way of saying that he is sublime and therefore beyond all spatial dimensions. The term was consecrated by the Fourth Lateran Council in answer to the Albigenses, who restored the Manichaean notion of deities who occupied (and were circumscribed by) the earthly and stellar regions. In the first article of a first-century creed, we read, 'For the first thing believe, that there is only one God . . . who encompasses everything, while he alone cannot be encompassed.'"
- **Incomprehensibility:** In regard to God's incomprehensibility, Fr. Hardon refers to Fourth Lateran Council, that incomprehensibility is "the same as God's immensity, except with the added connotation that his presence is not limited, even in a nonspatial way. Thus the angels, who are created spirits, are not incomprehensible, although they do not occupy local space. God is not confined either in the manner of a body or of a created spirit."
- **Personal:** About God's personhood, Fr. Hardon states, "More positively, however, he has a mind and will; in a word, he is personal in the basic sense of possessing what we commonly identify as the basic quality of a person (before we think of anyone as an individual), that he has a mind with which he thinks and a will by which he loves. Moreover, when the First Vatican Council spoke of God as substance (*substantia*), it did not mean that he also had accidental properties. The divine substance is really the divine being, a term used already at I Nicea to identify the being (*ousia*) of the first and second persons of the Trinity." The sixth century philosopher Boethius defined person as "an individual, rational substance." The term person was applied to the persons of the Holy Trinity before it was applied to human beings.

God possesses other attributes that can be known only by his revelation, such as, that he

is a personal God who loves us and cares everything about us. Furthermore, we can know only through revelation that he is love, truth, beauty, and justice. Moreover, we can know that God is a Trinity of Three Persons only by revelation.

#### DUTIES OWED TO GOD

Since we have proven that it is reasonable to believe that God exists, or it is reasonable to believe that he does, and that he possesses certain attributes, it is reasonable to believe that we can know our duties owed to God from logical proofs of his existence. We can conclude from our observation of God's creation that we owe him the following:

- **Worship:** Since God is the Supreme Being, we must acknowledge him as such. This acknowledgment is called worship.
- **Gratitude:** Since God was already perfect, our creation added nothing to him. Thus even our very existence is a gift from God. Therefore we owe him gratitude.
- **Obedience:** Since God created us, he obviously knows what's best for us.
- **Love:** Love is a response to goodness. Since God is perfect, he is infinite goodness. Love is a response to goodness. Since God is perfect, he is infinite goodness.

We can know the existence and perfections of God through natural reason. Our obligations to him are logical conclusions from our knowledge of God and his perfections. Therefore we don't need the teachings of a Church to know these duties. He obviously knows what's best for us.

## PROOF FOR THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

It is reasonable to believe that human beings possess immortal souls. Among the most important philosophical problems is the question of the reality of the soul and its distinction from the body. This is true because it is bound up with the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. The answer to this question is extremely important to us, because some have claimed that the soul is simply a function of the body, especially the brain, and dies when the body dies. The *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1911 Edition, defines the human soul as “the ultimate internal principle by which we think, feel, and will, and by which our bodies are animated.” This definition implies that the soul is not dependent on the body for its existence. If there be life after death, clearly the soul must be capable of an existence separate from the body.

Although this definition of soul applies only to human beings, but it is true that all living things have souls. Souls form bodies and give them life, whether they be simple one-celled organisms or complex rational beings such as us. The most obvious difference between living and nonliving things is that nonliving things can't act themselves; they can only be acted upon. For example, rocks can't roll down hills by themselves; they must be moved either by being thrown or pushed or acted on by gravity. On the other hand, living things or beings, even one-celled plant life, have the capacity to act on their own power; they can perform what are called immanent acts. In this case, immanent simply means the organism has the power to act within itself.

Living beings require some form of unifying principle to make these immanent acts possible. This is called the substantial form of a living thing or being—its soul. Greek philosophy and the Scholastic philosophers, especially St. Thomas Aquinas, spoke of three types of souls: vegetative; animal; and human. For instance, plants have vegetative souls, animals have animative souls, and humans have spiritual or rational souls.

Vegetative souls do not exist independently of plants and cease to exist when the plant dies. In Scholastic terms, the plant's soul is the formal cause of the matter, making it the kind of living thing that it is, making it alive and able to do living acts. The vegetative soul gives a plant the power to perform immanent acts, such as growth, nourishment, and reproduction. Death causes a substantial change in plants in which the matter remains the same, but it takes on a new form; that is, it becomes something else by taking a new form, breaking down into its constitutive parts or elements when it dies. Its soul does not continue after the plant dies, but dies with the plant.

Animals have animative souls. Animals have not only the power to grow, be nourished, and reproduce, but in addition they have senses and motions. In other words, animals

have both vegetative and animative powers. By using their senses, animals can associate things with pleasure and pain and store these associations in the memory of their brains; consequently, animals can be trained. Everything animals learn must be associated with some material thing they perceive through their senses. Even more intelligent animals, such as chimpanzees and porpoises, learn by associating things with pleasure or pain, rewards or punishments. For example, some researchers have claimed that they have taught chimpanzees how to read or some other amazing feat that only humans can perform. This has led them to claim that there are essentially no differences between them and humans, that the differences are only matters of degree and not of kind. Certainly there are cases where humans have trained animals, but have we ever heard of cases where animals have trained humans? Moreover, humans write books about monkeys, but not the other way around. It is true that humans do have some things in common with animals, such as, having material bodies, sensory knowledge, and some instincts, nonetheless there still exists fundamental differences between humans and animals. These are differences of kind and not of degree. It is the differences that make all the difference!

Humans not only have the power to grow, be nourished, and reproduce, and they have senses and motions, but in addition they have spiritual or rational powers. In other words, humans have vegetative, animative, and rational powers. The basic difference between humans and animals is that the substantial form of the human soul is spiritual, not material. Material things are concrete whereas spiritual things are neither composed of nor dependent on matter. However, to be spiritual means more than to be not composed of matter or immaterial. For instance, although our senses are immaterial, they depend on matter. We cannot have senses without the material organs to smell, taste, hear, feel, and see.

How can we prove that the human soul is spiritual and not material? To prove the spirituality of the human soul, it must be proven the soul is independent of matter. To begin, God created man in his image with a soul possessing the faculties or operations of intellect and will. The intellect gives humans the ability to know things and the will the ability to make decisions. If we can demonstrate that the intellect is spiritual, we can prove that the soul is spiritual, since an effect cannot be greater than its cause, meaning that the soul is on a higher level of causation than the intellect, because it is part of the soul. To prove the spirituality of the intellect, I shall use the method of logic called a syllogism.

**Major Premise:** That which is free of the conditions of matter is spiritual.

**Minor Premise:** The intellect is free of the conditions of matter.

**Conclusion:** Therefore, the intellect is spiritual

But how do we know that the major premise is true? The truth of the major premise can

be discovered from the principle of cause and effect. Since matter is limited, anything that goes beyond this limitation exists at a higher level or order of being. Another way of stating this is that since an effect cannot be greater than its cause, a material cause cannot produce a spiritual effect. Therefore, if the operations of the intellect can be demonstrated to be free of the conditions of matter, the intellect will be proven to be spiritual, because it would take a spiritual power to produce these spiritual effects.

How then do we know that the minor premise is true? The minor premise “That the intellect is free of the conditions of matter” can be proven by illustrating the fact that humans can comprehend universals. A universal is a concept that applies to all particular instances of something; that is, universals are immaterial. For example, when one knows another person, he knows not only that person’s individual qualities, but also he knows those qualities which that person holds in common with all other persons; that is, he knows the person’s humanity. Humanity is a universal concept, because it applies to all human beings. These general qualities are not limited by the conditions of matter; they are universal, they are common to all men. Universal concepts cannot have material qualities, because then they would not apply to all men. However, we know from experience that they do apply to all men. This universality can be known only by a spiritual power.

Another argument that proves that the intellect is free of the conditions of matter is the fact that the intellect can comprehend spiritual things. For example, one can have an intellectual knowledge of “truth”, “beauty”, or “justice”, which do not have material qualities. These qualities are universals, rather than particular applications of things that are truthful, beautiful, or just. Furthermore, the intellect has the power of self-reflection. Humans have the ability to think about themselves and their own act of thinking. They can, so to speak, step outside of themselves and see themselves. This pattern of reflexive attitudes that humans have of themselves psychologists call the “concept of self”, or “self image”. Matter or a material being is limited in time and space. However, a spiritual being is free of these limitations. Since the intellect, which is immaterial, can reflect upon itself, it must be spiritual.

Finally, the use of language to communicate is spiritual; it is not limited to the words that we write or speak. For example, the meaning of the words we write or speak is not limited to the letters or symbols that we make when writing or speaking. We know that we could express the same meaning with different words and that someone else could read the same words and get a different meaning from them. Therefore, the meaning of the words we write or speak is only extrinsically dependent on the words; words are merely instruments for their expression, not meaning itself. In other words, the meaning of the words is spiritual, and spiritual power is required to draw out this meaning from the material qualities of the words.

Now that we have shown that the major premise “That which is free of the conditions of matter is spiritual” is true and the minor premise “The intellect is free of the conditions of matter” is true, we can conclude that the conclusion “Therefore, the intellect is spiritual” is also true.

St Thomas Aquinas formulated what is essentially the Catholic teaching on the human soul. There was little development of doctrine on this subject until the thirteenth century when he and the Schoolmen defined the doctrine on the human soul. He somewhat modified Aristotle’s conception of the human soul and concluded:

- The rational soul, which also includes the sensitive and vegetative principle, is the form of the body. The Council of Vienne defined this as a matter of faith by 1311.
- The human soul is a substance, but an incomplete substance. Substance means that it exists in itself. Essentially it is what make the soul what it is, a spiritual thing. By incomplete substance is meant the soul has need for existence in the body. Body and soul make up the substantial unity of human nature. Originally God made the body and soul for each other, but Original Sin brought death into the world, the wages of sin that ultimately causes the separation of the soul from the body. The human person will become complete substance once again only at the Last Judgment and the Resurrection of the Body when the glorified soul will be united with a glorified body.
- Though naturally related to the body, the human soul is itself absolutely simple, that is, it has no parts and has a spiritual nature. The soul is not wholly absorbed in matter, its higher operations being intrinsically independent of the body.
- The rational soul is produced by special creation out of nothing (*ex nihilo creatio*) the moment when the organism is sufficiently developed to receive it. St Thomas believed that in the first stage of embryonic development, the organism has merely vegetative powers. Following this stage of human development a sensitive soul comes into being, drawn out from the evolving potential of the organism. Finally as the organism grows, this is replaced by the perfect rational soul by a special creative act of God. Most theologians today have abandoned the last point of Thomas’ teaching in favor of the idea that a fully rational soul is infused into the embryo at the first moment of conception. The time of ensoulment doesn’t matter as far as the right to life that every human being has at conception. Even though St. Thomas believed that ensoulment possible took place sometime after conception, he still taught that every human has a right to life from his conception. All he needs is time to grow and nourishment.

## NATURAL LAW

So far we have discussed in this essay what it means to believe something, especially the truths that God has revealed to us. This involved examining the role of faith, reason, and certitude in our search for truth. One of the issues that we considered during this discussion was: How can we know the truths of the Faith with certainty? Then using human reason, we tried to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that God exists. All other knowledge of religion presupposes that he does. Once we had established that God does exist, or at least made it reasonable to believe that he does exist, using human reason we identified his attributes or perfections. Then based on rational proof of God's existence and something of his attributes, using human reason we established that we owe God worship, thanksgiving, obedience, and love. Furthermore, we tried to prove by using reason that the human soul is immortal. Now all that is left for us to consider from a natural theological perspective is to make it reasonable to believe that God established an objective moral order called the natural law.

Following this we will explain how God revealed himself and how Jesus Christ established the Catholic Church to continue his presence in the world and provide us with the means of grace with which to achieve salvation. Proof that God revealed himself depends on the truth that he established a church, the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. St Augustine wrote in the fourth century that he couldn't believe what is contained in the Bible without the testimony of the Church, because the Church was there to witness the events described therein, eventually wrote them down in scripture, and transmitted down through the ages for our benefit.

### ***The natural law flows from the eternal law***

Fr. John Hardon, who was one of the world's greatest theologians and catechists until his death in 2000, says that the natural law is, "what God has produced in the world of creation; as coming to human beings, it is what they know (or can know) of what God has created. It is therefore called natural law because everyone is subject to it from birth (*natio*), because it contains only those duties which are derivable from human nature itself, and because, absolutely speaking, its essentials can be grasped by the unaided light of human reason." The Bible refers to the Natural Law in several places. For example, St Paul wrote in Romans 2:14-15:

When Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their

conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

He is here, of course, referring to the natural law. Furthermore, in the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses tells the Israelites that God's law is already in their hearts (Deuteronomy 30:14) The prophet Jeremiah said regarding the natural law, "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jeremiah 31:33). Moreover, extra-biblical sources include St Thomas Aquinas who refers several places to the law of God written on the human heart and Pope John Paul quotes St Paul's Romans text in his encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* in connection with his discussion of the natural law (No. 46). Having the law of God written on their hearts means that human beings have the ability to use their reason to know and understand the natural order of things as God has created them.

St Thomas Aquinas said in his famous *Summa Theologica* that the natural law is "nothing else than the rational creature's participation in the eternal law", the eternal law being defined as, "The plan of divine wisdom, insofar as it directs all the actions and events of the universe." One of the world's leading moral theologians, states that "Since eternal law embraces the whole of creation, any other law—any other reasonable plan of action—must somehow derive from it. Another prominent theologian says that "The plan of government that [God] has in his mind bears the character of law, and because it is conceived in eternity and not in time, it is said to be the eternal law." The Eternal Law is, also known as Divine Providence, which is "God's all-wise plan for the universe . . . This eternal law embraces both the physical and moral laws. . . ." Thomas said elsewhere that, people are naturally disposed to understand some basic practical principles, which he calls the "primary principles of natural law. Since everyone knows them naturally, no one can make a mistake about them." A document of Vatican Council II states that, "The Church calls these naturally known principles 'natural law.' They are natural in the sense that they are not humanly enacted but are objective principles which originate in human nature" (see *Gaudium et Spes* 16; *Dignitatis Humanae* 14).

There is a natural physical law, known as scientific law, and a natural moral law. It is the natural moral law that we are concerned with here. Natural moral law has been defined as "the prescriptions for human conduct derived from reason as applied to the nature of things. "It is therefore called natural law because everyone is subject to it from birth (*natio*), because it contains only those duties which are derivable from human nature itself, and because, absolutely speaking, its essentials can be grasped by the unaided light of human reason." St. Paul tells us that the natural law is "The law of God written on our hearts". This means that human beings have the ability to use their reason to know and

understand the natural order of things as God has created them.

Even though the natural law is “written on our hearts” – which means we have the ability to use our reason to know and understand the natural order of things as God has created them – we do not always interpret the natural order correctly, because of our fallen human nature due to Original Sin. Because God didn’t want to leave any doubt as to what is best for us in particular situations, God made explicit his law when he revealed them in the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai. The natural law has been written in the Ten Commandments, for they are simply the codification of the natural law. Jesus further refined, completed, and perfected the Commandments in his Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere in the Gospel. God gave us the Commandments for our own good, because when we break them we cause ourselves and others harm and unhappiness. Just as one can’t defy the laws of gravity by jumping off of the Empire State Building without harming himself, we can’t break the Commandments without harming ourselves and others. God wants us to love all human beings, including ourselves, as he loves us, because he created us in his very image and likeness and loves us so much that he sent his only begotten son into the world to suffer and die for us. All personal and social morality is based on this concept. The natural law is mediated through our conscience.

***Failure to adhere to the natural law leads to unhappiness and suffering***

When we fail to adhere to the natural law, it causes us and others unhappiness, suffering, sorrow, and can even cause death. As consequences of the Fall, our intellects have been darkened or diminished, our wills have been weakened, and concupiscence has brought disorder to our passions. As Professor Charles Rice, formerly Professor of Law at Notre Dame, tells us, because of our wounded nature we are inclined to draw “the wrong conclusions in their understanding or application of the secondary principles of the natural law.” For example, people can convince themselves that all kinds of acts are moral, such as lying, stealing, abortion, premarital sex, adultery, gay-lesbian relationships, contraception, assisted suicide, infanticide, euthanasia, and many others are perfectly normal acts, at least in certain circumstances, whereas they are, in fact, serious violations of the natural law, which, of course, is based on God’s Eternal Law. Whether or not people recognize it or not, these acts hurt other people in some way.

When we humans violate the natural order of things, we must pay the consequences. One cannot lie, cheat, steal, kill, fornicate, or adulterate without creating problems for himself or herself and others any more than he or she can jump off a tall building and violate the law of gravity. Such violations of the natural order have caused untold damage and misery in our world over the centuries. God gave us the commandments to help us control our

appetites and passions for our good and the good of others. He is not a killjoy or spoilsport who does not want us to have any fun, for after all, he gave us our appetites, drives, and passions for a reason. Although bodily pleasures associated with sensual appetites can be harmful to us and can even threaten our eternal salvation, they are not evil in themselves. God gave us appetites, which are pleasurable to satisfy in order to conserve the individual and the human race. The appetite to consume beverages and food is essential to our survival as individuals and the appetite to procreate is essential for the survival of the human species. If these activities were not pleasurable, no one would willingly eat or drink or procreate. However, because of original sin, the appetite for pleasure often wars against the demands of reason and causes us to sin. When we sin, we abuse them rather than use them for God's glory and the benefit of ourselves and others. To abuse the appetite for food and drink—which is gluttony—or the appetite to procreate—which is lust—harms us and others. Germain Grisez, a prominent moral theologian, sums this matter well:

Although we are naturally disposed to know basic practical principles and can make no mistake about them, they are not by themselves sufficient for the judgment of conscience which we must make. Our ultimate end is to share in fulfillment in the Lord Jesus, and we do not judge rightly what to do unless we judge in light of this end. So we must supplement natural law with faith, by this means drawing on the eternal law in a way that goes beyond reason.

### ***The natural law is as binding as the Ten Commandments***

Although the natural law “is not directly encoded in stone, but written on the flesh of our hearts”, it is as binding on our conscience as is the Ten Commandments. Vatican II teaches us that “human persons find in their conscience a law they do not impose on themselves which demands their obedience: ‘For man has in his heart a law written by God . . .’ This law not only calls the person to do good and avoid evil, but it also when necessary speaks ‘to his heart more specifically: do this, shun that’” (*Gaudium et Spes* 16; see 3-B). Another council document says of the subject: “The Council makes its own the explanation of St. Thomas, that this natural law is the human participation in the eternal law . . . the highest norm of human life is the divine law—eternal, objective, and universal—whereby God orders, directs, and governs the whole world and the ways of the human community according to the plan of his wisdom and love. God makes man a sharer in this his law, so that, by divine providence's sweet disposing, man can recognize more and more the unchanging truth” (*Dignitatis Humanae* 3). Since the natural law originates in human nature itself—all human beings, of all times and places, of all races and ethnic origins, of all religions—the law written on the heart is “binding and embracing” on all.

Fr. Thomas Dubay, a prominent theologian of spirituality and renowned spiritual director

until his death in 2010, tells us in his book *The Fire Within* that every normal adult has a sense of “oughtness” that he did not acquire and he cannot shake off. He says that it is imperious in its demands and it operates whether he is observed by other human beings or not. After some actions he feels happy and after others he feels guilty, and he cannot easily strip himself of the feelings. In this regard, he quotes scientist Thomas Lewis as saying:

As I understand it, a human being cannot tell a lie, even a small one, without setting off a kind of smoke alarm somewhere deep in a dark lobule of the brain, resulting in the sudden discharge of nerve impulses, or the sudden outpouring of neurohormones of some sort, or both . . . Lying, then, is stressful, even when we do it for protection, or relief, or escape, or profit, or just for the pure pleasure of lying and getting away with it . . . [Lying] is, in a sure physiological sense, an unnatural act . . . We are a moral species by compulsion. A moral compulsion can come only from a person, and in this case the person must be a lawgiver over and above the human race. Who else could so speak? Newman was much impressed with this evidence for the existence of a supreme Governor, the holy God of the universe. For him conscience was the echo of the loving Lord speaking from the depths of each human person.

I think the efficiency in lie detector tests is empirical proof that lying is unnatural. In fact, the existence of the human conscience has been one of many proofs given for God's existence.

Unfortunately, many if not most people believe that the natural law deals primarily with sexual morality, but this is hardly the case. Edward Feser states in his *The Last Superstition* that if one looks at any standard volume on ethics written from a traditional natural law theory point of view, he or she will find that “it deals with sexual morality at no greater length than it treats of other moral topics, such as capital punishment, war and peace, property rights, social justice, and so forth”. He goes on to say “That reflects the natural law view that sexual activity, however important, is just one relatively small part of life among others, not the be all and end all of our existence.” Before we go further, let's look at the Aristotelian-Thomistic Four Causes applied to Natural Law.

### ***Aristotelian-Thomistic Four Causes applied to Natural Law***

Since we discussed the Aristotelian/Thomistic four causes at some length above in this essay, a brief summary will suffice for our purposes here. A cause is something, such as a person or condition that is responsible for producing an effect or consequence. For centuries there existed a method of ascertaining the cause of things, which accounted for

all aspects of their existence. I believe it was first the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle who formulated the method and it was refined in the Middle Ages by the Scholastics or Schoolmen, especially St. Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century. The four causes are material cause; formal cause; efficient cause; and final cause. The material cause or matter is the “stuff” out of which things are made; the formal cause is the organizing principle that makes a thing what it is and not something else; the efficient cause is the principle that moves something from potency to act, something that causes something to happen; and the final cause is the purpose for which a thing is made. Aristotle believed, and the schoolmen afterwards, that all four elements are necessary in any adequate account of the existence and nature of things, since the absence or modification of any one of them would result in the existence of something else or nothing. An explanation that includes all four causes completely captures the significance and reality of the things themselves. It gives us a complete picture of reality.

During the Renaissance of the sixteenth century, a different perspective began to develop in regard to causation. With the development of scientific interest in nature, cause was usually conceived merely as an object, a thing that could be perceived with the senses, often with the aid of a microscope or telescope. Today, causation is generally interpreted as energy or action, whether or not connected with matter, which is a much narrower perspective. This narrower perspective was to have serious implications for every aspect of our lives: social; political; economic; religion; familial; and educational. Modern science, for the most part, eliminated formal and final causation from the formula of causation and generally has included only material and efficient causes. Material causes or matter can be perceived with the senses and only things that can be seen, heard, smelled, tasted, and touched are considered real or knowable. Final causes are teleological (from the Greek *telos*) which means an ultimate end of something, which science claims we can't know, because it isn't something that can be perceived by the senses.

### ***The natural law applied to human sexuality***

To apply this formula to human sexuality, the final cause and purpose of human sexuality is the procreation of the species. The other three elements of causation are oriented to that purpose; therefore, as Feser states, procreation is inherently heterosexual. The word procreation derives from the Latin *procreare*, meaning to beget, to generate children in cooperation with God. God is always the primary creator, but humans participate in with him in the procreation of children in the form of secondary creation. Fr. Hardon states in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary* that “It [procreation] is a formal term for generation and stresses the role of marital intercourse with the intention of producing offspring”. Feser asserts that “It is . . . irrelevant that people might indulge in sex for all sorts of reasons

other than procreation, for I am not talking about what our purposes are, but what nature's purposes are, again in the Aristotelian sense of final causality." He goes on to say "Now it is true of course that sexual relations are also naturally pleasurable. But giving pleasure is not the final cause or natural end of sex; rather, sexual pleasure has as its own final cause the getting of people to engage in sexual relations, so that they will procreate." He continues that sexuality "parallels the situation with eating: Even though eating is pleasurable, the biological point of eating is not to give pleasure, but rather to provide an organism with the nutrients it needs to survive; the pleasure of eating is just nature's way of getting us to do what is needed to fulfill this end."



Fr. Jordan Aumann, one of the world's leading theologians of spirituality and spiritual directors, tells us that although the world and the devil are our main enemies, the flesh is our most formidable enemy. By the flesh is meant the disordered operation of our senses due to original sin. Fr. Aumann tells us that the flesh wages war against us in two ways: by its insatiable desire for pleasure, which can threaten our eternal salvation; and by its instinctive fear of suffering, which is an obstacle to sanctification. Because of these detrimental effects, we need to know how to combat these dangerous tendencies. Since God gave us a desire for pleasure, there is, of course, nothing wrong with it. Although bodily pleasures associated with sensual appetites can threaten our eternal

salvation, they are not evil in themselves. God gave us appetites, which are pleasurable to satisfy, to con-serve the individual and the human race. The appetite to consume beverages and food is essential to our survival as individuals and the appetite to procreate is essential for the survival of the human species. If these activities were not pleasurable, no one would willingly eat or drink or procreate. However, because of original sin, the appetite for pleasure often wars against the demands of reason and causes us to sin.

Fr. Aumann points out that a problem occurs when we attempt to discriminate the difference between honest pleasure from disordered and forbidden pleasure, and how to keep ourselves within the boundaries of the former. The enjoyment of lawful pleasures often becomes occasions or stimulation to disordered and unlawful pleasures. To help us make the morally correct distinction and practice between lawful and unlawful pleasures, the Church has always advocated that we practice mortification by depriving ourselves of many lawful pleasures. This is one of the main reasons we fast and abstain.

He also warns us that our appetites associated with nutrition and generation create the largest problems for us. The former is needed to maintain the survival of the individual

and the latter the survival of the human species. Satisfying the appetite for food and drink and the need to procreate the human species is our principal struggle. The problem occurs when we try to satisfy these appetites without regard for the maintenance of the individual and the species. If reason does not intervene to keep these instinctive appetites within morally acceptable limits, they can easily lead to the destruction of the individual and the species; they can lead to gluttony and lust. . . .” He says that “It is incredible how much harm an unmortified appetite can cause in us, not only as regards perfection, which is absolutely impossible without mortification, but even as regards our eternal salvation. Sensual people not only are not united with God, but they also lose the taste for divine things, as St. Paul teaches (1 Corinthians 2:14)” (*Spiritual Theology*).

Feser states that nature makes it very difficult to indulge in sex without procreation. He says that it takes some effort to come up with and use mechanical contraceptive devices, and even then, they were not very effective during most of human history. Moreover, he says that “human experience indicates that people simply find sexual relations more pleasurable when such devices are not used, even if they will often use them anyway out of a desire to avoid pregnancy”, and “this is one reason pregnancy—even when cut short by abortion—is so very common even in societies in which contraception is easily available: People know they could take a few minutes to go buy a condom, but go ahead and indulge in ‘unprotected’ sex anyway”. He claims that “Even with the advent of ‘the pill’, pregnancies (though also abortions) are as common as rain; and even effective use of the pill—which has existed only for a very brief period of human history—requires that a woman remember to take it at the appointed times and be willing to put up with its uncomfortable side effects”. He concludes from this that “the final cause of sex is procreation, and the final cause of sexual pleasure is to get us to indulge in it”! In other words, sexual pleasure is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. Moral theologians consider the pleasure of sexual relations between a man and a woman to be part of the unitive function of sexuality.

In addition to the primary function of human sexuality to be procreative, it has the additional secondary function of being a unitive function for the husband and wife. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says of this matter: “The acts in marriage by which the intimate and chaste union of the spouses takes place are noble and honorable; the truly human performance of these acts fosters the self-giving they signify and enriches the spouses in joy and gratitude” (*Catechism* No. 2362). Pope Pius XII wrote in a 1951 document, “Sexuality is a source of joy and pleasure: The Creator himself . . . established that in the [generative] function, spouses should experience pleasure and enjoyment of body and spirit. Therefore, the spouses do nothing evil in seeking this pleasure and enjoyment. They accept what the Creator has intended for them. At the same time, spouses should know how to keep themselves within the limits of just moderation” (Discourse).

Elsewhere the *Catechism* states, “The spouses' union achieves the twofold end of marriage: the good of the spouses themselves and the transmission of life. These two meanings or values of marriage cannot be separated without altering the couple's spiritual life and compromising the goods of marriage and the future of the family” (No. 2363). In addition, “The conjugal love of man and woman thus stands under the twofold obligation of fidelity and fecundity”. It concludes this topic by saying “By safeguarding both these essential aspects, the unitive and the procreative, the conjugal act preserves in its fullness the sense of true mutual love and its orientation toward man's exalted vocation to parenthood” (No. 2369).

Feser points out that nature has planned that humans are designed to have many children:

which seems to put a fairly heavy burden on women, who, if 'nature takes its course,' are bound to become pregnant somewhat frequently. She has also put a fairly heavy burden on children too, given that unlike non-human offspring they are utterly dependent on others for their needs, and for a very long period. This is true not only of their biological needs, but of the moral and cultural needs they have by virtue of being little rational animals. They need education in both what is useful and right, and correction of error. [He concludes] nature's taking its course thus seems to leave mothers and offspring pretty helpless, or at any rate it would do so if there weren't someone ordained by nature to provide for them. But of course there is such a person, namely the father of the children. Fathers obviously have a strong incentive to look after their own children rather than someone else's, and they are also, generally speaking and notoriously, jealous of the affections of the women they have children with, sometimes to the point of being willing to kill the competition. Thus Mother Nature very equitably puts a heavy burden on fathers too, pushing them into a situation where they must devote their daily labors to providing for their children and the woman or women with whom they have had these children; and when nature takes its course these children are bound to be somewhat numerous, so that the father's commitment is necessarily going to have to be long-term.

All of this is the reason that marriage and the family must be a permanent and stable relationship. In fact, the family, not the individual, is the cell, the least divisible unit of a society, and will be no healthier than each individual cell. Our society is disintegrating, because the family is disintegrating.

Stating the obvious fact that sex is pleasurable, Feser claims that this is “only because this is nature’s way of pushing us into doing what is necessary for procreation; husbands and wives often feel great affection for one another, but this tendency is put in them by nature only because it facilitates the stability of the union that the successful generation and

upbringing of children requires”. This is all associated with nature's purposes regarding final causes. In this regard he states:

If human beings didn't reproduce sexually, sexual organs wouldn't exist at all, and neither would sexual pleasure. Neither would romantic love, but this affection wouldn't have any of the distinctive features we associate with the feelings that exist between lovers, or between husbands and wives or parents and children. All of these pleasures and affections exist in nature only because sexual reproduction does, and thus their point is to facilitate procreation, again in the full sense of not only generating, but also rearing, children. That is the big picture view of the teleology or final causality of sex. Every link in the chain has procreation as its final cause, whatever the intentions of the actors.

If all this is true, and I believe that it is, Feser asserts that “it cannot possibly be good for us to use them in any other way, whether an individual person thinks it is or not, any more than it can possibly be good for an alcoholic to indulge his taste for excessive drink. . . .” Although married couples might not always intend to have children with every sexual act, every act must be open to the procreative final cause or purpose of the act. They cannot morally do anything contraceptive to interfere with the natural processes. It is essential that a couple be married to engage in procreative acts, because properly rearing the children of such liaisons requires long term stability.

**Why contraception is a violation of the natural law:** Fr. Peter Armenio says of contraception in his *History of the Church* that “The Church Fathers taught that procreation within Matrimony is good and blessed. And that it is one of the intrinsic purposes of sexual intercourse. Artificial prevention of this possibility denigrates both the act and the subjects of the act. Even ancient Greek philosophy saw contraception as an unnatural violation since it destroys the possibility of one of the natural ends of sexual relations.” The *Catechism* says of the matter, “Fecundity is a gift, an end of marriage, for conjugal love naturally tends to be fruitful. A child does not come from outside as something added on to the mutual love of the spouses, but springs from the very heart of that mutual giving, as its fruit and fulfillment. So the Church, which is ‘on the side of life’, teaches that ‘it is necessary that each and every marriage act remain ordered per se to the procreation of human life.’ This particular doctrine, expounded on numerous occasions by the Magisterium, is based on the inseparable connection, established by God, which man on his own initiative may not break, between the unitive significance and the procreative significance which are both inherent to the marriage act” (No. 2366). Elsewhere the *Catechism* states, “Called to give life, spouses share in the creative power and fatherhood of God. Married couples should regard it as their proper mission to transmit human life and to educate their children; they should realize that they are thereby cooperating with the love of God the Creator and are, in a certain sense, its interpreters. They will

fulfill this duty with a sense of human and Christian responsibility” (No. 2367). In other words, parents are co-creators with God and any attempt to separate the unitive from the procreative function of marriage is a violation of the natural law.

**The connection between the contraceptive mentality and abortion:** Fr. Frank Pavone, who is National Director, Priests for Life, claims that “The links between abortion and contraception are more and more widely recognized, and not only in Catholic circle.” He says that “They are linked by a common mentality, which is that I may stifle the power of sex to produce a new life.” He then quotes Pope John Paul II as writing in his encyclical *The Gospel of Life*,

It is frequently asserted that contraception, if made safe and available to all, is the most effective remedy against abortion. The Catholic Church is then accused of actually promoting abortion, because she obstinately continues to teach the moral unlawfulness of contraception. When looked at carefully, this objection is clearly unfounded. It may be that many people use contraception with a view to excluding the subsequent temptation of abortion. But the negative values inherent in the 'contraceptive mentality'—which is very different from responsible parenthood, lived in respect for the full truth of the conjugal act—are such that they in fact strengthen this temptation when an unwanted life is conceived. Indeed, the pro-abortion culture is especially strong precisely where the Church's teaching on contraception is rejected” (No. 13).

He continues to quote the pope as saying, “Certainly, from the moral point of view contraception and abortion are specifically different evils: the former contradicts the full truth of the sexual act as the proper expression of conjugal love, while the latter destroys the life of a human being; the former is opposed to the virtue of chastity in marriage, the latter is opposed to the virtue of justice and directly violates the divine commandment 'You shall not kill'. But despite their differences of nature and moral gravity, contraception and abortion are often closely connected, as fruits of the same tree”. Commenting on this statement, Fr. Pavone says, “Contraception, in other words, is more like the sister to abortion rather than the parent. What gives rise to them both?” He answers by once again quoting the pope as saying, “Such practices are rooted in a hedonistic mentality unwilling to accept responsibility in matters of sexuality, and they imply a self-centered concept of freedom, which regards procreation as an obstacle to personal fulfillment.”

Fr. Pavone states the fact that every culture and subculture which has opened the doors to contraception has likewise experienced an increased practice of abortion. He writes that “The Alan Guttmacher Institute indicates the following as the main reasons women offer for their abortions. Ask yourself what resemblance they bear to the reasons for birth control. On average, women give at least 3 reasons for choosing abortion: 3/4 say that

having a baby would interfere with work, school or other responsibilities; about 2/3 say they cannot afford a child; and 1/2 say they do not want to be a single parent or are having problems with their husband or partner. Moreover, Fr. Pavone points out that some contraceptives are abortifacients “capable of causing early and usually unknown abortions. The morally relevant point here is that ‘it is objectively a grave sin to dare to risk murder’” (citing the Declaration on Procured Abortion, 1974, n.12-13). Father says that “If your action might kill a person, and you do it, you declare your willingness to kill a person.”

Without doubt, abortion and contraception are connected. As Pavone asserts, “They are linked with each other because they are linked with many other evils: the disconnection of freedom from truth, a relativistic view of morality, a positivistic view of law, a culture of hedonism, and many other problems. What lies at the solution to these problems is to rediscover the dominion of God.” Janet Smith, Professor of Philosophy at Ave Maria University, says of the connection between contraception and abortion:

The connection between contraception and abortion is primarily this: contraception facilitates the kind of relationships and even the kind of attitudes and moral characters that are likely to lead to abortion. The contraceptive mentality treats sexual intercourse as though it had little natural connection with babies; it thinks of babies as an ‘accident’ of pregnancy, as an unwelcome intrusion into a sexual relationship, as a burden. The sexual revolution has no fondness—no room for—the connection between sexual intercourse and babies. The sexual revolution simply was not possible until fairly reliable contraceptives were available. Far from being a check to the sexual revolution, contraception is the fuel that facilitated the beginning of the sexual revolution and enables it to continue to rage.

In his prophetic encyclical against contraception (*Humanae Vitae*, 1968), Pope Paul VI predicted that contraceptive use would encourage men to lose respect for women, and would come to consider her “as a mere instrument of selfish enjoyment, and no longer as his respected and beloved companion.” It would lead to men ignoring issues of women's physical and emotional health even more than in the past and exploit them as instruments of selfish pleasure. In addition to a loss of respect for women, Archbishop Charles Chaput of Philadelphia has noted that the pope warned of other cultural problems that would worsen, if Church teachings regarding married life and contraception were ignored, including a rise in “conjugal infidelity and the general lowering of morality.” In addition, contraception would be abused by “public authorities who take no heed of moral exigencies.” He points out how today, first-world leaders regularly export “contraceptives, abortion and sterilization” to developing nations, often as a prerequisite for financial aid. Moreover, human beings would be tempted to believe that they have “unlimited dominion” over their bodies. The archbishop concludes that “Pope Paul VI was indeed a prop-

het”. Another source has said that, “Because the world and many in the Church have rejected Pope Paul's words, we are witnessing what one writer has called a worldwide ‘sexual holocaust.’”

From the point of view of natural law, Feser states that “It should be obvious that abortion is automatically ruled out, because “it constitutes a particularly violent interference with nature's purposes”. He continues to say, “But there are other reasons too why abortion is immoral, and indeed especially wicked. The growth of a new human being in his or her mother's womb is not simply one natural process among others; it is the beginning of that relationship among human beings that is perhaps the closest of all, that between mother and child. A mother's natural instinct is to protect her child at all costs, especially when it is at its most vulnerable; the womb ought therefore to be the safest place in the world.” But he points out that this instinct resides not only in the mother, but also in the father as well. To consent to the killing of their unborn child goes against this instinct in the most egregious way possible. It is a biological fact that the child is a human being and person from the very instant of conception. Even a single celled fertilized ovum or zygote is fully a person requiring only time and nutrition to develop into a fully functional human being. Therefore, every human being has a natural right to life, which can be lost only by committing a serious crime, which no unborn child is capable of doing.

**All human beings have a natural right to life:** Scholastic philosophers developed the idea that all human beings have a natural right to their lives. Feser explains this theory of natural rights this way:

Nature has set for us certain ends, and the natural law enjoins us the pursuit of those ends. We also live in society with others—man being a social animal as well as a rational one, as Aristotle noted—and these others also have ends set for them by nature. But we can all pursue these ends only if our fellow human beings do not interfere with that pursuit. Hence, the existence of the natural law entails that we have certain rights against interference with that pursuit; and since there is no greater interference than being killed, it follows that every being has, at least until he forfeits it by committing a serious crime, a right not to be killed. This also entails many other rights such as a personal liberty that is strong enough to rule out chattel slavery as intrinsically immoral—the claim made by some that natural law theory would support slavery as it was known in the United States is a slander.

Tying the natural right to life and abortion to reproduction, he asserts, “But suffice it to note for our purposes here that is triply condemned by the natural law: again, it involves a deliberate turning of the reproductive process away from its natural end; it manifests an extraordinary degree of personal moral corruption insofar as it follows from a will to override the protective maternal and/or paternal instincts nature has put into us; and it

violates the right to life that every human being has by nature.”

**Why homosexuality is a violation of the natural law:** Then Feser goes on to the topic of homosexuality. He asked, “Does natural law theory entail that homosexuals can't marry?” He answers that they can marry; they can marry someone of the opposite sex. What they can't do is marry each other, because the metaphysics of natural law theory determines that the final cause or purpose of marriage is procreative, and persons of the same sex can't procreate. He responds by asserting, “There is no such thing as same-sex marriage any more than there are round squares. Indeed, there is really no such thing as ‘sex’ outside the context of sexual intercourse between a man and woman. Sodomy (whether homosexual or heterosexual) no more counts as ‘sex’ than puking up a Quarter Pounder counts as eating.” He finishes his treatment of homosexuality by writing, “No legislature or opinion poll could possibly change these facts, any more than they could repeal the law of gravity or the Pythagorean theorem. And any ‘law’ that attempted such an impossibility would be absolutely null and utterly void, a joke at best and a straightforward assault on the very foundations of morality at worst. For if ‘same-sex marriage’ is not contrary to nature, than nothing is; and if nothing is contrary to nature, then there can be no grounds whatsoever for moral judgment.” St. Thomas Aquinas said something to the effect that any civil law that violates the natural law is no law at all.

Feser claims that “[I]t is a characteristic common to all the perversions that in them reproduction as an aim is put aside. This is actually the criterion by which we judge whether a sexual activity is perverse—if it departs from reproduction in its aims and pursues the attainment of gratification independently.” He goes on to inform us that every Christian denomination officially taught that contraception was a sin until the Anglicans approved of its use at its Lambeth Conference in 1930. He says that “even the secular *Washington Post* fretted at the time that this would lead to the collapse of traditional sexual morality. For once the Post was right: It did lead to just the consequences they predicted, even if these consequences have now come to be labeled ‘progress.’” It was no more than forty or so years ago that contraception, abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, and homosexuality were considered sinful, whereas today they have become the politically correct solution to all of our problems.

The world has been turned upside down, such as was the world of George Orwell's 1949 novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, which is a dystopian and satirical novel set in Oceania, where society is tyrannized by The Party and its totalitarian ideology. In the novel by “doublespeak” people are forced to believe that evil becomes good. As one source states of the matter:

Like so many Newspeak words, the word ‘blackwhite’ has two mutually con-

tradictory meanings. Applied to an opponent, it means the habit of impudently claiming that black is white, in contradiction of the plain facts. Applied to a Party member, it means a loyal willingness to say that black is white when Party discipline demands this. But it means also the ability to believe that black is white, and more, to know that black is white, and to forget that one has ever believed the contrary. This demands a continuous alteration of the past, made possible by the system of thought which really embraces all the rest, and which is known in Newspeak as doublethink. Doublethink is basically the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them.

Feser states that what people believed all along about the immorality of these behaviors was right, and that “the current state of secular opinion on these matters is evidence not of progress but of steep decline and extreme decadence.” He continues his application of the natural law to polygamy and divorce, stating “while historically permitted within some otherwise conservative religious contexts, are suboptimal at best and in practice usually positively immoral.”

**The unitive function of sexuality elevated to equality with procreation:** The other purpose of human sexuality and marriage is the unitive function, meaning the love of the spouses for each other. Fr. Hardon states in the *Modern Catholic Dictionary*:

As a natural institution, the lasting union of a man and a woman who agree to give and receive rights over each other for the performance of the act of generation and for the fostering of their mutual love . . . Christ elevated marriage to a sacrament of the New Law. Christian spouses signify and partake of the mystery of that unity and fruitful love which exists between Christ and his Church, helping each other attain to holiness in their married life and in the rearing and education of their children.

Before Vatican II and the pontificate of Pope John Paul II, the Church held a minimalist view of the purpose of sexuality and marriage. The minimalist view of marriage in accordance with the 1983 Code of Canon Law is as follows: “The free consent to the exchange of a perpetual and exclusive right over each other's body for the purpose of procreative acts. This is the absolute minimum for determining when a valid marriage existed. This definition includes the procreative and unitive functions of marriage.

The personalist view of marriage was influenced by modern psychology. The personalist definition elevated the unitive function of marriage to the primary one and considered the importance of all of the qualities of a happy and successful marriage—mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual—and not simply the procreation and education of children as the primary function and the unitive as the secondary function of marriage. Since that time, the Church has considered the unitive function of sexuality and marriage to be on an equal

plane with the procreative.

### ***Why contemporary philosophers won't accept Aristotelian metaphysics***

Feser tells the story of a prominent philosopher who once assured him that if Aristotle's metaphysics really does have conservative moral implications—that is, to admit that formal and final causes have anything to do with the cause of things—would be reason enough for contemporary philosophers and other intellectuals to refuse reconsidering their rejection of Aristotelian metaphysics. He claims that is the way many secular academics think today, that “[t]heir egalitarian liberalism is the axis around which everything else turns, and all of metaphysics, epistemology, and even science itself, when it seems to touch on moral or religious questions, must be judged by reference to how well they conform to this standard.” He is, of course, here referring to political correctness. He continues, “Yet their own ‘research’ into moral questions is not a disinterested pursuit of truth, but an exercise in liberal apologetics, with the main conclusions determined in advance. As in so many other ways, they have become exactly what they claim to despise.” Feser makes an important point when he reminds us that using natural law theory to prove that certain human behaviors are harmful, especially sexual morality:

does not require appealing to scripture, or traditional religious teaching, or even to a purely philosophical notion of God. As this indicates, the tedious secularist allegation that opposition to abortion, ‘same-sex marriage,’ and the like can only rest on ‘faith,’ or an appeal to Divine revelation, is pure fiction. Traditional morality does not rest on arbitrary divine commands backed by the threat of punishment, but rather on the systematic analysis of human nature entailed by classical philosophy. Plato’s and Aristotle’s condemnation of homosexuality was not based on the Bible, after all, but on their respective rationally grounded systems of metaphysics and ethics.

According to Feser, this doesn’t mean that God is irrelevant to natural law theory, “for while what has been said so far has required no reference to Him, it remains true that, as we saw in our discussion of the soul, man's overarching end is to know God, and he has an immortal soul that gives him a destiny beyond this earthly life. Furthermore, since God is the First Cause of the world and the one who ultimately orders things to their ends, He is the Author of the natural law, even if knowledge of the grounds and content of that law can largely be had without reference to Him. Obedience to the natural law is thus obedience to God.”

### ***Objections to natural law theory***

There have been many objections to natural law theory. One common objection is that natural law would forbid sterile people to marry. But as Feser states, this isn't necessarily true. For example, if someone is sterile through no fault of his or her own, he or she has not done anything to interfere with nature's purposes. However, even sterile married couples cannot, according to natural law theory, allow their own sexual encounters to culminate in anything other than normal sexual intercourse. He says that "procreation would not result anyway is irrelevant: The point is not to do something oneself that interferes with natural processes . . . which is primarily procreative but secondarily (as ancillary to its procreative purpose) to unite husband and wife in mutual affection, not to provide a kind of built-in entertainment apparatus." He concludes this discussion by saying, "Finally, if someone married a sterile person precisely as a means of avoiding procreation, natural law theory would condemn this as immoral."

Some opponents of natural law theory claim that for proponents of natural law theory to be consistent they would have to condemn using a natural capacity or organ other than for its natural function, because this would frustrate its natural end. Feser gives some examples to illustrate this point. For example, "holding a table up with one's leg, or holding nails with one's teeth, does not frustrate the walking and chewing functions of legs and teeth, especially since nature obviously does not intend for us to be walking and eating at every single moment. But having one's leg amputated to make some sort of bizarre political statement, or throwing up one's food so as not to gain weight would frustrate nature's purposes and thus be condemned by natural law theory as immoral." However, "Amputating a leg or removing other organs to save a person's life, though, would not be ruled out by natural law theory, since these organs and their functions are metaphysically subordinate to the overall purpose of sustaining the life and activities of the organism as a whole, and can thus be sacrificed if this is the only way to prevent the loss of that life." Feser concludes this portion of his discussion by stating, "Natural law theory does not entail that every frustration of nature's purposes is a serious moral failing. Where certain natural functions concern only some minor aspect of human life, a frustration of nature's purposes might be at worst a minor lapse in a virtue like prudence. But where they concern the maintenance of the species itself, and the material and spiritual well-being of children, women, and men—as they do where sex is concerned—acting contrary to them cannot fail to be of serious moral significance." The

## NATURAL LAW AND CHRISTIAN PERSONALISM

The philosophy of Personalism came to be used widely by Catholic theologians after Vatican Council II, which ended in December 1965. These theologians didn't reject the natural law theology; they simply added another dimension to it in the explanation and understanding of human behavior. Fr Thomas McGovern, a priest of the Prelature of *Opus Dei* in Dublin, wrote in an article entitled "The Christian Anthropology of John Paul II: An Overview" that "The Church in the twentieth century has responded with greater sensitivity to the anthropological dimension of theology. This has not happened by accident. Particular philosophers and theologians made valuable contributions to this enterprise which found expression in the documents of Vatican II, especially in the pastoral constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, and the decree on religious freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae*. Then he continues to say, "Vatican II was the first council of the Church to affirm a detailed Christian anthropology. The need to do so arose as a response to the materialistic conception of man which has dominated much of the twentieth century."

Fr. John Hardon defines materialism in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary* as "The theory that all reality is only matter, or a function of matter, or ultimately derived from matter." McGovern identifies three types of materialism that has affected the earth for the past few centuries: the materialism that derives from the worship of science; Marxist materialism; and the materialism that results from technological advances. In regard to the first, he states that, "The experimental method tended to the view that, since only what can be measured is real, only material reality exists. At the human level, advances in biology, influenced by the theory of evolution, had led to a depreciation of the spiritual dimension of man." In regard to Marxism, he says, "the influences of the Marxist philosophy of materialism, in a tyranny without precedent in human history, brought misery and death to countless millions." And regarding the third type of materialism, he says that "the rapid development of technology, creating a wealthy society driven by consumerism. This society measures progress solely in terms of material wealth, and effectively reduces the practice of politics to the maintenance of favorable economic conditions." He concludes from this listing of materialism that "The driving principles of this rapidly expanding practical materialism are the primacy given to individual subjective rights, and the dominance of a liberal capitalistic outlook indifferent to social responsibilities at a global level."

Then McGovern proceeds to identify several of the leading Personalist philosophers and theologians who had a direct influence on Pope John Paul's thinking. He tells us that, "These personalist philosophies did not constitute a complete system, but rather expanded the framework of traditional Christian philosophy with a more profound exploration of the reaches of the human spirit." He closes this part of his article by saying, "These

insights of personalist philosophy are based on the light of Revelation—on the doctrine of man made to the image and likeness of God and on the Trinitarian theology of relationships. These were some of the insights and strands of thinking which, added to traditional philosophy, gave impetus to the articulation of a Christian anthropology in Vatican II and subsequently in the magisterium of John Paul II.”

McGovern points out how as Archbishop of Krakow, Poland, Cardinal Wojtyla, the future Pope John Paul II, had a considerable influence on the composition of the documents of the council, especially *Gaudium et Spes*, otherwise known as the “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.” He writes:

Chapter I is a very evocative reflection on the dignity of the human person in the light of his creation in the image and likeness of God. It is also a rich discourse on the vocation of man, the significance of human freedom and the nature of conscience. The christological conclusion at the end of this chapter (no.22), which has been repeated so often in the magisterium of John Paul II, is perhaps the best known passage of the whole document. [Then he quotes John Paul as saying] In reality, it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear . . . Christ the new Adam, in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling . . . Human nature, by the very fact that it was assumed, not absorbed, in him, has been raised in us also to a dignity beyond compare. For, by his incarnation, he, the Son of God, has in a certain way united himself with each man.

He quotes John Paul as saying in the second chapter about one of the most important truths about ourselves that “If man is the only creature on earth that God has wanted for its own sake, man can fully discover his true self only in a sincere giving of himself. This capacity for a relationship with God and with others is a reflection of the inner relational life of God himself which is the Trinitarian communion of the divine Persons. It is of particular importance for understanding the personal vocation to holiness of every man and the evangelizing mission of the Church.” During and after Vatican II, Church documents speak of human beings as persons rather than souls, which are only part of the human being.

To give one small example, I think that this is reflected in the change of the wording just before the communicant received Holy Communion after Vatican II. According to the 1962 *Ordo Missae* of the Mass, otherwise called the Tridentine Mass, before the council, the person about to receive the Host said “Lord, I am not worthy that Thou should enter under my roof; but only say the word, and my soul shall be healed.” However, after the council, the 1970 Missal, otherwise known as the *Novus Ordo*, or New Order in English, promulgated by Pope Paul VI following Vatican II, the wording was changed to, “Lord, I

am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word, and I shall be healed.” Now this a very subtle change in wording, but, I think, that it symbolic of the fact that human beings are not simply souls, but possess both bodies and a souls that God intended to be joined together for all eternity. Scholastic theology and philosophy had focused primarily on the human soul with its faculties of intellect and free will, whereas Personalists focus on the whole person—physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual, as well as the soul and its faculties. Interestingly, the original words of the liturgy have been restored, because they more closely follow the official Latin text of the lectionary.

**The meaning of Personalism:** Personalism is a variety of phenomenology, which has been defined as “the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view.” It literally means the study of “phenomena”, which are “the appearances of things, or things as they appear in our experience, or the ways we experience things, thus the meanings things have in our experience. Phenomenology studies conscious experience as experienced from the subjective or first person point of view.”

Thomas D. Williams writes in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* that Personalism has a “plurality of schools” and that it:

exists in many different versions, and this makes it somewhat difficult to define as a philosophical and theological movement. Many philosophical schools have at their core one particular thinker or even one central work which serves as a canonical touchstone. Personalism is a more diffused and eclectic movement and has no such universal reference point. It is, in point of fact, more proper to speak of many personalisms than one personalism. In 1947 Jacques Maritain [a prominent Catholic philosopher] could write that there are at least a dozen personalist doctrines, which at times have nothing more in common than the word ‘person.’ Moreover, because of their emphasis on the subjectivity of the person and their ties to phenomenology and existentialism, some dominant forms of personalism have not lent themselves to systematic treatises.

He goes on to say:

It is perhaps more proper to speak of personalism as a ‘current’ or a broader ‘worldview’, since it represents more than one school or one doctrine while at the same time the most important forms of personalism do display some central and essential commonalities. Most important of the latter is the general affirmation of the centrality of the person for philosophical thought. Personalism posits ultimate reality and value in personhood—human as well as (at least for most personalists) divine. It emphasizes the significance, uniqueness and inviolability of the person, as well as the person's essentially relational or communitarian dimension. The title ‘personalism’ can therefore legitimately be applied to any school of thought that focuses on the reality of persons and their unique status among beings in general,

and personalists normally acknowledge the indirect contributions of a wide range of thinkers throughout the history of philosophy who did not regard themselves as personalists. Personalists believe that the human person should be the ontological and epistemological starting point of philosophical reflection. They are concerned to investigate the experience, the status, and the dignity of the human being as person, and regard this as the starting-point for all subsequent philosophical analysis.

Philosophers as diverse as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, Descartes, Kant, Husserl, Scheler, Stein, Marcel, Mounier, Gilson, De Lubac, Maritain, John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and many others have been classified as personalists.

**Eight points of Personalism:** One personalist philosopher has identified eight points that distinguish Personalism from other philosophies.

1. The human person is a subject, not an object like the things of the world: Since the person is called to self-determination, he or she is a moral subject, deciding on all his or her doings in conscience and consequently in a responsible way.
2. The human person is a subject in corporeality: Our body forms part of the totality that we are: what concerns our human body affects our entire person.
3. Because of the materiality of our body, our being is a being-in-the-world.
4. Human persons are essentially directed toward each other.
5. Not only because of our openness to one another are we social beings, but also because we need to live in social groups with appropriate structures and institutions.
6. Human persons are fundamentally open to God, and it is the task of moral theology to explain how, according to our Christian revelation, our relationship to God affects us in all the dimensions of our person.
7. Human persons are historical beings since they are characterized by historicity.
8. All human persons are fundamentally equal, but at the same time each is an originality, a unique subject.

None of these points are new to Catholic moral philosophy, but they do add an emphasis on human experience not found in the traditional natural law perspective.

### ***The meaning of Christian Personalism***

Christian Personalism includes all of the above eight points. Personalism has been defined as “Any of various theories of subjective idealism regarding personality as the key to the interpretation of reality.” Joseph Amato defines Personalism in his *Mounier & Maritain: A French Catholic Understanding of the Modern World*, as “a diverse intellect-

ual movement of the twentieth century. In part, it belongs to no one school; and in part it belongs to everyone who believes man is a personal and communal being who is mortally endangered by his own political, social, economic, and ideological creations. Anyone, in fact, who in the name of man's worth seeks simultaneously to save man from isolation and tyranny, from the furies of individualism and collectivism, can consider himself, if he wishes, a Personalist. Personalism, defined in this loose sense, includes a whole array of men and movements who, without official program, are committed to man's transcendence and are the enemies of all individuals, ideas, societies, and states that deny man the needs of his body, the dignity of his spirit, the presence and sustenance of a true human community."

### ***Origin of the Word Person***

Since the word "person" is so important to the Personalist philosophy, how have theologians and philosophers defined the human person? The correct definition of person is extremely important, because only persons have rights. One of the reasons there has been such a loss of respect for the lives of human beings in our society is a flawed conception of the human person, for only persons have rights. The concept "person" has not always existed. The ancient pagan world had no concept of the person; they simply saw humans as part of a larger entity, such as the family or tribe. Pagans had no conception of the value or uniqueness of each individual, something I think is also true of modern pagans as well. The concept of person is unique to Christianity. The Church found it necessary to develop the concept of person to define the dogmas of the Trinity and the Incarnation in the face of heretical attacks on these dogmas. The early Christians, such as the great second century theologian and philosopher Tertullian, first developed the term "person" to define the Trinitarian and Christological doctrines.

The second century theologian Tertullian seems to have been the first to apply the concept of person to the persons of the Holy Trinity. Severinus Boethius, who lived in the fifth and sixth centuries, was the first that we know of to define the concept "person." He defined person as "an individual, rational substance." To better understand his meaning of person let's look at each of the key words in this definition.

- **Individual:** By individual is meant that a person is separate from all other persons and is unique and irreplaceable.
- **Rational:** By rational is meant that a person has the ability to think or in the case of humans, at least have the potential of rational thought. Of course, God is omniscient, that is, his intellect has no limits; he knows everything. Since humans can

think, this definition applies to them as well, even the most severely retarded.

- **Substance:** By saying that a person is a substance, we mean a person exists in himself. Personhood is not an accidental quality like hair color or skin color, but that which distinguishes God from all human beings, human beings from other types of beings, and one human being from another. Substance is the very essence of personhood; it is that which makes a person what he is and not something else. Sometimes nature is used in place of essence, although there is a slight difference in there meaning. The three persons of the Holy Trinity are composed of the same un-created substance. On the other hand, human beings are composed of a substance created by God and co-created by parents, which includes both the body and the soul. The soul forms and gives life to the body; body and soul together compose a human substance.

Boethius' definition of personalism is a good one as far as it goes, but the problem with it is it doesn't consider the relational aspect of personhood. In summary, persons are individuals who possess reason and are unique and irreplaceable, and are related to God and other beings. This definition applies to both the Persons of God and human persons.

### ***God is a Personal God***

The mystery of the Holy Trinity is the most important mystery of our Faith, and the source of all other mysteries. The Holy Trinity is a perfectly happy family consisting of three divine persons that need nothing to fulfill themselves and who live in intimate loving communion. The Trinitarian Family is one of relationships. One way of conceptualizing God the Trinity is to think of God the Father as Thinker—the First Person, God the Son as Thought—the Second Person, and God the Holy Spirit as love—the Third Person. The Father eternally generates the Son; the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son, each constituting separate Persons of the Holy Trinity. The Son is the image and word of the Father. The Father communicates his entire being to his son, thus they are equal and coeternal; they share the same being or substance. The Father and Son then communicate their entire being to the Holy Spirit as an act of love. The three Persons of the Trinity share the same divine spirit, consciousness, omniscient intellect and omnipotent will. God possesses an “absolutely and infinitely eternal perfect spirit” that is always and everywhere present (omnipresence). The three Persons also share the same likeness: holiness, wholeness; righteousness, etc.

The Father is the originator of the Trinitarian Family. Since he is the source and origin of the entire divinity, he is called the First Person of the Trinity. The Son is generated by the

Father; therefore is called the Second Person of the Trinity. He is the Word and Image of the Father. Since he is eternally generated or begotten (not created or made), he is of the same substance or being as the Father; therefore, he is coequal and coeternal with the Father. The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, which proceeds from the Father and the Son. The First and Second Persons combine in an act of perfect love for one another that constitutes a Third Person, the Holy Spirit.

How about God's Nature, his likeness to human persons before the fall? God is holy, which means he is whole, perfect, sound, blessed, hallowed, sacred, and complete, possessing integrity, goodness, and righteousness. God possesses these qualities by nature. Moreover, he is infinitely just, which means that he always gives everyone his or her rightful due, what he or she has earned, whether it be rewards or punishments.

### ***The Incarnation***

At the Incarnation, Jesus Christ united his divine Person with a human nature possessing a human body and soul. Thus, he possesses two natures, human and divine. This means that his two natures, divine and human, are united in one Divine Person. His human nature subsists or has existence in a divine person. In his divinity, he remains one of the three persons of the Holy Trinity, continuing to share his divine intellect, will, and consciousness with the Father and the Holy Spirit. The divine intellect is omniscient or all-knowing and the divine will is omnipotent or all-powerful. The union of his divine and human natures is called the Hypostatic Union. It is extremely important to emphasize that even though Jesus possesses two natures, he is only one person, the same Person as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. He possesses only divine personhood; he does not possess human personhood. He shares his divine intellect, will, and consciousness with the Father and the Holy Spirit; otherwise, if each of the persons of the Holy Trinity had separate intellects, wills, and consciousness, there would exist three separate gods, not one.

During the Incarnation, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity became Jesus Christ. In addition to his divine Person, who possesses the divine spirit with infinite intellect and will, in his humanity Jesus possesses a human soul with human intellect and will. His human nature consists of a body and soul with the faculties of intellect and will, which is, "complete and perfect in every respect." Instead of subsisting in a human person as do all other human natures, however, his human nature subsists in a divine Person, the Son, who is the Second Person of the Trinity. At the same time, "the Son's divine nature was in no way changed or diminished." In Jesus Christ, a human nature exists that did not exist before and it subsists in a divine Person. However, there is no change in the divine Person.

Thus Jesus Christ was both fully God and fully man, one Divine Person with two natures, human and divine. Jesus Christ is true God and true man. In his humanity, he is like us in all things but sin. Although he is perfectly holy and virtuous, in order to fully share in our humanity he emptied himself and allowed himself to suffer from many of the consequences of Original Sin: exhaustion, hunger, thirst, suffering, sorrow, and even death.

### ***Humans as the image of God***

The "image of God" is the spiritual part of man's nature, which includes his soul and its faculties of intellect and free will. Humans possess an immortal spirit or soul united to a body. The persons of Adam and Eve possessed the preternatural gifts of bodily immortality, infused knowledge, and integrity (absence of concupiscence) before their fall from God's grace; afterwards they lost these gifts. In regard to their souls, in God's image they possessed finite or limited intellects and wills. Of course, God's intellect is omniscient or all-knowing and his will is omnipotent or all-powerful. Although after the Fall, humans remained in God's image, still possessing immortal souls with the faculties of intellect and free will (although reduced in capacity because of the effects of Original Sin), they had to suffer the consequences of sin, which is suffering, sorrow, and death.

### ***Humans as the likeness of God***

In likeness, God created Adam and Eve in Original Holiness and Original Justice. By holiness Adam and Eve were originally like God who is whole, perfect, sound, blessed, hallowed, sacred, and complete, possessing integrity, goodness, and righteousness. God possesses these qualities by nature; they possessed them only by God's sanctifying grace, which was the life of God within them, the indwelling Trinity. By Original Justice is meant that our first parents possessed an intensely intimate friendship with God and lived in harmony with themselves and with the creation around them. They were an adopted son and daughter of God the Father and a brother and sister to his Son and heirs to Heaven. The Original Justice possessed by Adam and Eve means that until their fall from God's grace, they always gave him his due by adoring, praising and worshipping him and doing his will.

However, after the fall, they no longer possessed the likeness of God, for they were no longer holy. As a result, they lost God's friendship (justice) as well. Moreover, they lost their place in the Trinitarian Family; therefore, they were no longer supernatural children of God and no longer possessed the privilege of inheriting eternal happiness. Yet God still

loved them, so much so that he sent his only begotten son into the world to redeem them and their posterity and to restore them to his family.

In the fallen state, all human beings inherited diminished intellects and weakened wills as well as the desire to sin, called concupiscence, and to experience the wages of sin, which is death. At death the soul is separated from the body and the body decomposes. The soul will be reunited at the end of time with a glorified body for those who are already in Heaven or going there. Even after our first parents committed the Original Sin, humans still possess the image of God, because they were not totally corrupted. Because of their sin, Adam and Eve no longer possessed the likeness of God, for they were no longer holy. God is holy and they were no longer holy because God no longer lived in their souls. Because human beings had lost their innocence and were no longer holy, they were no longer like God; however, they were still basically in God's image, that is, they still had immortal souls, which possessed intellect and free will (although weakened by sin). They were no longer children of God or shared in the inner life of the Holy Trinity. They and all of their children were no longer the Father's heirs. However, there was still hope, for it was in the Father's plan to send his son into the world someday to redeem humankind, to once again make them his children. Human beings are persons, because they are created in God's very image, although damaged due to sin, and possess God's likeness when in the state of sanctifying grace. Only God is holy and we are holy—or like God—only when he dwells in our souls. We can become more like God by acquiring more of his life in us, more of his grace by living holy and virtuous lives.

The closer one achieves union with God, the more godlike he becomes. One must be purified before he can achieve union with God. Our union with God began at our baptism. At that time we became members of his Mystical Body—the Catholic Church—and to share in the life of the Holy Trinity. At that time, we became adopted children of God the Father and sons and daughters of his son Jesus, and as a result members of his family. The holier one becomes the more and more he becomes integrated into the life of the Trinitarian Family.

These Trinitarian and Christological doctrines could not have been defined without an understanding of the concept person. Once these dogmas were defined with respect to the Holy Trinity, the concept of person could then be applied to man, who is created in the image and likeness of God, who is a personal God. We looked at a few definitions in the preceding paragraphs of the human person that have been posited over the centuries, the best of them emphasizing both the rationality and relationality of human beings. An important point to remember regarding the definition of person in the words of one scholar is that “When the Church defined the dogma of the Trinity, the three Persons in one God—the pattern of all personhood—it did so in terms of relationships. The three Divine

Persons are distinguished from one another by their relationships. Each fully possesses the Divine Nature and all the Divine Attributes. Also human beings are distinguished by relationships, specifically their relationship to God and to other human persons. To quote one scholar in this regard, “God called each human person into existence; therefore each person is known and loved by God and is of infinite value. Each human person has a unique place in the Divine plan. He is called to know, love, and serve God in this life and to be happy with him forever in the next. All of his rights and duties stem from this relationship.”

***All persons are related to the Persons of the Holy Trinity and to each other***

We are all persons related to the Persons of the Holy Trinity and to each other. It is our rationality and relationality that make us like God. It is rationality and relationality that renders a human being a person. The three persons of the Holy Trinity share the same divine rationality or reason (intellect) and will and each is connected to the other by relationality: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is a family relationship. God created us as rational beings and when the son became one of us, he elevated our nature to the supernatural level by adoption and by grace. By adoption, we become connected to the Holy Trinity in a family relationship. As members of God's human family, we are related to all human beings. We are rational creatures who at our baptism became sons and daughters of the Father by adoption and by grace, brothers and sisters to his son Jesus Christ, and heirs to Heaven if we remain faithful to him to the end of our earthly lives. God loves us so much that he gave his only begotten son that those who believe in him and obey his commandments will not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16). All of the Church's moral and social teachings flow from these facts. The starting point of Christian Personalism is that humans are created in the “image and likeness of God” and redeemed by Christ

***Catholic Personalism***

There are at least two major stains of Christian personalism: the so-called Boston School of Personalism, which has Methodist roots; and the Catholic brand of Personalism. The Methodists brand of personalism has been largely confined to the United States, and is associated with theologians Borden Parker Bowne and Edgar Sheffield Brightman of Boston University, Thomas O. Buford of Furman University, and Ralph Tyler Flewelling of the University of Southern California. Martin Luther King, Jr. was greatly influenced by personalism in his studies at Boston University.

There were three varieties of Catholic Personalism:

1. **France:** Mounier who in turn influenced Gabriel Marcel and Jacques Maritain.
2. **Germany:** Edmund Husserl whose brand of phenomenology influenced Max Scheler, Dietrich von Hildebrand, and Edith Stein, all three Catholic converts. He had a lot of influence on Karol Wojtyla's philosophy (John Paul II) as well.
3. **Poland:** Roman Ingarden who influenced Karol Wojtyla among others. This brand was known as Lublin Personalism after the university where it was centered.

The leader of the movement in France, the philosopher Emmanuel Mounier, identified several contemporary thinkers as creators of this tradition, including Rudolf Hermann Lotze, a nineteenth century German philosopher and logician; Max Scheler who was a German philosopher known for his work in phenomenology, ethics, and philosophical anthropology; Martin Buber who was an Austrian-born Jewish philosopher best known for his existentialist I-Thou philosophy; Emmanuel Levinas, a French Jewish philosopher and Talmudic commentator, the Talmud being a record of rabbinic discussions pertaining to Jewish law, ethics, customs, and history; Karl Theodor Jaspers, a renowned German psychiatrist and philosopher who had a strong influence on modern theology, psychiatry and philosophy; Nikolai Alexandrovich Berdyaev, a Russian religious and political philosopher; Henri-Louis Bergson, a major French-Jewish philosopher, who was influential in the first half of the twentieth century; the French philosopher Maurice Blondel; Charles Péguy, a noted French poet, essayist, and editor; and Jacques Maritain, who was a famous French Catholic Thomist philosopher. As should be evident from this list, not all of the pioneering Personalists were Catholics, but those who weren't had an influence on subsequent Catholic thinkers.

Because they emphasized the role that human experience plays in history, religion, and other aspects of our lives, I would add to this list Dietrich von Hildebrand, a German Catholic philosopher and theologian who Pope Pius XII called a twentieth century Doctor of the Church; Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day who were co-founders of the Catholic Worker Movement in the United States; Edmund Husserl, who was a German-Jewish philosopher and Christian convert considered to be the founder of phenomenology, which is the study of experience and intellectual processes of which we are introspectively aware; St. Edith Stein, who was a German-Jewish philosopher, convert to Catholicism, a nun who took the name of Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, and martyr at Auschwitz concentration camp, where she died in the gas chamber; Gabriel Honoré Marcel, a French Christian existentialist philosopher and playwright; Karol Wojtyla, later Pope John Paul II; and Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. Of course, many other noted personalists could be added to this list.

## The *Nouvelle Theologie* (New Theology) and Personalism

I would also add the theologians and philosophers of the *Nouvelle Theologie* (New Theology), such as the Jesuits Henri de Lubac and Jean Daniélou of the Lyons province and by the Dominicans Yves Congar and Marie-Dominique Chenu of Le Saulchoir. One of the founders of the New Theology was Chenu. He and Louis Charlier had been censored and their works placed on the Index in the 1930's by Cardinal Pietro Parente of the Holy Office, now called the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. I understand that he was the first writer to use the term New Theology to describe the writings of Chenu and Charlier in a paper in 1942, and was a major influence in Pope Pius XII's encyclical *Humani Generis* that condemned these and other theologians eight years later. Parente charged these theologians, among other things, with "having followed Mohler and, more radically, the Modernists, in belittling the value of reason and privileging religious feeling." By Mohler is meant Johann Adam Möhler who was a German Roman Catholic theologian of the early nineteenth century. His ideas were rejected by the Catholics of his day as being inconsistent with the doctrines of the Church.

These theologians were involved with *Ressourcement*, which means returning to the traditional sources of Catholic theology and philosophy—the Scriptures, Tradition, and the Church Fathers. They also placed a lot of importance in the role of history in the development of Catholic doctrine and as well as advocating the use of modern philosophy to better understand the Church's teachings when compatible with them. This movement drew some of its inspiration from earlier nineteenth century theologians and philosophers such as Johann Adam Möhler and John Henry Newman and others, including the French Catholic poets Charles Péguy and Paul Claudel. Academic theologians involved in this movement included such Belgian and German thinkers as Emile Mersch, Dom Odo Casel, Romano Guardini, Karl Adam, and Dom Anselm Stolz. Even though German theologians contributed to the movement, its undisputed center was France. Others who were considered part of the movement were Hans Urs von Balthasar and Louis Bouyer. Also, the Frenchman Etienne Gilson was considered a devotee of the New Theology. Although the various theologians associated with the New Theology held different views on specific issues, they all believed that theology had to speak to the Church's present situation and that the key to theology's relevance to the present lay in the creative recovery of its past. In other, words, as one scholar has said, "they all saw clearly that the first step to what later came to be known as *aggiornamento* had to be *ressourcementó*, a rediscovery of the riches of the Church's two-thousand-year treasury, a return to the very headwaters of the Christian tradition." To accomplish their objectives, they employed an historical methodology and utilized modern philosophies that were compatible with Catholic teaching.

These theologians shared a common view of how the Catholic Church should approach

theology. They reacted against the dominance of Neo-Scholasticism and the scholastically-influenced manuals of the day. Neo-Scholasticism is the revival and development of medieval scholastic philosophy starting from the second half of the nineteenth century. It has sometimes been called neo-Thomism, partly because according to one source “Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century gave to scholasticism a final form, partly because the idea gained ground that only Thomism could infuse vitality into twelfth century scholasticism.” During the Renaissance humanism of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, “scholastics were put to the background and somewhat forgotten. This has been the source of the view of scholastics as a rigid, formalistic, aged and improper way of doing philosophy. During the Catholic scholastic revival in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the scholastics were repopularized, but with a kind of narrow focus on certain scholastics and their respective schools of thought, notably Thomas Aquinas. In this context, scholasticism is often used in theology or metaphysics, but not many other areas of inquiry.” Although there were many theologians who contributed to the revival of Scholasticism in the late nineteenth century, Pope Pius IX, in various letters and especially Pope Leo XIII in his 1879 encyclical *Aeterni Patris* “imparted to Neo-Scholasticism its definitive character and quickened its development, setting forth the principles by which the movement is to be guided in a progressive spirit, and by which the medieval doctrine is to take on new life in its modern environment.”

The New Theologians were critical of how they thought the Church seemed out of touch with the Modern World, and they held a more favorable view on ecumenism than the Church held. They thought that the methods of Scholasticism, or at least the Neo-Scholastic variety that prevailed during the first half of the twentieth century, were too rigid and formal to provide sufficient insight into the problems that afflicted modern societies. They believed that Neo-Scholasticism had strayed too far away from the original sources of revelation: Scripture and commentaries on it by the Church Fathers. I must add that the so-called New Theologians did not reject Thomism, that is, the philosophy and theology of St. Thomas Aquinas, but they simply added a subjective or experiential dimension to better understand the Faith to Thomas’ more objective approach. For example, Pope John Paul II always remained a Thomist at heart, but he supplemented it with a Personalist philosophy. On the other hand, Pope Benedict XVI tends to supplement a Personalist philosophy with an Augustinian theology and philosophy. De Lubac, Chenu and other *Ressourcement* theologians claimed to be Thomists all along, but claimed that their interpretation of his works was more faithful to Thomas than that of the Neo-Thomists or Neo-Scholastics. In the final analysis, all of those who could be classified as fitting under the umbrella of the New Theology wanted to reform theology by adding a more personalist dimension to it.

How did the New Theologians hope to achieve their goal of reforming Catholic Theology?

Their goal was a return of Catholic Theology to what they conceived as the “original purity of its thought and expression.” To achieve their goal, they advocated a “return to the sources” of the Christian Faith: namely, Scripture and the writings of the Church Fathers. This methodology has been called by its French name, *ressourcement*, meaning in French a “return to the sources.” Moreover, the movement adopted openness to dialogue with the contemporary world on theological issues. They also developed a renewed interest in biblical exegesis, typology, art, literature, and mysticism. Also the New Theologians advocated employing modern philosophy to better understanding the faith whenever it is compatible with Christianity. One major project of the New Theologians was to edit and publish many of the writings of the Church Fathers.

Why were the New Theologians so critical of Neo-Scholasticism? For the New Theologians, doing theology meant doing history, which tells the story of a people's experience. The Neo-Scholasticism in vogue in the Church at the time was, for the most part, ahistorical, that is, non-historical. The history of theology and doctrinal development were hardly considered at all in the work of theologians who were devoted to the method of logic and the syllogism. In the search for religious truth, the Scholastics had refined the Church's doctrines by means of these methods, and for the most part they believed to go back to the theology of the Church Fathers or even to the Bible itself was retrogression or going backwards, rather than progression, or going forward. The New Theologians wanted to replace the scholastic methodology with another.

They wanted to add an historical dimension to theology as well as to utilize other modern philosophies compatible with the Faith, especially Personalism. One scholar has said in this regard, “Yet the distinctive approach to historical theology which [the New Theologians] shared was neither mere detached, scholarly reconstruction nor a futile attempt at what Congar calls ‘restitution.’ It was rather a creative hermeneutical exercise in which the ‘sources’ of Christian faith were ‘reinterrogated’ with new questions, the burning questions of a century in travail. With such twentieth-century questions serving as hermeneutical keys, these theologians of *ressourcement* were able to unlock new rooms in the treasure house of tradition and discover there, surprisingly enough, many of the twentieth-century ideas which Neo-Scholasticism neglected or even resisted.” After having done quite a bit a study of this matter, I have come to agree. To not agree, I think, would place one in opposition of the theology of Vatican II and Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI. This is, of course, what many extreme Traditionalists have done. I think there is great value in the Scholastic approach, but I think that it needs to be supplemented with one that takes into account human experience, human experience as found in the Bible, the Church Fathers, and the development of Tradition.

The term *Nouvelle Théologie* was originally a negative label given the movement by

its opponents. Usually the term is attributed to the Dominican theologian Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, one of the greatest Scholastic theologians of the twentieth century, as well as an expert in spiritual theology. The future John Paul II got his doctorate in theology under him at the Dominican Angelicum University in Rome. The charge was that the theologians of the movement did not simply “return to the sources” but instead deviated from the long-standing theological tradition of the Catholic Church, thus creating a “new theology” of their own, a claim that the New Theologians denied. Traditionalists who oppose the New Theology have maintained that Pope Pius XII was condemning it in his encyclical *Humani Generis*, because he believed that it unduly criticized the Old Testament texts and “warned of a resurgence of modernism in many Catholic seminaries.” *Humani Generis* condemns the New Theologians, among other things, for its criticism of Neo-Scholasticism, the semi-official theology of the Church at the time. The encyclical dismisses the charge that says “the ‘innovators’ reproach the ‘philosophy of our schools’ for ‘attending to the intellect alone in the process of thought and neglecting the function of the will and the affections of the spirit.’” It states that, “it is one thing to acknowledge the role of these dispositions in knowing the truth, and another thing to assert the power of the will and of sentiment to the detriment of *ratio*, in order to diminish its role.”

The New Theology didn’t fare very well with the Church during the 1950’s. One has to remember that European society was in turmoil from the 1930’s to the 1940’s. In an article entitled “*Ressourcement* Theology, *Aggiornamento*, and the Hermeneutics of Tradition”, Marcellino D’Ambrosio describes how a broad intellectual and spiritual movement arose within the European Catholic community in response to the challenge presented by a newly secularized society, a challenge that the reigning Neo-Scholasticism seemed sorely ill-equipped to meet. Prior to Vatican II, experience played a very minor role in Catholic theology, mainly because of the bad experience the Church had with Modernism at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. But during and after the council, the movement had increasingly more influence on Catholic theology and biblical scholarship, not all of it good by any means.

How did Personalism come to be used so widely by Catholic theologians after Vatican II? I referred above to an article by Fr Thomas McGovern who wrote regarding this matter, “The Church in the twentieth century has responded with greater sensitivity to the anthropological dimension of theology. This has not happened by accident. Particular philosophers and theologians made valuable contributions to this enterprise which found expression in the documents of Vatican II, especially in the pastoral constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, and the decree on religious freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae*. Then he continues to say, “Vatican II was the first council of the Church to affirm a detailed Christian anthropology. The need to do so arose as a response to the materialistic conception of man which has dominated much of the twentieth cen-

ture.” He points out how as Archbishop of Krakow, Poland, Cardinal Wojtyla had a considerable influence on the composition of the documents of the council, especially *Gaudium et Spes*, otherwise known as the “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.”

### ***Personalism after Vatican Council II***

Social documents after Vatican Council II more and more reflected the philosophy of Personalism in addition to the natural law. Before Vatican II, morality was considered almost exclusively from a natural law point of view. During and after the council, Personalism was combined increasingly with natural law to explain Catholic Social Teaching. From Leo XIII to Pius XII natural law philosophy was primarily used to justify the Church’s doctrines associated with personal and social morality. We see some use of personalist philosophy by Popes John XXIII and Paul VI, but it was John Paul II who made considerable use of the personalist philosophy both in personal and social morality and Pope Benedict XVI continued that practice to some extent.

Jan Jans, a professor at Tilburg University in the Netherlands, has said of this matter in an article entitled “Personalism: The Foundations of an Ethics of Responsibility”:

Any ‘fundamental’ ethical discussion is thus a discussion on this fundamental level of one’s understanding of the human person, or to use a traditional category from western thought, it is a discussion concerning human nature. What is moral can thus be delimited on the basis of the presence or absence of conformity with the natural order or natural law. Catholic moral theology—the domain within which I tend to engage in ethical reflection—witnessed the ‘turning point’ from an ethical reflection based on strictly formulated natural law towards one rooted in personalism during the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).”

Jans tells us that Personalism wasn’t invented during the Council, but, “rather, decades of study and reflection conducted by a number of (moral) theologians came to fruition in the Council discussions and found its written form in certain important conciliar documents”, such as, the document “Declaration on Religious Liberty”, (*Dignitatis humanae personae*). The document begins with the Latin *personae* or person, establishing in Jan’s words “a connection between freedom of conscience and freedom of religion, in which both were based on a personalist vision of the human person.” He states that “Personalism as the foundation of morality is even more explicitly evident in *Gaudium et spes*, the renowned ‘Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World’”. Commenting on the document, he states:

Seen and understood from the assumptions and presuppositions of the natural law model, where ‘objective’ stands for immutable and established human nature, personalism is nothing more than a reformulation of the existing teaching related to the natural law. In this case, the ‘objective criteria’ in question are the result of a deductive process and are just as preconceived as the “nature of the person”. Catholic moral theology—the domain within which I tend to engage in ethical reflection—witnessed the ‘turning point’ from an ethical reflection based on strictly formulated natural law towards one rooted in personalism during the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).

Paul VI also argued in his encyclical *Humanae Vitae* that the contraceptive mentality will result in men losing respect for women and “no longer (care) for her physical and psychological equilibrium” and will come to “the point of considering her as a mere instrument of selfish enjoyment and no longer as his respected and beloved companion.” Professor Janet Smith of Ave Maria University maintains that “This concern reflects what has come to be known as a ‘personalist’ understanding of morality. The personalist understanding of wrongdoing is based upon respect for the dignity of the human person. The Pope realized that the Church's teaching on contraception is designed to protect the good of conjugal love. When spouses violate this good, they do not act in accord with their innate dignity and thus they endanger their own happiness. Treating their bodies as mechanical instruments to be manipulated for their own purposes, they risk treating each other as objects of pleasure.” Pope Paul applied both natural law philosophy and personalist philosophy in reasserting the Church’s longstanding tradition position against contraception.

Pope John Paul II also wrote extensively on contraception from a Personalist perspective. One scholar says of this matter, “And although the contribution of the present pope John Paul II to the conception of *Humanae vitae* remains as yet unclear, it is by now quite evident that his ‘personalism’ is equivalent to such a reformulation of neo-classical natural law ethics.” The pope began his discussion of contraception in July 1984 when in the words of one scholar he emphasized “the design of the human body revealing God's truths. It is explained and reaffirmed that the fundamental structure of males and females, which causes sexual intercourse between them to result in both greater intimacy and the capability of generating new life, demonstrates a morally inseparable connection between these two functions.” During his discussions, he explains how the bases of the Church’s moral teachings on matters of sexuality are scriptural teachings.

Regarding contraception, one source reports the pope as explaining the “moral wrongness of using artificial means to manipulate such a significant aspect of the created body is explained. However, the language expressed by bodies, in this context the language expressed during sexual intercourse, is so damaged by the use of artificial contraception that the conjugal act ‘ceases to be an act of love . . . [or] communion of persons’ but rather is a

mere bodily union.” The source goes on to say:

[On] the other hand, the licitness of natural family planning (NFP) methods is held to be evident from the structure of the human body, which has natural periods of fertility and infertility. The morality of these methods was literally designed into the body, and use of them, unlike use of artificial contraception, can actually improve the dialog between couples which is expressed through the language of the body. Throughout these speeches the main emphasis is on the intrinsic goodness of the marital act. The power of love between spouses is said to both lead to and be nourished by the moral use of the conjugal act. Thus, moral exercise of sexual intercourse uses the form of the body to reveal the love of God toward Creation.”

He concludes this discussion by saying, “John Paul states many other benefits claimed for moral use of NFP, some from *Humanae Vitae*. These include an increase of marital peace, less spousal selfishness, increased and more positive influence over their children (5 September 1884), and increased dignity of person through following the law of God. Use of NFP is also said to increase appreciation of children, by fostering respect for what is created by God.”

### ***Comparison of Scholasticism with Personalism***

Scholars have considered natural law as a classical way of looking at personal and social morality. Classicism understands reality “in terms of the eternal, the immutable, and the unchanging.” Natural law flows from the eternal law and is eternal, objective, and universal, a system of law whereby God orders, directs, and governs the entire universe. The natural law is based on the idea that human nature is fixed for all time and that God's law is eternal and immutable, not subject to changing social, cultural, and historical circumstances. Historical consciousness is not generally an important part of a natural law approach to moral issues. Natural law is based on the eternal law and human reason. This means, of course, that the natural law can't grow or become out-of-date. The natural law places emphasis on a fixed human nature that possesses the human faculties of intellect and free will.

On the other hand, a more personalist approach to understanding and interpreting reality takes into consideration social change and historical developments. One scholar has written that “Historical consciousness gives more importance to the particular, the contingent, the historical, and the individual.” Personalism, while not rejecting the eternal and immutable, places emphasis on the present and changeableness and is rooted in time or history. On the other hand, as I said, the natural law emphasizes the eternal and

immutable. Natural law doesn't account very well for changing historical circumstances, while personalism attempts to do so. Also, natural law focuses on the human soul with its faculties of intellect and free will, whereas personalism focuses on the total human person who has not only a soul with the faculties of intellect and free will, but also a body as well. Personalists tend to place more emphasis on the total human being, body and soul. Furthermore, they look at the universe from the point of view of the person—the subject—and not exclusively as objects existing outside the mind. Moreover, they have an historical consciousness not possessed by those who take an exclusively natural law approach.

The two philosophies have different methodological approaches to understanding reality and moral issues as well. The scholar that I was just referring to says that “the classicist worldview is associated with the deductive methodology, which derives its conclusions from premises considered to be eternal truths, and that the syllogism was well suited for this deductive approach.” As I discussed above, using this approach “one's conclusions are as certain as the premises if the logic is correct.” On the other hand, historical consciousness requires a more inductive approach to understanding reality. Those employing an inductive method begin by observing phenomena and reason to general concepts explaining them

Personalists and others who emphasize experience in human behavior, claim that inductive methodology is more flexible than a deductive one. I think that is generally true. The natural law model recognizes few if any gray areas regarding moral issues, whereas the personalist philosophy is more open to the existence of gray areas, because of the complexity of modern societies and conditions. Some issues that come to mind are capital punishment, ecumenism, religious liberty, and economic matters. Those who take a classicists approach, such as do neo-scholastics, are generally more “conservative” regarding these and other matters, whereas those who look at issues from a personalist perspective are more “progressive.”

For example, Pope John Paul II was “progressive” on all four of the issues I just mentioned. He took an intensely personalist approach to both personal and social morality, and contrary to dissident theologian Fr. Charles Curran, his works dealing with personal morality, especially sexual morality, are highly personalistic. John Paul's “Theology of the Body” is about as personalistic as a theologian can get. What bothers Curran so much is that John Paul doesn't budge an inch on the Church's long-standing positions opposing contraception, abortion, homosexuality, pre-marital sex, and other practices that lead to a culture of death. In other words, he commends John Paul for being “progressive” on social issues, but faults him for being “conservative” on the personal moral issues. For those not familiar with Fr. Curran, in 1986, the Vatican declared that although a tenured

professor at Catholic University of America, Curran could no longer teach theology at the Catholic University of America schools, because “clashes with Church authorities finally culminated in a decision by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, headed by then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger [later Pope Benedict XVI], that Curran was neither suitable nor eligible to be a professor of Catholic theology.” The areas of dispute included publishing articles that dissented from Church teaching on divorce, artificial contraception, masturbation, pre-marital intercourse, and homosexual acts.

To sum up the differences between the Natural Law and Personalist philosophy, one scholar writes, “The difference between a neo-classical approach and personalism can be clearly indicated with the word-pair object-project. A neo-classical approach will tend to base morality on an objective image of the human person as preconceived and immutable. Personalism, on the other hand, views the status of an ethically grounding anthropology as a project, a design, a programme requiring participation, a vocation to be realized. That the above interpretation is not merely theoretical can be demonstrated by analysing the understanding of ‘personalism’ in the encyclical *Humanae vitae* (1968): ‘Human intelligence discovers in the faculty of procreating life, biological laws which are part of the human person’”.

Some conservative critics of personalism claim that the philosophy is too individualistic. What is the difference between Personalism and Individualism? This is an important distinction, because personalists stress the belief in the uniqueness of the human person by distinguishing between the concepts of “person” and “individual.” Thomas Williams tells us in his article “What is Thomistic Personalism?” that “The major difference is that an individual represents a single, countable unit in a homogeneous species of being, interchangeable with any other member of the species, whereas a person is characterized by his uniqueness and irreplaceability.” In this regard, he quotes the famous Catholic theologian Hans Urs Von Balthasar as saying, “Few words have as many layers of meaning as person. On the surface it means just any human being, any countable individual. Its deeper senses, however, point to the individual’s uniqueness which cannot be interchanged and therefore cannot be counted.” Commenting on this quotation, Williams states that “In this deeper sense persons cannot, properly speaking, be counted, because a single person is not merely one in a series within which each member is identical to the rest for all practical purposes, and thus exchangeable for any other. One can count apples, because one apple is as good as another (i.e., what matters is not that it is this apple, but simply that it is an apple), but one cannot count persons in this way. One can count human beings, as individuals of the same species, but the word person emphasizes the uniqueness of each member of the human species, his incommunicability.”

Since individualism is a term that is so widely used and prized in democratic societies

such as our own, is there anything wrong with using the concept of individualism with respect to human beings? It depends on what one means by individualism. Williams says that to the extent that individualism is “the moral stance, political philosophy, ideology, or social outlook that stresses the moral worth of the individual, and places emphasis on independence and self-reliance, it can be good, but to the extent that it leads to severe social fragmentation [and atomization of society], it is bad.” As one personalist scholar has said, “most personalists have been very sensitive to the sterility of individualism.” He goes on to write:

[Personalists] have taken very seriously the inter-personal relations in which human persons live and move and have their being. The interiority of a person does not isolate a person from others, but rather opens him or her to others. Personalists refuse to think about social life only in terms of rights and of protection against intruders; they also think in terms of solidarity and co-responsibility. The personalism to which we are committed impels us to work towards a new kind of solidarity that is precisely based on the fact that each member, as person, is always more than a mere part of the community.

In other words, human beings are social beings by their nature. Persons are made for relationships with other human beings. They can only be human in relationship with other human persons. Williams commenting on John Paul’s view regarding this matter says that “The person never exists in isolation, and moreover finds his human perfection only in communion with other persons. Interpersonal relations, consequently, are never superfluous or optional to the person, but are constitutive of his inherent make-up and vocation. By underscoring the person’s vocation to communion, personalists endeavor to overcome the polarization of individualism on the one hand and collectivism on the other . . . As much as he may strive for independence, the human person necessarily relies on others.”

To prove his point, Williams writes, “In the first place [the human person] depends radically on God as the source of his being. Moreover, from the moment of conception he depends on other persons for his survival and development, and this interdependence is a hallmark of human existence. The human person tends towards society as a basic human value. Thus Aristotle, when considering the good of self-sufficiency, hastens to add that such a term is not employed with reference ‘to oneself alone, living a life of isolation, but also to one’s parents and children and wife, and one’s friends and fellow citizens in general, since man is by nature a social being.’”

Pope John Paul’s and other personalists tie the “law of the gift” that shows in William’s words that “the relation and society of which the person alone is capable, and which is necessary for his realization as a person, consists not only in association, but in love. It

consists in a love which gives and gives itself, which receives not only things but other persons as well. Only persons can give love and only persons can receive love. Love has as its true object other persons, not things nor even qualities, but the person himself. Whereas individualism seeks the self above all and views others as means to one's own profit, love seeks to make of the self a gift to another. Where individualism hopes to find personal realization in self-interest, love realizes that, in the words of the Council, 'man can fully discover his true self only in a sincere giving of himself.' Here the antagonism between individualism and personalism manifests itself."

I'll finish this topic by quoting from Pope John Paul's Letter to Families, where he writes of the antithesis between individualism and personalism that "Love, the civilization of love, is bound up with personalism. Why with personalism? And why does individualism threaten the civilization of love? We find a key to answering this in the council's expression, a 'sincere gift.' Individualism presupposes a use of freedom in which the subject does what he wants, in which he himself is the one to 'establish the truth' of whatever he finds pleasing or useful. He does not tolerate the fact that someone else 'wants' or demands something from him in the name of an objective truth. He does not want to 'give' to another on the basis of truth; he does not want to become a 'sincere gift.' Individualism thus remains egocentric and selfish. The real antithesis between individualism and personalism emerges not only on the level of theory, but even more on that of ethos. The ethos of personalism is altruistic: It moves the person to become a gift for others and to discover joy in giving himself. This is the joy about which Christ speaks."

### ***Karol Wojtyla's (John Paul II) brand of personalism***

Pope John Paul II wrote thirteen encyclical letters in which he employed his personalist philosophy by focusing on the dignity of each human person as ends in themselves, not means to achieving ends. One scholar has said of the pope's philosophy: "Through this lens, John Paul II analyzed the problems faced by the contemporary world and provided penetrating insight into their solutions—solutions that focused not on political or economic policy, but on conversion."

Karol Wojtyla grew up around the Catholic University of Lublin, Poland, where he attended as a student and later served as a professor. One of his professors in the early 1940's was Roman Ingarden, who had gotten his doctorate in philosophy under Edmund Husserl in Germany. Husserl has been called the Father of phenomenology. Phenomenology has been defined as "the philosophical study of the structures of subjective experience and consciousness." As a philosophical movement it was founded in the early years of the twentieth century by Husserl and was later expanded upon by a circle of his followers at

the universities of Göttingen and Munich in Germany. From there it spread to France, the United States, and elsewhere, often in contexts far removed from Husserl's early work. One source states that “Phenomenology, in Husserl's conception, is primarily concerned with the systematic reflection on and study of the structures of consciousness and the phenomena that appear in acts of consciousness. Ingarden encouraged him to read Max Scheler and he ended up doing his doctoral dissertation in philosophy on Scheler's ethics of values, which he presented in 1953. Scheler was a German philosopher known for his work in phenomenology, ethics, and philosophical anthropology. He was one who further developed Husserl's philosophical method, and the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset called him “the first man of the philosophical paradise.” Even the philosopher Martin Heidegger thought that all philosophers of the century were indebted to Scheler and praised him as “the strongest philosophical force in modern Germany, nay, in contemporary Europe and in contemporary philosophy as such.” In 1954, Wojtyła defended his doctoral thesis on “An Evaluation of the Possibility of Constructing a Christian Ethics on the Basis of the System of Max Scheler.” He didn't find Scheler's personalism very helpful in understanding Catholic morality more deeply.

Wojtyła had received a solid Aristotelian-Thomistic formation at the Angelicum University in Rome and he used the phenomenological method in the words of one scholar to “develop a creative and original personalistic synthesis, enriching Thomistic metaphysics and anthropology with insights from phenomenology.” Wojtyła later took a professorship of ethics at both the Theological Faculty of Cracow and Lublin's Catholic University, where he founded the Polish personalistic school, also known as the Lublin School. As one scholar has written:

Like all students of his time, he was well formed in the philosophical principles of Thomist theology, accepting fully St Thomas' definition of the person as a subject of intellectual and volitional actions. His philosophical approach, however, enabled him to study a dimension of the person not developed in Thomist ontology—the creative aspect of human action and interpersonal relations. Descriptive analysis of human experience through the phenomenological method allowed him deepen his understanding of the person as a being who entrusts himself to God.

Some scholars have classified John Paul's personalism as Thomistic Personalism. His Aristotelian-Thomistic formation was accomplished at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome, which is a Dominican school, otherwise known as the Angelicum. There he wrote his doctoral thesis on St. Thomas under the direction of the great Neo-Scholastic Thomist Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange. As I just mentioned, he wrote his doctoral dissertation in philosophy on the ethical system of the phenomenologist philosopher Max Scheler. Thomistic Personalism was developed by John Paul and others, such as Jacques Maritain, Étienne Gilson, Robert Spaemann, and Yves Simon in response to

“the dehumanizing forces of determinism and materialism of the nineteenth century, and especially against collectivism on the one hand and individualism on the other.” As one scholar has said of Wojtyla’s personalism, “his personalism was influenced by his experience of Hegelian totalitarianisms in his native Poland, both of Nietzschean (National Socialism) and Marxist (Leninist Communism) stamp. In his 1994 work, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, Pope John Paul narrates how interest in man and in his dignity became the main theme of the polemic against Marxism, and this because the Marxists themselves had made the question of man the center of their arguments.”

John Paul experienced both Nazi and Communists totalitarianism directly himself. They developed in nineteenth century Germany and Communism spread to Russia and elsewhere during the twentieth century, including into his native Poland. The nineteenth century saw the dehumanizing effects of the collectivistic philosophies of Hegel and Marx, the deterministic sociology of Comte, the biological determinism and materialism of Darwin, the atheistic collectivistic philosophy of Nietzsche, and the psychological determinism of Freud. Furthermore, the Scientific, Technological, and Industrial revolutions contributed further to the dehumanization of society. The dominance of Liberal Capitalism, with its excessive individualism, also contributed to human misery. John Paul II, as Karol Wojtyla, experienced both Nazi and Communist tyranny. John Paul and others developed their brand of personalism to counter the dehumanizing effects of these tyrannies.

In the words of Fr. Thomas McGovern, the Thomist brand of personalism is distinguished from other brands by “adopting a Thomistic metaphysics that posits man’s rational nature as the essential difference between persons and non-personal beings. Based on this key difference, Thomistic personalism focuses on the singularity of persons vis-à-vis other beings, not just as numeric members of a species, but as self-determining subjects possessing a unique dignity and worthy of special regard.” By applying Thomistic metaphysics to their analysis of the human person, the Thomas personalists were able to avoid the subjectivism of other personalist philosophies.

The problem of totalitarianism was to be a major consideration of Vatican Council II. And that was in part due to Karol Wojtyla’s influence on the Council as Cardinal Archbishop of Cracow. In light of past Nazi tyranny and present Communist atheism and materialism, he thought that the time was right for the Council in the words of Fr. McGovern “to emphasize the transcendent spiritual order and the uniqueness of human personal existence in the created world. In other words, he concluded, ‘it is appropriate to delineate the question of Christian personalism.’” He continues to say “the brutality of the Nazi occupation as a student and seminarian, and, later, of the tyranny of Communist oppression, gave him a unique perspective on the fundamental truths about man that needed to

be proclaimed and defended by the Church.” He then quotes Cardinal Wojtyla as saying:

The two totalitarian systems which tragically marked our century—Nazism on the one hand, marked by the horrors of war and the concentration camps, and communism on the other, with its regime of oppression and terror—I came to know, so to speak, from within. And so it is easy to understand my deep concern for the dignity of each human person and the need to respect human rights, beginning with the right to life. This concern was shaped in the first years of my priesthood and has grown stronger with time.

Others who heavily influenced Wojtyla’s personalist philosophy was another of Husserl’s disciples, Dietrich von Hildebrand, who as I said earlier Pope Pius XII called a twentieth century Doctor of the Church. During his professorial years Wojtyla produced two important books using the personalistic methodology, one being *Love and Responsibility* in 1960 and the other *The Acting Person* in 1962 as well as numerous essays, lectures, and articles. Thomas D. Williams has said that his concern for the acting person “arose not from the disputes with Marxism, but rather from his deep personal interest in man.” He says that, “In describing his own calling, John Paul writes that ‘when I discovered my priestly vocation, man became the central theme of my pastoral work.’ From the above, one already foresees the anthropological slant that Wojtyla’s work would take.”

What does he mean by anthropological slant? According to Max Scheler, Philosophical Anthropology is the philosophical science concerned with the questions about the essence or nature of man. Williams goes on to say that according to Wojtyla, “The centrality of the human person in moral theology represents a shift of emphasis from a more nomothetic framework to an ethics based on philosophical and theological anthropology.” By “nomothetic” he means a Natural Law framework. While Pope John Paul II, he told the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, then headed by Joseph Ratzinger, the future Benedict XVI, that in order to renew moral theology we need to return to Christology and anthropology. To quote one scholar on the matter, his principal objective was “to incorporate into Aquinas’ objectivistic anthropology of the person a more dynamic, personalistic approach.” Pope John Paul was to apply his Thomistic Personalism to both personal ethical issues as well as social issues. Williams writes in this regard:

[A]s Pope he has continued to employ personalistic arguments in his magisterial teaching, and in a sense has conferred on personalism a certain authority which raises it above the level of a mere philosophical position. John Paul clearly sees personalism as coalescing with revealed truths about the human person, and therefore as a contribution to theological reflection and renewal. He speaks of ‘regret’ that the Second Vatican Council’s doctrine of the dignity of the human person, who is united through the Covenant to Christ, the Creator and Redeemer, ‘has still not been introduced into theology nor has it been well applied.’ From this, John Paul

identifies ‘the need for theological renewal based on the personalistic nature of man.’ He likewise explicitly invokes the personalistic argument in his encyclical letters *Laborem Exercens*.”

John Paul II wrote in another social encyclical *Centesimus Annus* that, “It will be necessary to keep in mind that the main thread and, in a certain sense, the guiding principle . . . of all of the Church’s social doctrine is a correct view of the human person and of his unique value.”

Williams goes on to quote John Paul’s *Centesimus Annus*, which makes it clear that the Church’s social doctrine begins with the principle that “there is something due to the person because he is a person.” He adds, “social structures must be evaluated according to how they serve the person. Indeed, John Paul argues that the social order will be stable only if it takes the rights and interests of individual persons into account; any attempt to oppose the common good and the good of individual persons will be doomed to failure.” He concludes by again quoting the pope as saying:

What the social order needs is a correct understanding of the human person—a proper anthropology. The church makes her contribution by offering a Christian anthropology—a view of man that is rooted in theology. In this way, one moves from the social order to the human person to the revelation in Christ of what it means to be human. In my case, that progression was from economics to economic personalism to Christian anthropology to theology.

### ***The Law of the Gift***

In regard to the “Law of the Gift,” John Paul II stated, “[W]e are at our best, we are most fully alive and human, when we give away freely and sacrificially our very selves in love for another.” Cardinal Dolan, Archbishop of New York, says that “The Law of the Gift” was “exemplified in the lifelong, life-giving, faithful, intimate union of a man and woman in marriage, which then leads to the procreation of new life and the self-sacrificing love expressed in the care and education of their children.” The encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* contains quite a bit of discussion of Pope John Paul’s idea of the “Law of the gift”, the idea of “gratuitousness.” The pope’s biographer George Weigel believes that this “might be an interesting attempt to apply to economic activity certain facets of John Paul II’s Christian personalism and the teaching of Vatican II, in *Gaudium et Spes* on the moral imperative of making our lives the gift to others that life itself is to us.” The idea of the “Law of the Gift” was an important concept in Pope John Paul’s thinking and now in Pope Benedict’s as well.

John Paul when still Karol Wojtyla developed the idea in his book, *Love and Responsibility*. He pointed out that marital love has two aspects that must be considered in a successful marriage: the subjective and the objective. The subjective aspect places emphasis on the emotional content of love, what has been called Romantic love. It is nothing more than the natural pleasurable experience of a loving relationship, but it isn't love itself. According to Edward Sri, a prominent Catholic scholar who teaches at Benedictine College, in his article "The Law of the Gift—Understanding the Two Sides of Love" the objective aspect of love goes beyond the pleasurable feelings that one in love experiences on the subjective level. Interpreting John Paul II, he says, "True love involves virtue, friendship, and the pursuit of a common good. In Christian marriage, for example, a husband and wife unite themselves to the common aims of helping each other grow in holiness, deepening their own union, and raising children. Furthermore, they should not only share this common goal, but also have the virtue to help each other get there." He says that one must ask the following questions to determine whether or a not a relationship is a loving one:

Does the other person truly love me more for who I am or more for the pleasure he receives from the relationship? Does my beloved understand what is truly best for me, and does she have the virtue to help me get there? Are we deeply united by a common aim, serving each other and striving together toward a common good that is higher than each of us? Or are we really just living side by side, sharing resources and occasional good times together while we each selfishly pursue our own projects and interests in life? These are the kinds of questions that get at the objective aspect of love.

Karol Wojtyla teaches that what makes marital love different from all other forms of love, such as friendship, is that two people surrender themselves entirely to the other. He calls this "Self-giving Love." True marital love means totally surrendering oneself to the other without giving up ones identity, without giving up one's mind and will. Love is a decision, a free act of the will, to do the will of others, to do what is necessary to promote their total well-being—mental, physical, emotional, and above all spiritual well-being. In self-giving love, a man recognizes in a profound way that his life is not his own. In a true loving marital relationship, Sri tells us that the spouses surrender their own wills to his or her beloved. He says, their "own plans, dreams, and preferences are not completely abandoned, but they are now put in a new perspective." They are subordinated to the good of their spouse and any children they might have from their marriage. He writes that "many marriages today would be much stronger if only we understood and remembered the kind of self-giving love that we originally signed up for. Instead of selfishly pursuing our own preferences and desires, we must remember that when we made our vows, we freely chose to surrender—we lovingly wanted to surrender—our wills to the good of our spouse and our children." Jesus gives us the essence of love. He didn't tell us to feel good about him

when he told us what it means to love him. He said, “If you love me, obey my commandments.” In other words, loving Jesus is using one’s will to do his will; to freely surrender one’s will to his as he did to his Heavenly Father.

Pope John Paul II applies the concept of self-giving love to the idea of the “Law of the Gift.” Sri says of the Pope’s law of self-giving, “At the heart of this gift of self is a fundamental conviction that in surrendering my autonomy to my beloved, I gain so much more in return. By uniting myself to another, my own life is not diminished but is profoundly enriched.” He claims that in an age of individualism, this idea might be very difficult to understand. He asked why should anyone want to go outside himself to find happiness? Why would one ever want to commit himself to someone else in this radical way? Why would anyone want to give up the freedom to do whatever he wants with his life? However, he says that from a Christian perspective:

Life is not about ‘doing whatever I want.’ It is about my relationships—about fulfilling my relationship with God and with the people God has placed in my life. In fact, this is where we find fulfillment in life: in living our relationships well. But to live our relationships well, we must often make sacrifices, surrendering our own will to serve the good of others. This is why we discover a deeper happiness in life when we give ourselves in this way, for we are living the way God made us to live, which is the way God Himself lives: in total, self-giving, committed love.

Much of what John Paul II and others have said about true marital love can also be said about all other loving relationships as well, including loving the entire human race. Applying self-giving love and the “Law of the Gift” not just to God or spouses and children, but to all of his children, true love then is giving up ones time, talent, treasure, and freedom for the sake of the loved ones, which is expressed in the two commandments of love found in the Ten Commandments: to love God with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves, or even better yet, as he has loved us. This applies to all human beings. God has a special love for us all, because he created us in his own image and likeness, and when we fell from his grace he continued to love us so much that he sent his only begotten son into the world to redeem and save us. All of the Church’s social teachings flow from these two facts.

### ***Theology of the Body***

Pope John Paul II’s Personalist philosophy can best be seen in his *Theology of the Body*, which was the topic of a series of 129 lectures given by the pope during his Wednesday audiences in St. Peter’s Square and the Pope Paul VI Hall between September 1979 and November 1984. According to sources, it was the first major teaching of his pontificate.

The pope expanded on the theme in numerous encyclicals, letters, and exhortations. One source outlines the work as covering such topics as:

[T]he unified corporeal and spiritual qualities of the human person; the origins, history and destiny of humanity; the deepest desires of the human heart and the way to experience true happiness and freedom; the truth about man's need and desire for loving communion derived from the revealed understanding of humanity in the image of a Triune Creator; the truth about God's original design for human sexuality and thus the dignity of the human person, how it was distorted through sin, and how it has been restored and renewed through the redemption of Jesus Christ; and Catholic teachings about the sacramentality of marriage.

Christopher West, who is a Catholic author and speaker known for his interpretation of Pope John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*, states that the central thesis of John Paul's Theology of the Body is that "the body, and it alone, is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and the divine. It was created to transfer into the visible reality of the world, the mystery hidden since time immemorial in God, and thus to be a sign of it."

One source describes the pope's series as follows:

The work consists of two halves and five cycles. The first half, entitled "The Words of Christ" consists of three cycles in which John Paul II establishes an "adequate anthropology." Cycle 1 looks at the human person as we were created to be "in the beginning" (original man); Cycle 2 addresses human life after original sin, unredeemed and redeemed (historical man). Cycle 3 treats the reality of our life at the end of time when Christ comes back again and history reaches its fulfillment (eschatological man). John Paul II also places his reflections on virginity for the kingdom within the context of Cycle 3. In the second half, entitled "The Sacrament" (which refers to the sacrament of marriage), John Paul II addresses the sacramentality of marriage in Cycle 4 and the responsible transmission of human life in Cycle 5.

He informs us that some consider Pope Benedict XVI's first encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love) "with its exposition of the relation between *agape* and *eros*, to be the culmination of John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*."

In the first cycle, the pope deals with divorce, a practice that was accepted by Moses because of the weakness of the Israelites, but that isn't how God established marriage in the first place. According to one scholar:

Prior to sin, the pope accounts, man and woman's desire for one another was perfectly oriented in a Sacramental way that pointed them toward God's ultimate plan for humanity: the marriage of Christ the bridegroom with his bride the Church.

Throughout Sacred Scripture, the most common reference that Christ uses when speaking of heaven is that of a wedding feast. Thus, marriage is intended to be a union that draws us deeper into the mystery of our creation and provides a foretaste of the heavenly marriage between Christ and his Church, where man and woman are no longer given in marriage. In heaven, the eternal wedding feast, men and women have now arrived at their ultimate destination and no longer have need of the Sacrament (or sign) of marriage.

John Paul treats the subject of adultery in his second cycle as discussed by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is recorded as saying in Matthew 5:27-28: “You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say to you, that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart.” Rather than taking a strictly natural law way of explaining this passage, in the words of one source the pope explains this as “looking at another person to desire them in a reductive way, that is they are viewed as merely an object of desire. Pope John Paul II says this seems to be a key passage for theology of the body.”

The pope analyzes the Resurrection of the body in the third cycle by using the instance where Jesus answered the Sadducees when they come to him and asked him about a woman who had married seven brothers, and he considers celibacy and virginity in the fourth cycle. In the fifth cycle he discusses the sacrament of marriage.

In his *Theology of the Body Explained* Christopher West, who has been teaching John Paul's theology of the body since the late 1990s, wrote, “John Paul's TOB is most often cast as an extended catechesis on marriage and sexual love. It certainly is that, but it is also so much more. Through the mystery of the Incarnate person and the biblical analogy of spousal love, John Paul II's catechesis illumines the entirety of God's plan for human life from origin to eschaton with a splendid supernatural light.”

On the other hand, Alice von Hildebrand, widow of twentieth century theologian Dietrich von Hildebrand who was a profound expert on the subject of spousal love, severely criticized West's approach, which she considers a “hyper-sexualized approach to the *Theology of the Body*.” In this regard, she writes, “My general criticism of Christopher West is that he does not seem to grasp the delicacy, reverence, privacy, and sacredness of the sexual sphere. He also underestimates the effects of Original Sin on the human condition.”

George Weigel, the noted biographer of John Paul, has described *Theology of the Body* as “one of the boldest reconfigurations of Catholic theology in centuries.” He goes on to say it is a “kind of theological time bomb set to go off with dramatic consequences, sometime in the third millennium of the Church.” Weigel believes that it has barely begun to “shape the Church's theology, preaching, and religious education” but when it does “it will com-

pel a dramatic development of thinking about virtually every major theme in the Creed.”

Nonetheless, Weigel realizes that there are major obstacles to the theology of the body becoming the standard for moral theology. He states that, “The Pope is very hard to read and understand: The density of John Paul's material is one factor. A secondary literature capable of translating John Paul's thought into accessible categories and vocabulary is badly needed.” And, Weigel believes, the dominant liberal views on such issues as women's rights, birth control, abortion and divorce are also obstacles to the 'theology of the body' becoming known or accepted.

In conclusion, Pope John Paul II's theology of the body in particular and theology in general is an attempt to blend Aristotelian-Thomistic with personalist philosophy. He saw the importance of Thomistic philosophy and theology, yet while combining it with a personalist philosophy to provide a deeper understanding of the human person and his behavior, he saw the limitations of a strictly phenomenological approach. One source quotes him as saying, “If we wish to speak rationally about good and evil, we have to return to St. Thomas Aquinas, that is, to the philosophy of being. With the phenomenological method, for example, we can study experiences of morality, religion, or simply what it is to be human, and draw from them a significant enrichment of our knowledge. Yet we must not forget that all these analyses implicitly presuppose the reality of the Absolute Being and also the reality of being human, that is, being a creature. If we do not set out from such 'realist' presuppositions, we end up in a vacuum.” Only time will tell how deep and lastly will be John Paul II's Personalist theology.

## THE REASONABLENESS OF REVELATION

So far we have proven beyond a reasonable doubt that God exists. All other knowledge of religion presupposes that he does. Once we established that God does exist, or at least making it reasonable to believe that he does exist, using human reason we identified his attributes or qualities. Then based on rational proof of God's existence and something of his attributes, using human reason we established that we owe God worship, thanksgiving, obedience, and love. Furthermore, we proved by using reason that the human soul is immortal and made it reasonable to believe that God established an objective moral order called the natural law.

However, because of our fallen human nature, there is a limit to what we can know about God and ourselves using human reason. We need his revelation. At this point of our discussions we must prove that it is reasonable to believe that God revealed himself to us. During this discussion we will examine the credibility and integrity of the sources of revelation— Scripture and Tradition.

Following this we will explain how Christ established the Catholic Church to continue his presence in the world and provide us with the means of grace with which to achieve salvation. Proof that God revealed himself depends on the truth that he established a church, the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. St Augustine wrote in the fourth century that he couldn't believe what is contained in the Bible without the testimony of the Church, because the Church was there to witness the events described therein, eventually wrote them down in scripture, and transmitted down through the ages for our benefit.

Revelation means that the Word of God the Father, the Supreme Truth, has spoken to humankind and revealed truths, which are not in themselves evident to the human mind. This gives us the choice of either rejecting revelation altogether, or accepting it by faith. This means that we must submit our intellect to truths, which we cannot understand, but which come to us on Divine authority. As we discussed earlier in this essay, the only adequate answer to why we believe with Divine faith any Divine truth is because God has revealed it.

However, as we also discussed above, the idea that faith is blind is a false one. To quote Vatican I on this matter once again, "We believe that revelation is true, not indeed because the intrinsic truth of the mysteries is clearly seen by the natural light of reason, but because of the authority of God Who reveals them, for He can neither deceive nor be deceived." St. Thomas Aquinas said regarding this matter, "A man would not believe unless he saw the things he had to believe, either by the evidence of miracles or of some-

something similar.” The saint is here speaking of the motives of credibility. What do we know about God through revelation, and therefore on faith, that is unknown by mere reason? There is a vast difference in the depth or wealth of supernatural knowledge from God’s revelation to humankind compared with the natural rational knowledge accessible to humankind through reason. The genius of an Aristotle or Plato discovered a lot about God using human reason, but they never even came close to the knowledge the Hebrews had of God by revelation let alone conceiving of a God of three Divine Persons revealed in the Gospels, a God who loves us and created us to be part of his extended family. Even in the Old Testament we get a glimpse of God’s plural nature when he said in the Book of Genesis “let us make man to our image and likeness.” There is only one God, but God is a family who made human beings in his image and likeness to live with him and with others. We could never have known this by reason alone.

It is also far above the ability of the unaided human mind apart from revelation that God so loved the world that he became man to become like us and to be one of us. Fr. Hardon tells us that Love wants to become like the one whom it loves. He says, “What mind boggling truth we believe in when we believe, as we do on faith, that the God of creation, the God of the billowing seas and the towering mountains and the stars millions of light years away, this God became a little child.”

What’s more, we could not have known that God became man, not only to become like us, but also to suffer and die for us. Fr. Hardon says that knowing this we should want to suffer and die for him. He says “No intellect, no thousand human intellects would ever conceive of a God like this unless He had vouchsafed to reveal Himself as the God who died on the cross.” Furthermore, Father tells us that, “God became man in order to teach us who He is and what He wants us to do. . .” Moreover, he says:

God revealed Himself to show us how we are to serve Him. That is why He came into the world a speechless child, infant, so that by following in His footsteps as the way we might reach the God from whom we came. More still and finally, what is there more to God’s revelation about Himself than we could ever acquire by natural reason? We learn from God become man that He wants to share not only creatures, He wants to share Himself with us. So that by sharing Himself with us we might want to share ourselves with Him.”

### ***Why it is reasonable to believe in God’s Revelation***

Although we can prove beyond a reasonable doubt that God does exist by the use of our reason, as we have said, most of what we know about him is through divine revelation. This is true because of the original sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve. Because of the

Fall, we possess diminished intellects and weakened wills as well as concupiscence—the desire to sin. In other words, after the Fall, human nature was damaged and a veil was created between God and us so that we no longer have a direct communication with him.

Although the human race lost its friendship with God when Adam and Eve sinned and were driven from the Garden of Eden, God still loved them so much that he planned to redeem them and their descendants one day by sending his only begotten son into the world to eventually restore all things. Moreover, human beings still had the law of God written on their hearts—the Natural Law.

About 4,000 years ago God began to gradually reveal himself to his Chosen People, the Hebrews. The story of the covenants that God made with his Chosen People are told in the books of the Old Testament. God continued to reveal himself to humankind in the New Testament. Jesus, the Son of God the Father, told us much about himself and his relationship to the Father and the Holy Spirit that we couldn't otherwise have known using reason. The Hebrews had not known that God consisted of three divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He also revealed to us the law of the love of neighbor as taught in the Sermon on the Mount and at the Last Supper. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ fulfilled and sealed the covenants that God had made with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David in the Old Testament. As St. Augustine said, the New and Everlasting Covenant or the New Testament is concealed in the Old Testament and the Old Testament is revealed in the New Testament.

Although Divine Revelation ended when John wrote the Book of Revelation, God has continued to inspire us with knowledge of himself through the writings of the Church Fathers, saints, theologians, church councils, and popes down through the ages. They have not provided us with anything new in regard to what it takes for us to achieve Heaven, but they help us to better understand what God has revealed to us and how to better apply his revelation to our lives.

### ***Holy Scripture and Tradition***

Revelation is found in Holy Scripture and Tradition. The *Catechism* defines Holy Scripture as “the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit” (No. 81). The *Catechism* says of Tradition: “Tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. It transmits it to the successors of the apostles so that, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, they may faithfully preserve, expound, and spread it abroad by their preaching” (No. 81).

The *Catechism* continues: “As a result the Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the Holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence” (No. 82). The *Catechism* concludes this discussion of Tradition by stating, “The Tradition here in question comes from the apostles and hands on what they received from Jesus’ teaching and example and what they learned from the Holy Spirit. The first generation of Christians did not yet have a written New Testament, and the New Testament itself demonstrates the process of living Tradition” (No. 83).

This latter point is extremely important, because the first century Christians at first transmitted what Jesus said and did orally, only writing it down later when the Church started to spread far beyond the boundaries of the Holy Land and they realized that Jesus was not going to return during their lifetimes. In other words, originally the New Testament began as a part of Holy Tradition. Even after the Gospels were written before the end of the first century, not everything Jesus said and did was included in the Gospels. John tells us in his Gospel: “But there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written” (John 21:25). Of course, John is using hyperbola here, but what he means is that Jesus said and did a lot more things than is written in his Gospel.

Tradition includes not only Holy Scripture, but also ancient creeds, such as the Apostles Creed, and catechisms such as the *Didiche*, ancient liturgies, the writings of the Church Fathers and Doctors, and ecumenical councils, especially those of the Church’s formative years. I might add that all of the Church’s doctrines are found either explicitly or at least implicitly in the Bible. Regarding tradition, St Paul tells us, “To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter” (2 Thessalonians 2:14-15).

### ***The Old Testament***

Is it reasonable to believe that the accounts of the Old Testament are reliable and credible; that is can they be trusted? The answer is emphatically yes! The infallible teaching authority of the Catholic Church guarantees the truthfulness and integrity of the Scriptures, including the Old Testament. This means that we can have confidence that the books of the Bible are substantially the same as they were when they left the hands of the writers.

**The Old Testament is its own witness:** The credibility and integrity of the Scriptures

can also be proved on the testimony of the Sacred Writings themselves as well as on the testimony of Jewish and Christian tradition. For example, from the Old Testament we learn in the book of Deuteronomy that Moses wrote the “words of the law and delivered it to the Levites to be put in the side of the Ark of the Covenant” (Deuteronomy 31: 9-13; 24-26). Also, the Book of Joshua tells us that Joshua made additions to the “volume of the law of the Lord” (Joshua. 24, 26). Moreover in 1 Kings we find that Samuel “wrote the law of the kingdom in a book, and laid it up before the Lord” (1 Kings 10:25). What’s more, we find from several sources that the Prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, wrote down prophecies and accounts of historical events and entrusted them to their disciples. We know from the Old Testament that the Psalms were used in public worship about 700 B.C. (2 Chronicles 29:30) and that around 450 B.C. Esdras collected the Mosaic Law and read it to the people (2 Esdras 8). We learn from 2 Maccabees that Nehemiah collected the books of the Kings, of David, and of the Prophets into a library (2 Maccabees. 2:13). ). This and other evidence proves that the Jewish authorities collected the Sacred Books and, therefore, considered them genuine.

**The Old Testament doesn’t glorify the Israelites:** Further evidence that the books of the Old Testament are genuine is the fact that they don’t glorify the Jewish people. In fact, the contrary is true. Although the Old Testament describes the glorious mission of the Chosen People and God’s extraordinary providence in their behalf, it also describes their unfaithfulness to God on numerous occasions. One could conclude from this that the Jews have no reason to keep the sacred scriptures except for their belief in their authenticity and truthfulness.

**The testimony of Jesus Christ:** The most powerful argument for the authenticity and truthfulness of the Old Testament is from the testimony of Christ and his Apostles. Jesus makes reference to the Old Testament on many occasions (For example see John 5:39; 5:45-46; 19:36; Luke 24:44) as did St. Paul (2 Timothy 3:16) and St. Peter (2 Peter 1:21). I’ll illustrate a couple of these references: Jesus says in John 5:39, “You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me. Jesus says in Luke 24:44, “These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled.” And on the road to Emmaus Jesus said to the disciples, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory? Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures” (Luke 24:25-27). If one accepts the New Testament he must also accept the Old Testament on which it is based. As St. Augustine said, the New Testament is concealed in the Old Testament and the Old Testament is revealed in the New Testament.

**Archaeology and the Old Testament:** Furthermore, secular history and archaeology have proven that the accounts in the Old Testament are true. The history found in the Old Testament is closely interwoven with the history of most of the great nations and empires of ancient world. No established facts of secular history have been found to contradict the facts found in the Old Testament. For example, Isaiah (20:1) mentions an Assyrian king by the name of Sargon. For a long time secular historians had not come across this king in their researches, so many historians considered the story that contained the name to be a fable. However, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, archaeological excavations at Nineveh uncovered numerous inscriptions referring to him as well as his portrait. Another example is found in 1Kings 14:25 that mentions an Egyptian King by the name of Sheshonk, who invaded Palestine and plundered Jerusalem under King Solomon's successor Rohoboam. He too was unknown to secular historians until his name was found in an inscription in Karnak, Egypt in the early twentieth century. Even another example is found in 2 Kings 18:14 that tells about the story of the Assyrian king Sennacherib's expedition to Jerusalem. Archaeologists have found Babylonian inscriptions proving the truth of this account as well.

Although there are many more such examples, one more should suffice to make our point, that the biblical account is confirmed by secular history and archaeology. Ancient historians had long said that Nabonidus was the last king of Babylon, but the biblical account in Daniel 5 states that Baltassar (Belshazzar) was the last Babylonian king. Consequently, secular historians had maintained that the story of Daniel's interpretation of the writing on the wall told in this chapter was nothing but a myth. Then two documents written on clay cylinders were found in the ruins of Babylon in which Nabonidus speaks of his first-born son Baltassar and in another document reference is made to the reign of Baltassar, thus proving that Daniel's story was no myth.

**The Catholic Church accepts the Old Testament canon:** The Catholic Church accepts the books of the Old Testament on the authority of the Jews. The Church received the Old Testament Books through Christ and his Apostles in the Greek Translation called the Septuagint. The name was derived from the Latin *septuaginta*, which means seventy. With the spread of the Jews into many lands at various times and circumstances the need arose for the translation of the Bible into new tongues. The Septuagint was the most notable of these translations. The Septuagint was the first Greek version of the Old Testament made at Alexandria, Egypt between 250 and 100 B.C., traditionally by 70 Jewish translators and was designed to be used by the large number of Jews in Egypt who had adopted the Greek language. The New Testament quotations from the Old Testament are mostly taken from it and not from the Hebrew. It is often referred to simply as LXX. The *Catechism* says of the Old Testament, "Christians venerate the Old Testament as true Word of God. The Church has always vigorously opposed the idea of rejecting the Old

Testament under the pretext that the New has rendered it void (Marcionism)” (No. 123).

Archaeologist John McRay, who retired 2002 from Wheaton College, sheds light on the biblical text by examining recent archaeological discoveries in Archeology and the New Testament. He discusses many of the more important sites associated with the ministry of Jesus, the journey of Paul, and the seven churches of Revelation where he demonstrates the pervasive influence of society, architecture, and religion on the peoples of the first century and on the New Testament.

### ***The New Testament***

It is reasonable to believe that the Gospel accounts of the New Testament can be trusted. For anyone who takes the trouble to study the matter carefully, it is beyond a shadow of doubt that Sacred Scripture tells the truth and nothing but the truth. The Gospels are “not merely religious propaganda, hopelessly tainted by overactive imaginations and evangelistic zeal.” Many outstanding scripture scholars and historians have made a convincing case that the Gospels were written by eyewitnesses or writers who relied on eyewitness accounts. Moreover, they have proven that the Gospel accounts of the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ into Heaven were written soon after the events themselves. These factors are unmistakable earmarks of accuracy, happening too soon after the events to allow for the formation of legends or myths.

**The Gospels contain reliable history:** Furthermore, scholars have proven that the “gospel writers intended to preserve reliable history, were able to do so, were honest and willing to include difficult-to-explain material, and didn’t allow bias to unduly color their reporting.” The harmony among the Gospels on the essential facts, together with the dissimilarity of some details, gives historical credibility to the accounts. Also, in the words of one scholar, the early Church “could not have taken root and flourished right there in Jerusalem if it had been teaching facts about Jesus that his own contemporaries could have exposed as exaggerated or false.”

The Gospel accounts have been reliably preserved for us. Compared with other existing ancient documents, we possess a large number of manuscripts and fragments of manuscripts of the New Testament that were written very close to the time of the original documents (at least 5,000). The existing manuscripts of most ancient classical stories were written many centuries after the original compositions. In addition, scholars claim that the New Testament that we possess today is over 99% free of textual discrepancies, putting no major Christian doctrines in doubt. Bruce Metzger, late distinguished professor at Princeton Theological Seminary who was considered one of the most influential

New Testament scholars of the twentieth century, aid in the words of one scholar:

Compared with other ancient documents, there is an unprecedented number of New Testament manuscripts and that they can be dated extremely close to the original writings. The modern New Testament is 99.5 percent free of textual discrepancies, with no major Christian doctrines in doubt. The criteria used by the early church to determine which books should be considered authoritative have ensured that we possess the best records about Jesus. In other words, a comparison with the current New Testament with the oldest available manuscripts shows few textual discrepancies, proving that very few copyist or editorial errors exist in modern editions. The criteria used by the early Church to determine which documents should be considered inspired by the Holy Spirit and free from doctrinal error have ensured that we possess the most accurate records about Jesus.

**The Catholic Church establishes the New Testament:** How did the Church decide what books should be in the New Testament? To simplify our answer, I'll just say that the early Church decided which books of the Bible were canonical, that is inspired by the Holy Spirit, by tracing what books were used over the very early centuries in the dioceses established by the Apostles; places such as Alexandria, Antioch, Ephesus, Rome, and Jerusalem. Many other accounts of Christ's life and sayings were in existence during the years of the early Church, but most of them were apocryphal, containing a lot of inaccurate, even, heretical information. The so-called Gnostic gospels, acts, and epistles are examples of what I am referring too. These are the types of writings that Dan Brown relies exclusively on in *The Da Vinci Code* and radical feminists writers use to spin out their theologies or ideologies.

**The Gospels are reliable history:** Since this is such an important topic for our faith, I'll provide a summary of factors that prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the Gospels are reliable historical documents.

- The Gospels are eyewitness accounts: Matthew and John were Apostles of Jesus. Mark was a disciple of St. Peter, and Luke a disciple of St. Paul.
- Luke tells us that he interviewed eyewitnesses, which probably included the Blessed Mother herself.
- They were written within living memory of the events they describe: reliable scripture scholars believe that the Gospels were almost certainly written before 70 A.D., because they do not mention the destruction of the Temple, which occurred that year. John's gospel was the last to be written, but in accordance with the

- Ryland's papyrus fragment, we know that it was almost certainly written before 90 A.D.
- They have independent corroboration: Flavius Josephus wrote in *Jewish Antiquities* about Jesus' life, miracles, crucifixion, and resurrection. Other independent sources include Tacitus and Pliny the Younger. Edwin Yamauchi, a professor ancient history at Miami University claims that "We have better historical documentation for Jesus than for the founder of any other ancient religion."
- Sources from outside the Bible corroborate that many people believed Jesus performed healings and was the Messiah, that he was crucified, and that despite this shameful death, his followers, who believed he was still alive, worshiped him as God.
- No one contradicted them during their early distribution of the gospels: No documents of the time contain any contradictions of the facts presented in the Gospels. This includes Jesus' enemies who would have had every reason to point out any contradictions to others.
- The authors had nothing to gain and everything to lose, including their lives: The authors of the Gospels gained neither fame, wealth, or power. All of them except John were martyred.
- Existing texts have not been altered: The very earliest texts of the Gospels agree with later texts. We have texts of the Gospels older than any other texts.
- They are absolutely free from legendary and mythological development: The Apostles are described as having human faults and failings. They describe miracles and supernatural events in a matter-of-fact way.

Craig Blomberg of Denver Seminary in his *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* and other books maintains that the gospels "reflect eyewitness testimony and bear the unmistakable earmarks of accuracy." He says that the gospels were written too soon after Jesus' death for myths or legends to have developed. He states that "Within the first two years after his death, significant numbers of Jesus' followers seem to have formulated a doctrine of the atonement, were convinced that he had been raised from the dead in bodily form, associated Jesus with God, and believed they found support for all these convictions in the Old Testament." Blomberg believes that the evidence is substantial that the gospel writers intended to preserve reliable history.

### ***The Jesus of History and the Christ of Faith***

According to Norman Geisler, a prominent present day Protestant theologian, that it was the eighteenth century German philosopher Hermann Samuel Reimarus who first separated what the apostles said about Jesus from what Jesus actually said about himself. In the words of one scholar, he was a Deist who “believed that human reason can arrive at a knowledge of God and ethics from a study of nature and our own internal reality, thus eliminating the need for religions based on revelation. He denied the supernatural origin of Christianity, and is credited by some with initiating historians’ investigation of the historical Jesus.” Geisler says that “This partition between the Christ of Faith and the Jesus of History remains a core tenet of much of modern New Testament research. It is rooted in the anti-supernaturalism of Benedict Spinoza, English Deism, and the fact/value dichotomy of Immanuel Kant.” Deism is the religion that God designed and created the universe and all that is in it, and then stepped back and had no concern for its operation. Naturally, with such a view, Reimarus denied the possibility of miracles and prophecies. This view considered Jesus just a simple religious teacher, rather than the divine person of traditional doctrine. After Reimarus, the most dominant scripture scholars were Protestants, mainly German Lutherans, among them Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher.

I think that Richard N. Longenecker, formerly a professor at the University of Toronto, in his article “The Jesus of History and the Christ of Faith: Some Contemporary Reflections” sums it all up nicely when he writes, “Schleiermacher was heavily influenced by the Enlightenment. Thus he denied that Christianity rested on the historical and doctrinal claims of the New Testament; rather, he insisted that it had to do only with the inward religious consciousness of Jesus, which was a consciousness of being in relation with God and absolutely dependent on God.” Schleiermacher was to be the first to distinguish the Jesus of History, the Jesus who actually lived in the early first century from the Christ of Faith, the Jesus who the early Christian community believed in, but who was not necessarily the same person. The implication being that the later followers of Jesus, including those who wrote the Gospels, made up the stories about his sayings and actions, including his miracles, prophecies, and above all his resurrection.

There is no doubt that these Protestant Biblical scholars were greatly influenced by the pervasive influence of the Enlightenment. According to Philip Trower, a noted British writer and journalist, in his book *Turmoil & Truth: The Historical Roots of the Modern Crisis* the denial of the historical truth of the miracles in Sacred Scripture, and of Scripture’s divine authorship and authority led to a crises in faith among countless Christians—Protestant and Catholic. He states that “The books of the Bible were considered to be merely profane documents, written by different groups of people with their own political or personal goals.” Baruch Spinoza was the first to apply some of these ideas to the Old

Testament, and Reimarus to the New Testament. Now in the nineteenth century we find Protestant Biblical scholars such as Schleiermacher and others, as well as the Catholic Ernst Renan, Alfred Loisy, and George Tyrrell applying the Rationalist system to interpreting the Bible. Trower states that each of these scholars had his own theory, but “the ultimate conclusion of them all was that the Bible contained either falsified history or edifying myths, and that we can really know very little about what Jesus Christ really said and did.” This is the essence of the current Jesus Seminar that just about everyone has heard about thanks to PBS and the History, Discovery and similar documentary channels. Longenecker concludes his article by saying, “Unfortunately, it was Schleiermacher’s brand of philosophical theology, biblical criticism, and hermeneutics that gained ascendancy on the European continent during the nineteenth century.”

We’ll evaluate and refute the flawed methodology and false presuppositions of these and other Modernists in another section of this website, but for now I’ll simply say that they are nothing but mere fabrications. Pope Benedict XVI recently reaffirmed the long held Catholic view in his book *Jesus of Nazareth* that the Jesus of History and the Christ of Faith are one and the same, a statement for which contemporary Modernists have taken him to task, naturally.

In summary, numerous scholars have maintained over the past three hundred years that the Jesus Christ of history is not the same as the Christ of Faith. Some scholars have maintained that there existed an actual Jesus of history, but that the Jesus found in the Gospel accounts was invented by later Christians to prove the truth of their Faith. A radical fringe of contemporary scripture scholars, including some Catholics, such as former priest John Dominic Crossan, who hold this view are contributors of the much-publicized Jesus Seminar. The scholars of the Jesus Seminar and others rule out the possibility of miracles and employ other questionable presuppositions or assumptions to determine what Jesus really said and did. Moreover, many of them rely on questionable ancient documents, such as the various Gnostic writings, in their attempts to discredit the Gospels. A careful study of the facts dispels beyond any reasonable doubt that the Gospels are true and that the Jesus Christ of Faith is indeed the Jesus of History.

Prominent scholars maintain that we have better historical proof that Jesus Christ existed than for the founder of any other ancient religion. There are many sources outside the Bible that corroborates that he lived. Many of them report that he was believed to be the Messiah and that he performed miracles; that he was crucified, and that despite his shameful death, his followers believed he arose from the dead and worshipped him as God. One scholar has documented thirty-nine ancient sources that corroborate more than one hundred facts concerning Jesus existence (*The Case for Christ*, Lee Stoebel). Moreover, a number of secular sources, several early creeds, and the Apostolic Church Fathers

wrote extensively on the life of Jesus and of the early Catholic Church. The Apostolic Fathers were second generation bishops who followed the Apostles, men such as St. Justin Martyr, St. Ignatius of Antioch, St. Irenaeus, and St. Polycarp who was consecrated by St. John the Evangelist. This generation of Christians heard the testimony of actual witnesses to the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ into Heaven. Among non-Christian sources that corroborate the Bible are the writings of Tacitus, Pliny the Younger, and Josephus. The very earliest traditions of the Catholic Church, which are unquestionably safe from legendary development, prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Jesus Christ believed that he was the Son of God, the anointed one of God (Hebrew Messiah; Greek Christos).

### ***Only Jesus Christ fulfills the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament***

Of all the figures of history, only Jesus Christ fulfills the prophecies regarding the Messiah. Hundreds of years before he was born, numerous prophets foretold the coming of the Messiah, or the Anointed One (the Christos in Greek), who would save the world from its sins. Among the many prophecies concerning the Messiah are as follows:

- He was foretold from Adam to Abraham as the Savior from sin and the blessing of all nations (Genesis 3:15; 12:3; 22:18).
- He would have a precursor (Malachi. 3:1).
- He will come from the tribe of Judah, one of Jacob's (Israel) sons (Genesis 49::8-12).
- He would come from the ancestral line of David; the prophet Nathan, speaking the word of the Lord, revealed to David that one of his descendants would establish an everlasting kingdom (2 Samuel 7:1-16).
- His birth of a virgin was foretold (Isaiah 7:14; Jeremiah 31:22).
- The time of his coming was revealed to Daniel (Daniel 9:24)
- Even the place of His birth, Bethlehem, was identified (Micah 5:2-14).
- His reign was described (Jeremiah 23:5).
- He would enter the rebuilt Temple (Haggai 2:8; Malachi. 3:1).
- He was to abide among men and would suffer a cruel passion and death at their hands to redeem mankind (Isaiah 42:1-4; 53:1-12).
- He was to rise from the dead as a proof of His divinity (Zephaniah 3:8).
- Isaiah (7:14) had foretold that he would be Emmanuel, that is, God with us.

When the angel Gabriel appeared to the Virgin Mary and announced to her that she would conceive and bear a son named Jesus, the prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled. He was called Christ, which is the same as Messiah, and Jesus, meaning "he who saves"

(Matthew 1:21, 25; 26:68; John 1:41; 4:25). Furthermore, he was called “The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” (John 1:29, 36). Isaiah describes in detail several places the sufferings that the Messiah would undergo (Especially Isaiah 53) that accurately describe his suffering and death. The importance of the book of Isaiah is shown by the fact that Christ and the Apostles quoted him at least 50 times and freely quote him more than 40 additional times (Matthew 3:3; 8:17; 12:18; Mark 1:7; Luke 3:4; John 1:12; Acts 8:28; Romans 9:20). Isaiah is quoted more frequently in the New Testament than any other prophet; and his book, along with the Psalms and Deuteronomy seems to have been a favorite of Our Lord and the Apostles.

In effect, dozens of Old Testament prophecies foretell the coming of a Messiah that only Jesus Christ could fulfill. Philip Stoner, who was Chairman of the Departments of Mathematics and Astronomy at Pasadena City College and Chairman of the science division at Westmont College has estimated that there is only one chance in a trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion that Jesus, and only Jesus, throughout history, matched this prophetic fingerprint. He concludes that “This confirms Jesus’ identity to an incredible degree of certainty.”

### ***Jesus Christ claims to be God***

It is reasonable to believe that Jesus Christ claimed to be God. Jesus revealed that he was the Messiah and God’s Son only gradually. The occasions are as follows:

- When he was found after having been lost in the Temple he said “How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” (Luke 2:45-52)
- When Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter said in reply, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Jesus said to him in reply, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. (Matthew 16:13-20).
- At Jesus’ baptism by John the Baptism at the River Jordan: “Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form, as a dove, and a voice came from heaven, ‘Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well

pleased” (Luke 3:21-22).

- At the Transfiguration when God the Father said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.’ When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces, and were filled with awe” (Matthew 17:1-8).
- During the Feast of the Tabernacles that Jesus began to speak more openly and forcefully about whom he was. He began to refer to himself as the “Living Water” (John 7:37-38) and the “Light of the World” (John 8:12), and claiming that he was greater than their father Abraham. After a particularly intense debate with the Scribes and Pharisees in the Temple, Jesus said to them: “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” So they took up stones to throw at him; but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple (John 58-59). The Jews, that is those Jews who were his enemies, knew perfectly well that Jesus was claiming to be God when he referred to himself as "I AM," the name with which God had identified himself to Moses in the Burning Bush (Genesis 3).
- Once in the Temple after the Scribes and the Pharisees had brought to Jesus a woman who had been caught in adultery, a conversation erupted between him and them when Jesus said “I bear witness to myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness to me.’ They said to him therefore, ‘Where is your Father?’ Jesus answered, ‘You know neither me nor my Father; if you knew me, you would know my Father also.’ These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.” Then when the conversation turned to Abraham, Jesus said “Your father Abraham rejoiced that he was to see my day; he saw it and was glad.’ The Jews then said to him, ‘You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?’ Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.’ So they took up stones to throw at him; but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple” (John 8). Again, the Jews knew that Jesus was claiming to be God and sought to kill him.
- During the feast of the Dedication at Jerusalem when Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. The Jews gathered round him said “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.” Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness to me; but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.” The Jews

took up stones again to stone him (John 10: 22-40).

- When Jesus delivered his farewell address to his Apostles at the Last Supper, he told them that he was the way, the truth, and the life and that he and the Father were one; that if one sees him they see the Father; that he is in the Father and the Father is in him. In other words, Jesus was clearly telling them he is God (John 14).
- After his arrest, Jesus was questioned at the palace of the high priest, Caiaphas. There he was falsely accused and mistreated by the Jews (Matthew 26; Mark 14; Luke 22). The chief priests and the whole council tried to get false testimony against Jesus so they could put him to death, but they could find none, although many false witnesses had come forward. Eventually two came forward and said, “This fellow said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.’” In response the high priest stood up and said “Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?” But Jesus remained silent. Then the high priest said to him, “I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.” Jesus said to him “You have said so. But I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.” Then the high priest tore his robes, and said, “He has uttered blasphemy. Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy” (Matthew 26:62-65). In the early morning hours Jesus was taken to the temple area where he was tried, convicted, and sentenced to death for blasphemy by the Sanhedrin.

### ***Jesus Christ proves he is God***

Jesus Christ proved beyond a reasonable doubt that he is God by doing things that only God can do, such as:

- By displaying every attribute of deity, including: omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, eternity, and immutability.
- By unrivaled teaching and divine understanding of people.
- By living a life of perfect virtue and holiness.
- By making prophecies that came true, such as the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and of his suffering, death, and resurrection. Only God knows the future.
- By performing many great miracles, such as healing the sick, restoring sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf, driving out demons, curing the crippled, multiplying

the loaves and fishes, walking on water, calming the sea, and raising the dead to life. Only God can change the laws of nature.

- By His resurrection from the dead.

One of the most credible proofs that Jesus is divine are his miracles. If miracles exist, then God exists. For an event to be classified as a miracle it must be extraordinary, that is, not an occurrence in the ordinary course of events. Moreover, the context in which a miracle occurs must be religious and cannot have a natural explanation. Otherwise, extraordinary events that are not in a religious context or can be explained by natural occurrences are mere “oddities,” “curiosities,” or “strange happenings” as is found in Ripley’s *Believe it or Not*. The logic of a miraculous event in a syllogism is as follows:

**Major Premise:** A miracle is an event whose only adequate explanation is the extraordinary and direct intervention of God (Major premise, which is a general statement).

**Minor Premise:** There are numerous well-attested miracles. (Minor premise, which is a particular application of that general statement).

**Conclusion:** Therefore, there are numerous events whose only adequate explanation is the extraordinary and direct intervention of God. We conclude then that God exists.

Above in this essay we looked at miracles described in both the Old and New Testaments. Also we considered miracles down through the ages and that they even happen today. If miracles still happen today, it is reasonably certain that the stories we have heard about them in the past are true. They are a continuation of the loving compassion of Jesus begun in the Gospels. Many thousands of attested and documented miracles have occurred in the twentieth century, events that simply can’t be explained by a natural occurrence. Moreover, they happened in a religious context. Although God does perform miracles among non-Catholics, the great majority of miracles has happened to Catholics or are due to the intercession of Catholics, dead or alive. We could literally take days discussing the miracles that have been due to Our Lady’s intercession at Lourdes, Fatima, Guadalupe, and elsewhere or the miracles that resulted from the intercession of St. Padre Pio, Fr. Solanus Casey, Blessed Brother Andre, and many thousands of other holy people.

Among the types of miraculous events that have occurred are cures of hopelessly sick people—people suffering from terminal cancer and other deadly diseases, the restoration of body organs such as eyes and lost bone, the restoration of hearing and eyesight, the preservation of the dead from corruption, and even raising the dead to life. Believe it or not, hundreds have been raised from the dead over the centuries—credible evidence exists to prove it. Most of the miracles occurring in history have taken place in the Catholic Church, which is logical since it is the Mystical Body of Christ, the source of all miracles.

Miraculous events provide irrefutable evidence of the claims of the Catholic Church that it is the Church founded by God himself. Among the types of well documented supernatural occurrences or mystical experiences are ecstasy, rapture, levitation, auras, locutions, visions, stigmata, fragrances, bilocation, apparitions, private revelations, and the like.

Modern medical science has been employed to verify the occurrence of countless miracles during the twentieth century. For example, the Shrine at Lourdes, France has a committee of distinguished medical doctors who carefully examine every claimed miracle at the Shrine. Although there have literally been thousands of instantaneous cures of every imaginable disease and infirmity at the site, only 75-80 of them have passed the rigorous scrutiny of the committee. However, only one miracle is enough to prove that God exists, one occurrence of an event that only the intervention of God can explain. Moreover, the dead who are undergoing causes for beatification or canonization must have miracles attributed to their intercession. These processes are used to verify and declare that the souls of faithfully departed are in Heaven, that they are saints. Miracles that are due to the intercession of saints in Heaven are incontestable proof that God exists. Miracles are God's way of telling us that the dead person under consideration for beatification or canonization is in Heaven. A committee of medical doctors must verify that there is no other possible scientific explanation for miracles attributed to the intercession of candidates for beatification or canonization than the intervention of God. Of course, the most important consideration of sainthood is that the candidates lived lives of heroic virtue and holiness.

The process for verifying the occurrence of miracles is a very rigorous one. In order for a miracle to be verified by the Church, the following conditions must be satisfied:

- The malady must be grave and impossible or very difficult to cure.
- The malady must not be in a state of decline.
- There must be no use of a possibly effective medicine.
- The cure must be instantaneous.
- The cure must be complete.
- There must be beforehand no noteworthy decline of the symptoms or anything that might provide a natural explanation.
- The cure must be permanent.

Surprisingly enough, miracles are not as incontestable of proof of God's existence as one would expect. In the final analysis acceptance of the truth of miracles is a matter of faith or belief. If this were not true everyone would believe in God who witnessed or heard of them. Nonetheless, many who see or hear of them do not believe. In fact, although the

Scribes, Pharisees, saw Jesus, perform many miracles, the great majority of them refused to recognize him as the Messiah. Unbelievers, then and now, try to explain them away in some manner or another. Even the Scribes, Pharisees, and Chief Priests acknowledge that Jesus performed miracles, but attributed their cause to the devil or magic and. refused to accept him as the Messiah.

### ***It is reasonable to believe Jesus Christ rose from the dead***

The greatest miracle of all time is Jesus' resurrection from the dead. From the evidence that we have, it reasonable to believe that Jesus Christ died on the Cross and arose from the dead. Over the centuries some have claimed that that Jesus' death was a sham and his resurrection a hoax. Each of these claims can be soundly refuted. For example:

**The claim that Jesus' body was stolen:** Some have claimed that the Apostles stole the body while the guards were sleeping: This is not likely, because the soldiers whom guarded the tomb were professionals who didn't sleep on duty and the penalty for falling asleep on duty was death. There has been some debate whether the soldiers were Roman soldiers or Temple guards. Pilate refused to provide guards according to St Matthew 27, but it isn't clear whether they were Roman or Jewish. I am of the belief that they must have been Jewish, because when they found the tomb empty they went to the chief priests rather than the Roman authorities (Matthew 28:11-15).

Furthermore, the Apostles were fearful cowards at this point who would not have attempted such a bold act. Moreover, scholars have proven beyond a reasonable doubt that the vacant tomb of Jesus was a historical reality. The empty tomb is reported in very early sources, such as Mark's gospel and in St. Paul's early writings taken from much earlier sources close to the event and not possibly the product of legend (1 Corinthians 15). The fact that the gospels report that women discovered the empty tomb bolsters the story's authenticity, because women were not considered reliable witnesses at that time. Moreover, both Christian and Jew alike knew the site of Jesus' tomb, so the report of Jesus' resurrection could have been easily checked by skeptics. In fact, no one at the time ever claimed that the tomb still contained Jesus' body, not even the Roman authorities or Jewish leaders. Instead they invented the ridiculous story that the disciples stole the body. William Lane Craig of the Talbot School of Theology in suburban Los Angeles as Research Professor of Philosophy, and who has written several books on the Resurrection, presented striking evidence that the enduring symbol of Easter the vacant tomb of Jesus was a historical reality. The empty grave is reported or implied in extremely early sources.

**The disciples were hallucination when they saw Jesus:** The claim that the apos-

tles were hallucinating when they saw the resurrected Jesus: Some have argued that the Apostles and others who saw the resurrected Jesus were hallucinating: this is discounted by the fact that the tomb was empty, groups of people don't hallucinate, and his disciples saw him eat and touched him. The evidence for the post-Resurrection appearances of Jesus didn't develop gradually over the years as mythological stories as Friederich David Strauss claimed. To the contrary, the Church proclaimed the Resurrection to be the central proclamation from the very beginning. The ancient creed found in St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians mentions several individuals who saw the risen Lord (1 Corinthians 15:3), and Paul even challenged doubters to talk with these individuals personally to determine the truth of the matter for themselves (1 Corinthians 15). The book of Acts is replete with accounts of persons having encounters with the resurrected Jesus and the gospels contain numerous descriptions of such encounters in detail. One scholar has concluded that "The appearances of Jesus are as well authenticated as anything in antiquity."

**The claim that Jesus didn't really die on the Cross:** Even some have claimed that Jesus didn't really die on the Cross: this is disproven by the fact that Romans were expert at executing people and did not let living men off of the cross. Besides, they knew that they themselves would face death if any of their victims were to survive execution. Furthermore, one of the soldiers thrust a lance in the side of Jesus piercing his heart and lung. Doctors who have examined the medical and historical evidence have concluded that Jesus could not have survived the terrible torture of crucifixion, much less the large wound that pierced him. The idea that he somehow swooned on the Cross and pretended to be dead is preposterous. Even if Jesus had somehow survived the torture, only three days later his pitiful condition could never have "inspired a worldwide movement based on the premise that he had gloriously triumphed over the grave."

Modernists scripture scholars have said that the Gospel accounts were nothing but symbolic expressions of the Apostles conviction that Christ lived on in their hearts: this is disproven by the fact that the Apostles stressed the physical reality of the resurrection of Jesus and that they gave their lives for this belief. Philosopher, theologian, and apologist James Porter Moreland who is a Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at Talbot School of Theology at Biola University, states that the disciples were in a unique position to know whether the Resurrection occurred, and they went to their deaths proclaiming it was true. No one in his or her right mind knowingly and willingly dies for a lie. This is especially true of skeptics like Thomas, Paul, and James who would not have died for their faith if the resurrection had not occurred. Further proof of their conviction that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead is that within a few weeks of the Crucifixion, thousands of Jews began to abandon important social practices that had critical sociological and religious importance for centuries. What's more, the early practice of the sacraments of the Eucharist and

baptism affirm Jesus' resurrection and deity. And last but not least, the miraculous emergence and growth of the Church in the face of brutal Jewish and Roman persecution further attests to the truth of the resurrection. In the words of Cambridge professor C.F.D. Moule, the Resurrection "rips a great hole in history, a whole the size and shape of resurrection . . . [but] what does the secular historian propose to stop it up with?"

The evidence for the post resurrection appearances of Jesus didn't develop gradually over the years as mythology or distorted memories of his life. Rather, said renowned Resurrection expert Gary Habermas, a professor of history at Liberty University, states that Jesus' resurrection was the central proclamation of the early church from the very beginning. British theologian, Anglican priest, apologist, and Oxford professor Michael Green asserts that "The appearances of Jesus after his death are as well authenticated as anything in history . . . . There can be no rational doubt that they occurred."

**Jesus Christ was perfectly sane when he claimed to be God:** It is reasonable to believe that Jesus Christ was perfectly sane when he claimed to be God. Ben Witherington III, who is Professor of New Testament Interpretation at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky, and an ordained pastor in the United Methodist Church, is able to show in his *The Christology of Jesus* that Jesus had a supreme and transcendent self-understanding. If what Jesus said about himself is true, and we believe that the evidence is overwhelmingly true, he was simply stating the fact that he is God. If not, he was either a madman or insane. Prominent psychologists who have studied his life have maintained that he displayed no inappropriate emotions and that he appeared to be in contact with reality at all times. In fact, he showed brilliant and amazing insights into human nature and enjoyed deep and abiding relationships with all human beings with whom he came in contact. They conclude that he shows no signs of suffering from any known mental disease. Moreover, he backed up his claim to being God by doing things that only God can do. An historian says that his "life showed complete integrity and complete harmony of actions and words. His answers to the Pharisees are logical and witty. He shows deep concern for others. His teachings are sublime. His words and actions show a man of highest integrity and moral sensibility."

**Jesus Christ founded the Catholic Church:** It is absolutely essential that the apologist establish that Jesus Christ instituted a Church and that that church is the Catholic Church. It is not Holy Scripture or Tradition that verifies the truth contained in Gospels, it is the living Church who witnessed these events and who wrote down accounts of them in Sacred Scripture and elsewhere. Only the Catholic Church can verify their veracity. Without the witness of the Church, the Bible or Tradition by themselves could be nothing more than well-meaning stories, myths, legends, or folklore. We Catholics believe all the things that we believe because of the reliability of the Church that teaches

them. A prominent apologist has said that any thoughtful apologist will grasp at once the essential link between Christ and the Church in the three major defenses of the Church, which can be easily made.

First, one can argue from Scripture and history that Christ founded a Church. Second, that it is precisely the Catholic Church, which has the marks of this true Church. Third that the Catholic Church has so many great qualities, shown so consistently throughout such a long span of years, that it must have a divine character.

First let's prove from Scripture and history that Christ founded a Church. When Jesus Christ ascended into Heaven he did not abandon us, he did not leave us orphans as he promised he wouldn't (John 14:18); he left his Church—his Mystical Body of which he is the head and we are the members—to continue his presence in the world and to provide the means with which to distribute his graces and mercy. He deposited all of the graces he earned by his suffering and death in his Church (the Deposit of Grace) and he provided the sacraments to distribute them. Also, he deposited all of his teachings in his Church (the Deposit of Faith). His teachings are found in Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, which are preserved, transmitted, and interpreted by the Magisterium (teaching authority) of the popes and bishops in communion with him over the centuries. Proof is found in the New Testament that Jesus Christ not only established a religion, but a Church as well. For example:

- Jesus speaks frequently of his Kingdom in the New Testament in Matthew 25:34, Matthew 13:44-46, and John 18:36.
- Jesus speaks of his flock in Luke: 32, John 10:16, and John 21:17.
- He calls his kingdom a Church in Matthew 16:18 and Matthew 18:17.
- St. Luke describes in the Acts 14:23 the founding of specific churches by Paul and Barnabas.

A careful reading of the passages cited above and others make it perfectly clear that Jesus founded a Church, not simply a religious association as some have claimed.

It is reasonable to believe that not only did Jesus establish a church, but that church is the Catholic Church. The Church established by Jesus Christ must contain the marks of Oneness, Holiness, Catholicity, and Apostolicity: We examined these marks or signs above in this essay. The Church founded by Jesus Christ must contain only one faith, the same sacrifice, the same sacraments, and the same visible head, the successor to St. Peter. A leading apologist says that the Church possesses a remarkable unity in authority, structure, doctrine and essential practice across time, place, culture, state in life and social station.

The Church founded by Jesus Christ must be Holy, because its founder and the Spirit that gives it life are holy; because her doctrines, her sacrifice, and her sacraments are holy; because her members are called to holiness; and because many of her members have achieved holiness. A leading apologist says that the Church possesses sanctifying effects of her doctrine and sacraments as well as her fruitfulness in good works and holy persons of every kind.

The Church founded by Jesus Christ must be Catholic or universal, because she was instituted for all persons, is suitable for all persons, and has spread throughout the entire world. A leading apologist says that the Church is catholic because her chronological, geographical, social and doctrinal universality has won adherents to the entire faith in every time, place and group

The Church founded by Jesus Christ must be apostolic, because she was founded upon the apostles and their preaching, and because she is governed by their successors, the bishops and popes. A leading apologist says that the Church possesses the ability to trace her teachings and her ministry back to the apostles, including the vital apostolic succession of papal, episcopal, and priestly supernatural powers.

Of all of the religions and churches in the world, only the Catholic Church contains all of these marks. It can be easily seen that all other religious bodies find themselves partly or totally lacking in one or more of the marks. In fact most other churches are even named for a particular man, place or doctrine, whereas the true Church has retained the providential name of Catholic.

There are other ways to identify the Catholic Church as the true Church that Jesus established. In addition to the marks of the Church, other factors identifying the Church as the true church established by Jesus Christ are as follows:

- The Church even now maintains unity against all natural obstacles.
- She has remained stable over two thousand years in the face of every form of external attack.
- She has been able to propagate herself from the first under the most difficult of conditions.
- Her doctrine has been always sublime, her sacraments symbolic of the grace they confer, her authority conducive to the salvation of souls, her character unsurpassably holy.
- She has been marvelously fruitful in all manner of good works, projects, purposes and people since her foundation.
- The antiquity of the Church; no other institution in the world's history comes close

to its longevity.

- The fact that the teachings of the Church have never changed over 2,000 years.
- The longevity of the Church in spite of its sinful members, including bad popes and bishops.
- The Church's phenomenal growth throughout the world.
- The holding power of its members.
- The unity of its faith and worship for two millennia.
- The fruitfulness of its charity, such as hospitals, orphanages, hospices, schools, and aid to the poor.
- The sanctity of millions of its members over the centuries.
- The unbroken history of the Church from Jesus Christ to the present.
- The countless miracles attributed to the intercession of the Church.
- The Church has withstood the assaults of Godless totalitarian forces such as Nazism and Communism as no other institution has done.

These are all motives of credibility that make it reasonable to believe what God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived, has revealed with Divine Faith.

There are even more factors to consider when identifying the Catholic Church with the church established by Jesus Christ. Added to these factors are the following considerations or motives of credibility:

- The Church provides the only satisfactory explanation for evil in the world.
- The Church provides the only satisfactory explanation for who we are and what our destiny is.
- The Church provides meaning and purpose to our lives as no other institution has ever done.
- The Church provides the best explanation for suffering, sorrow, and death ever devised.
- The Church provides the only reasons for hope in a world of darkness and despair.
- The Church is the only institution in the world that fosters a culture of life.
- The Church is the world's only institution that teaches objective morality and traditional family values.

Although other churches claim to be the church founded by Jesus Christ, none of the other world religions, except Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, claim to offer divine revelation and that their founders intended to establish churches. Christianity is, of course, the fulfillment of Judaism and Islam is an amalgamation of Christianity, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Mandaeanism, and Arabic paganism. All Protestant denominations have human founders and were not established until the sixteenth century and afterwards. Only the

Catholic Church fully satisfies the four marks of the true church established by Jesus Christ to convey his revelation and to provide the means of salvation for the human race. Only the fullness of truth is found in the Church founded by Jesus Christ and all graces needed for salvations are channeled through her.

We believe in the authority of the Church, because it was founded and guaranteed by Christ, and Christ is not a fallible man, but as we have proved beyond a reasonable doubt, he is the infallible God-become-man. Furthermore, it is reasonable to believe that Jesus Christ appointed Peter the first pope of the Catholic Church. St. Matthew tell us:

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do men say that the Son of man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter replied, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven' Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ." (Matthew 13-20).

The Catholic Church has always used this saying of Jesus as proof that he appointed Peter to be the head of his Church. Modern people are very reluctant to accept authority over their own minds, especially religious authority, such as the authority of the pope. In this regard, Jeffrey A. Mirus, a leading apologist of the Catholic Faith, wrote the following:

Before one can proceed to the fullest possible defense of the papacy, it is perhaps best to clear the way by proving the importance, utility and even necessity of dogma. The discussion necessary for a complete proof is technical and hinges upon a proper understanding of Revelation, as has already been suggested. But in outline we may say that dogma is the end process of any reasoning upon faith, that when a man seriously inquires into the meaning of his faith, he will begin to define his general conception of Christ and Revelation in the form of various propositions which together accurately convey the truth. Thus for a man, as for the Church, doctrine (or teaching, or refining into propositions) develops or unfolds over time. The end product of a fruitful development is a sentence so precise and well-worded that, with respect to the point it addresses, it is completely and unalterably true. This is dogma; it is, again, the goal of any truly religious man, and it is of immense and obvious help to everyone who seeks the truth.

It took human beings in the form of popes with the authority and guarantee of Christ to define doctrines over the centuries.

One might understandingly ask, “But how do we know that a dogma, which represents a truth coming from beyond man, is correct?” Mirus says of this matter: “To paraphrase Cardinal Newman, there is no reason to presume that the conditions of faith for the first Christians were so different from those of our own time that they had a living, infallible guide (Christ) and we have not. We have, indeed, the infallible vicar of Christ, the Pope, and the apologist has four basic types of arguments to use in his defense. . . .” The types are listed as follows:

1. **Scriptural:** all texts which first establish Peter's special place in Christ's plan after Our Lord's Ascension may be used by inference to apply to those who succeed Peter in office; thus we might argue that since Christ knew that Peter would die, yet entrusted to him powers vital to the life of the Church, He must have intended that these powers should be passed on to successors in Peter's pastorate (the Diocese of Rome);
2. **Historical:** the documentary evidence of the earliest Christian writers and fathers testifies to the existence and authority of the Bishop of Rome (Pope) as Peter's successor; we need take only one example here in St. Cyprian's third century exclamation about the papacy: “the See of Peter and principal Church, whence the unity of the priesthood took its rise. . . , to whom faithlessness can have no access”;
3. **Ecclesiological:** following Newman's suggestive remark, it can be logically argued that the structure, purpose and guaranteed endurance of the Church until the end of time require the existence of a monarchical and infallible teaching and directing authority; surely, for example, a universal error in faith on the part of Christians unprotected by an infallible guide would be a triumph of the “jaws of death” against the Church;
4. **Motive of Credibility:** the extraordinary logic and consistency of papal teaching under more than two hundred popes during nearly two millennia provides a strong suggestion of the papacy's Divine protection. “In constructing any of these arguments—for Christ, for the Church, for the Papacy and dogma—apologists should carefully reason upon Revelation so that its reasonableness, compatibility with authentic facts, and general suitability for belief may be clearly shown.”

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

To begin my summary I want to remind you that the Catholic Faith is a rational one. It is not based on unproven assumptions, myths, folklore, legends, and the like. It is based on logic, the facts of history, Tradition, and above all Sacred Scripture. Christianity is an historical religion. The story of the creation, fall, and redemption of mankind is history; they are events that really happened. The Gospels describe events that occurred as surely as did any other great historical events. We probably know more about Jesus Christ from an historical perspective than we do about most historical figures. Jesus is not some mystical figure enshrouded in myth, folklore, and legend, but a man who was conceived, born, lived, and died as all other human beings have and will do. Without this historical dimension, apologetics would be impossible.

Our main reason for writing this essay was to provide our listeners with reasons to believe the truths found in the Nicene Creed and elsewhere. We tried to prove that these doctrines of the Catholic Church can be believed with certainty; that is, they can be proven beyond a reasonable doubt. Apologetics is the science of defending or justifying the Faith and its purpose is to persuade unbelievers to accept the Faith and to help believers to overcome any doubts or difficulties they might have regarding the Faith. Since apologetics is such an enormous subject, we concentrated only on the most fundamental apologetic issues in this series.

After we considered some preliminaries, we looked at Faith, Reason, and Certitude in some considerable detail. We said that, “faith is an assent of the mind to the truth of some proposition on the word of another.” In other words, having faith means to believe something on the word of another. When one says he or she believes something, he or she is reasonably certain that it is true, that it reflects what really is regarding the matter. If an assent is not sure, it is not belief; it is merely an opinion. We can achieve certainty of belief on the merely human or natural level; this is what we call natural or human faith. Human faith is based on the word of others whether it be secular or sacred matters. Just think how much more certain we would be if our faith existed on the supernatural or divine level, the level of Divine Faith. Divine Faith is the holding of some truth as absolutely certain because God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived, has spoken it. It is not merely a feeling or a suspicion or an opinion, but a firm, unshakeable adherence of the mind to a truth revealed by God. Having Divine Faith is something that millions of martyrs have been willing to die for over the centuries.

We spent quite a lot of time explaining and distinguishing the Motive of Divine Faith from motives of credibility. The Motive of Divine faith is the why we believe. We believe because of God's authority, his unfailing knowledge and truthfulness. Divine Faith holds that

revealed truths are absolutely certain, because God, has spoken them, he who can neither deceive nor be deceived. Faith is more than mere feelings or opinions that something is true, but a firm, unshakeable adherence of the mind to God's revelation. We believe the truths of faith not because our minds understand or see them, but because the infinitely wise and truthful God has revealed them. Faith is the first of the infused theological virtues, which means that it is oriented to God.

On the other hand, the motives of credibility are the signs, and among them the most certain are miracles and prophecies, by which we can conclude with full certitude what God has revealed and that therefore there is a strict obligation to accept the truths he has made known. It is these motives of credibility which precede the act of faith and which make it essentially reasonable to assent to the truths of Faith, for once it is certain that God has spoken, it is unreasonable to withhold assent to his truths.

Then we discussed how Divine Faith is a gift from God. Divine Faith is a supernatural virtue infused by God, a gift that enables one to have a personal relationship with the Holy Trinity as well as the capacity to believe in Divine Revelation. The motives of credibility might make the teachings of the Catholic Church reasonable to believe, but only God's grace can move the will to believe them. Motives of credibility precede the act of faith and make it reasonable to assent or agree to the truths of the Faith. St. Thomas Aquinas defined faith or believing as, "Believing is an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will moved by God through grace." belief emphasizes the act of the will, which disposes one to believe, where faith is rather the act of the mind, which assents to what is believed." The role of the will in faith is to give assent to what is presented to it by the intellect. The intellect must determine whether or not something proposed to it is reasonable to believe, that it is something good to believe, but the will must move the intellect to give its assent. The recognition of truth, the goodness of the object, or of the reasonableness of belief incites the will, which brings reason (intellect) to assent. God infuses the theological virtue of faith into the human soul only if the recipient is willing to accept it, for he respects our freedom of the will and does not force anything on us. Having Divine Faith makes one absolutely certain of that which the Church proposes as true. St. Thomas Aquinas defined believing (what God has revealed) as "an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will, moved by God through grace."

It is difficult for us to know truth with certainty; ultimately it is because of our fallen human nature due to the consequences of Original Sin. However, we can achieve certainty with the infusion of the gift of Divine Faith.

In addition to faith, we spent quite a bit of time talking about the role of reason in our

faith. Using human reason can make it reasonable to believe in the existence of God, many of his attributes, what we owe him, and the fact of Revelation. Reason provides the motives of credibility that must precede the exercise of faith and lead us to it. For, unless we possessed natural certitude of the existence of God, of his wisdom and truthfulness, and of the fact of Revelation, we could not reasonably give the certain assent of faith to revealed truths. Motives of credibility can't make us believe, for only God can give us Divine Faith, but they can make us want to believe and motivate us to open ourselves to his grace.

After we discussed faith and reason, we looked at certitude. Certitude means that faith is certain, that it is free from doubt, that it is true. The proper test of certainty or truth is evidence. Because we have not directly seen or experienced many things, we must accept many truths on the authority of others, but the authority must be credible and legitimate. This applies to secular as well as sacred matters. Most things we believe are on the authority of others. It is impossible for us to experience and verify everything that we believe. We accept most of what we believe on the word of parents, teachers, scientists, historians, engineers, and hundreds of other authorities. Society is built on trust, that what others say is true. In other words, the authority must be in a position to know the truth of the matter and trustworthy in conveying this information.

This is the reason that the Catholic Church is so important to our faith. The Church verifies the truth of the Faith. The Church is in a position to know the truth of the Gospel, because she was there and witnessed the events described in the Creed. In fact, she wrote the Gospels and the Creed and transmitted them down through the ages for our benefit. Therefore, we can accept what the Church teaches with certitude, without doubt.

After completing our discussion of faith, reason, and certitude, we established that it is reasonable to believe that God exists by reasoning from his creation to the fact of his existence. We discussed St. Thomas Aquinas's five classic ways to do this. We also looked at several others proofs for God's existence, including the existence of miracles, the fact that all men have consciences, and that they have established religions. Also, we examined Fr. Aidan Nichol's six arguments and Peter Kreeft's eight historical arguments for God's existence. Altogether we looked at over twenty arguments that make it reasonable to believe that God's exists. Not only can God's existence be proven by logic, his existence can be proven with modern science, or at least make it reasonable to believe that he does exist. Science has given us reasons to believe beyond a reasonable doubt that God exists. Several scientific disciplines contain credible evidence of God's existence. Cosmology, physics, astronomy, geology, biochemistry, DNA information science, and psychology all contain evidence that point to an all-knowing Designer and all-powerful Creator. After a careful study of these arguments, we concluded that it is reasonable to believe that God exists. In addition to these, we took a summary look at scientific and metaphysical argu-

ments for God's existence found in Fr. Spitzer's *New Proofs for the Existence of God*

Once we had established that God does exist, using human reason we identified his attributes, perfections, or qualities, such as omnipotence, simplicity, eternity, and the like. Then based on rational proof of God's existence and something of his attributes, using human reason we also established what we owe God, such as, worship, gratitude, obedience, and love. Moreover, by using our reason we can prove beyond a reasonable doubt that we are beings that possess immortal souls and that we can reason from this fact that God exists and possesses certain attributes or qualities.

But as we discussed, there is a limit to what we can know about God by the use of reason. Our fallen human nature limits what we can know about God using human reason. Because of the consequences of Original Sin we possess diminished intellects, weakened wills, and an urge to sin called concupiscence. We established that we need God's revelation to further penetrate the mystery of God.

In order to accomplish this, we offered arguments that make it reasonable to believe that God revealed himself to us. We proved beyond a reasonable doubt that God revealed himself to us. During this discussion we examined the credibility and integrity of the sources of revelation—Scripture and Tradition. We concluded that the facts prove that the Old Testament is reliable and credible and that the New Testament can be trusted as well.

After proving that it is reasonable to believe that God revealed himself, we offered arguments making it reasonable to believe beyond a doubt that Jesus Christ founded a church. We proved that it is beyond a reasonable doubt that Jesus established a church to continue his presence in the world and to provide the means with which distribute his graces and mercy. It is absolutely essential that the apologist prove that Jesus Christ established a church and that that Church is the Catholic Church. It is not Holy Scripture or Tradition that verifies the truth contained in the Gospels, it is the living Church that witnessed these events and wrote down accounts of them, and passed them down over the centuries. Only the Church can verify their veracity. Without the witness of the Church, the Bible or Tradition by themselves could be nothing more than well-meaning stories, or myths, legends, or folklore. We Catholics believe all the things that we believe because of the reliability and trustworthiness of the Church that teaches them. A prominent apologist has said that any thoughtful apologist will grasp at once the essential link between Christ and the Church in the three major defenses of the Church, which can be easily made.

- First, one can argue from Scripture and history that Christ founded a Church.
- Second, that it is precisely the Catholic Church, which has the marks of this true

Church: Oneness; Holiness; Catholicity; and Apostolicity.

- Third that the Catholic Church has so many great qualities, shown so consistently throughout such a long span of years, that it must have a Divine character.

We concluded from the facts of history and the Bible that it is reasonable to believe that the Church established by Jesus Christ is the Catholic Church. This is true, because the Catholic Church alone of all the religions and churches in the world contains the four marks of the true Church; that it is One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic.

In addition to the four marks of the church, we discussed several other motives of credibility that prove beyond a reasonable doubt the truth of the Catholic Church. In addition to the four marks, the following are further proofs of the authenticity of the Catholic Faith: the antiquity of the Church; the fact that its teachings have never changed over 2,000 years; its longevity in spite of its sinful members, including bad popes and bishops; its phenomenal growth throughout the world; the holding power of its members; the unity of its faith and worship for two millennia; the fruitfulness of its charity, such as hospitals, orphanages, hospices, and schools, and aid to the poor; the sanctity of millions of its members over the centuries; its unbroken history from Jesus Christ to the present; and the countless miracles attributed to its intercession over the centuries.

Added to these factors are the following considerations: the Church provides the only satisfactory explanation for evil in the world; it provides the only satisfactory explanation for who we are, how we came to be, why we exist, what our destiny is, and how we are to get there; it provides meaning and purpose to our lives as no other institution has ever done; it gives us assurance that we can have some control over our lives, with God's help; it provides the best explanation for suffering, sorrow, and death ever devised; it provides the only reasons for hope in a world of darkness and despair; it is the only institution in the world that fosters a culture of life; it is the world's only institution that consistently teaches objective morality and traditional family values.

After reviewing the meaning of Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, we went on to examine the reasonableness of believing some of the most fundamental doctrines of the Nicene Creed. We discovered that it is reasonable to believe that God has revealed that he is a Trinity of three divine persons and that he is a personal God who loves and cares for each of us. We also discovered that it is reasonable to believe that God revealed to us that the Second Person of the Holy Trinity became man in the Incarnation and that he redeemed us by his suffering and death on the Cross. In addition, we discovered that it is reasonable to believe that he arose from the dead and ascended into Heaven. We also discovered that it is reasonable to believe in Jesus Christ, the second person of the Blessed Trinity and the son of the Father. Jesus proved beyond any reasonable doubt that he is

God by doing things that only God can do: by displaying every attribute of deity, including: omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, eternity, and immutability; by unrivaled teaching and divine understanding of people; by living a life of perfect virtue and holiness; by making prophecies that came true, such as the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and of his suffering, death, and resurrection; by performing many great miracles; and above all, by his resurrection from the dead. We proved that the historical evidence is overwhelming that Jesus Christ died on the Cross, arose from the dead, ascended into Heaven, and will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead.

Recall that we said at the beginning of this series that knowledge of God is achieved by study, but our knowledge must be transformed into faith in Jesus Christ and his promises. It is one thing to know about God and another to know him. We can know a lot about him by study, but we can come to know him only by developing an intimate relationship with him. This is accomplished with frequent prayer and a reception of the Sacraments. And finally we must transform our faith into action. This is possible only by cultivation of the theological, cardinal, and moral virtues; practice of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy; and above all by prayer and penance. We discuss the entire process in detail in other places in this website.

Faith can best be deepened by engaging in an intimate and active prayer life. Prayer is communication between friends, God and man. As one achieves holiness by moving through the stages of holiness—purgative, illuminative, and unitive—one comes to know God more intimately. The wills of Jesus and the Father are in perfect harmony. We become holy only to the extent that we bring our wills into conformance with the divine will. As we become closer friends with God, he communicates knowledge about himself to us by contemplative prayer. This knowledge gives us absolute assurance of his love and mercy. Although contemplative prayer has many benefits, one of the most important to our subject is the continual awareness that God creates of himself in the recipient of his divine presence.

Our friendship with God began at our baptisms. At baptism we had the stain of original sin washed from our souls and we became temples of the Holy Spirit and the Trinity came to dwell in our souls. Furthermore, we became adopted children of God the Father and brothers or sisters of his son Jesus. Moreover, as his children we became heirs to Heaven. Our baptism gives us the privilege of sharing in the inner life of the Holy Trinity; we truly become members of God's family by adoption and his grace. Jesus shared in our humanity so that we could share in his divinity.

Wherever the Holy Spirit dwells also dwells the Father and the Son. This is known as the indwelling Trinity. Although God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—lives in friendship with

us from the time of our baptism, like all friendships, it must be cultivated; we must spend a lifetime developing our friendship with God. The more we become like Jesus, that is the holier we become, the closer will be our friendship with him. The closer our friendship with him, the more he will increasingly make us aware of his presence and the more firm will be our faith in him and his promises, for he will infuse into our souls the theological virtue of faith.

We can better assist others in learning the Catholic Faith. Jesus called all of us to evangelize the Catholic Faith, for it is his desire that all be saved. After all, he suffered and died for all men and women. In assisting others to better understand the Catholic Faith, we Catholics should first assess where they are in their knowledge and understanding, then tailor our explanations accordingly. Of course, we can't do this unless we have the knowledge and understanding of the Faith ourselves. We study apologetics, or fundamental theology as some prefer to call it, so we can deepen our faith and help others to know and understand it. By others I mean Catholics ignorant of the Faith, lapsed Catholics away from the Church, Protestants, those of others religions, agnostics, atheists, pagans, etc.

By far the most important thing is to lead virtuous and holy lives ourselves. No one will want to learn the Faith if the one explaining it is not practicing it him or herself. Being holy is being like Jesus. We become more and more like him by taking advantage of the means through which he channels his graces: prayer, penance, and a frequent reception of the sacraments (confession, communion, and above all participation at Mass, the source of all graces and the summit of our Faith). God's graces will help us to live virtuous and holy lives. The fruits of our virtue and holiness will produce good works that glorify God and benefit humankind.

Humility is another important factor in evangelization. Be humble when explaining the Faith to others. Our membership in Jesus' true Church is a free gift that he wants all to benefit from. Our membership in the Church is a blessing and a gift, not a right. Our discussions should not take the form of winning debating points with others, but to provide them with the fullness of truth that we Catholics possess by the grace of God. We Catholics should consider our efforts to evangelize others spiritual works of mercy. We should show them that we care about their souls and that we want them to share in the benefits that we are so blessed and privileged to possess.

To know and understand the arguments outlined above fully would require a lifetime of study and prayerful reflection. Hopefully this essay has provided you with the framework and inspiration to begin a lifetime of study and reflection. There are many other subjects with which apologetics deal, such as establishing the primacy of St. Peter and his successors, the popes down through the ages; a more detailed defense of the Creed; an

explanation and defense of the Church's system of morality, which is based on the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount; the relationship of the Church and the World; economic and social justice issues, questions of war and peace; Church and State issues; life and death issues; relationships between men and women; marriage and the family; the consecrated life; the role of the priesthood; grace and the universal call to holiness; the development of virtue; sin and its effects; an explanation for evil and the meaning of redemptive suffering; an explanation and defense of the sacraments; prayer; the last four things; and angels. Moreover, apologetics defends the Church from attacks by heretics and by its detractors, such as those who have falsely criticized the role the Church allegedly played in such events as the Crusades, the Inquisition, the Galileo affair, and the Holocaust.

The main thought that I would like to leave with our listeners is that once one comes to believe that there is a God, and that he is a Trinitarian family of three divine persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—who loves each and every one of us, so much so that the Father sent his only begotten son into the world to save us, and that he suffered, died, and was buried, descended to the dead, then arose again on the third day, that he ascended into Heaven where he is seated at the right hand of the Father, that he established a church to continue his presence in the world and to provide the means with which to distribute his mercy and graces, and that that church is the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, and that he will come at the end of time to judge the living and the dead, one has all the information he or she needs to get to Heaven. If one believes that the Catholic Church is the true Church established by Jesus Christ, and we have shown that there is abundant proof to believe that he did, then one can believe all that the Church teaches with confidence. We will close where we started this essay by quoting St. Peter:

*“Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence.” (1 Peter 3:15-16)*