

CATHOLIC

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Q & A

Does God really exist?

This question was addressed to our Holy Father Pope John Paul II in his book "Crossing the Threshold of Hope". John Paul II points us to the Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas whom he calls "the master of philosophical and theological universalism". The Pope suggests that we should read St. Thomas in his writings on the "five ways" that lead us to answer the question of God's existence.

MOTION – The world in which we live is animated by motion. Things are either in motion or can be put into motion. A thing is said to be in motion when it is gaining or acquiring something which it did not have. Therefore, when a person is acquiring knowledge, he is moving; when he is advancing in age, he is moving. A thing cannot be in motion and at the same time at rest. Rest is the absence of motion. If an object is at rest where does it acquire motion? It certainly cannot give this motion to itself, for it does not possess it. It can receive motion only from some other object, which already has it. There must be a source from which motion originated and we call this source – God.

CAUSALITY – If we look at the computer on our desk or the automobile in our driveway, we are certain that these things were made by someone, they did not make themselves. Something or someone must have caused the computer or car to come into being. The effect (car or computer) must have a cause. If a person caused the car and computer to come into existence, then who caused that particular person to come into existence? That person's parents. Who caused that person's parents to be born? The series of causes and effects must have a beginning, a first cause - God.

CONTINGENCY – There are things in this world, including us as human beings, which may exist now but at one time did not exist. These things are contingent on other things for their

existence. Man is contingent on air, food, water, shelter, clothing etc. for his earthly existence. A being that is contingent requires some being that is not contingent. We call a being that is not dependent on any other being in order to sustain its existence – God.

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

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

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