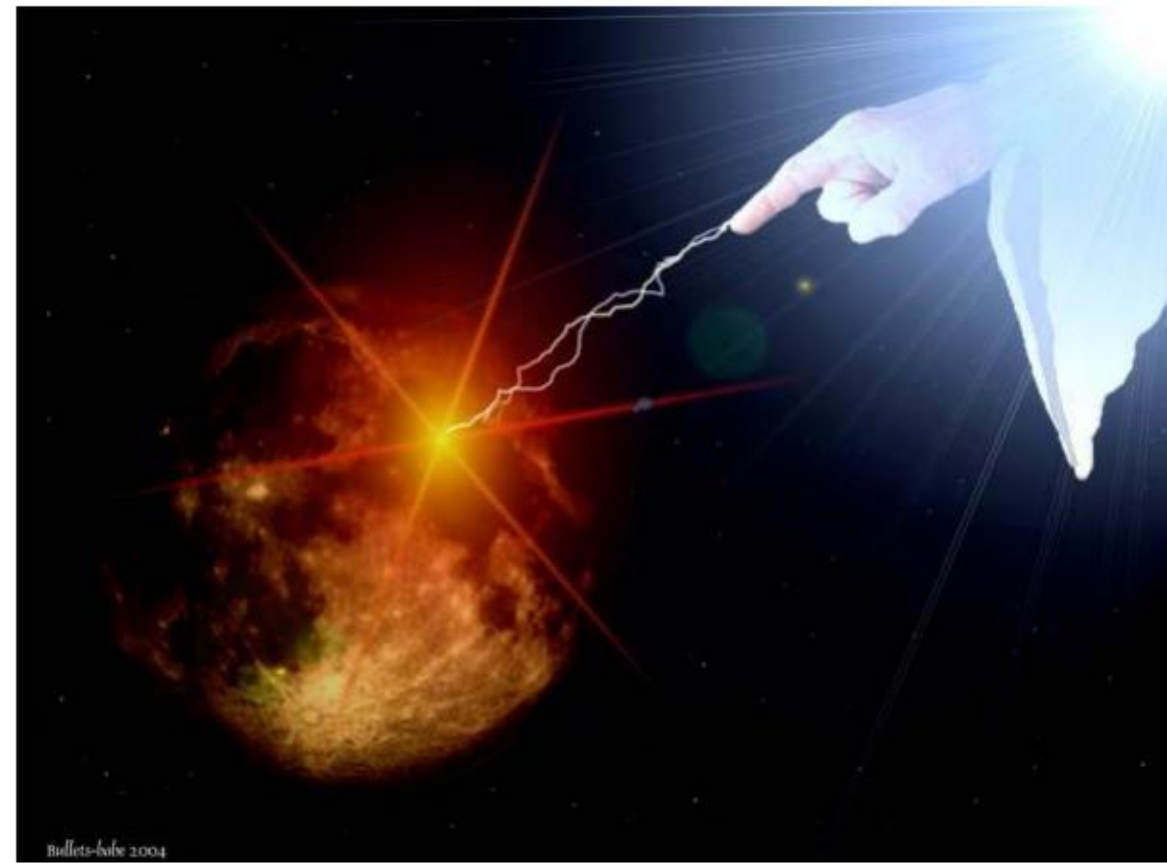




INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF THE WORD

Basic Theology ∞ Doctrine of God ∞



1. The Existence of God

- A. Philosophers and theologians have attempted to prove or disprove the existence of God from the earliest days of the church. It was the early church father Tertullian (155-222 ad) who first said, *“What does light have to do with darkness? What does Jerusalem have to do with Athens?”*
- B. It is impossible:
 - 1. To fully understand a spiritual God using natural means
 - 2. For humanity to fully comprehend or understand the fullness of God
- C. Scripture does not attempt to prove the existence of God, it accepts His existence as a fact taken for granted.

Anselm (1033-1109 ad.), the Archbishop of Canterbury said, *"I do not seek to understand that I may believe, but I believe in order to understand."*¹

"A God capable of proof would be no God at all."

Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743–1819)²

2. The Attributes of God

- A. Both creed and catechism affirm that God is a personal Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being and attributes.³
- B. His divine personality may then be appreciated as consisting of **intellect**, **sensibility**, and **will**.⁴

3. The Will of God

- A. God's will may be understood as that within God which puts into effect all that the two previous aspects of His personality have designed.⁵
- B. Scripture establishes that God has a will:
 - 1. John 1:13: *"Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."*
 - 2. Romans 8:27: *"And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."*

¹ Anselm, *Proslogium*, in *St. Anselm: Basic writings*, trans. S.N. Deane, second edition (LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1962), 7

² Alexander Wellington Crawford, *The Philosophy of F.H. Jacobi*, (MacMillan Press, Basingstoke, UK, 1905)

³ *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, question 4.

⁴ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1. (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), 191.

⁵ *Ibid*, 208.

3. Romans 12:2: *“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”*
 4. 1 Corinthians 1:1: *“Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother.”*
 5. Ephesians 1:5: *“Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.”*
- C. The will of God does not determine what is right or wrong. What God wills is right because it expresses His holy character.⁶
- D. There are times when God “wills” something, but His will does not come to pass.
1. An example of this can be found in 2 Peter 3:9, which states, *“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”*
- E. Because God has granted to humanity the power of choice, some do refuse God’s grace.

“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.”

- John 3:19-20

4. Anthropomorphism of God

A. The word *anthropomorphism* comes from two Greek words:

1. *anthropos*, meaning “man,”
2. *morphe*, meaning “form.”

B. Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology defines anthropomorphism as the following:



⁶ James Whyte, “Protestant Ethics and the Will of God” *Theology*. 76. (September 1973). 465.

“Assignment of human attributes to nonhuman things. Biblical anthropomorphisms are used primarily in reference to God, who is neither visible (John 1:18) nor human (Numbers 23:19; 1 Samuel 15:29).”

C. Scriptural Evidence:

Job and his friends recognized God to be a person, not some invisible nothingness floating around everywhere filling all matter and space. In fact, Job is the first book in the Bible to call God a person.

“Will ye accept his person? Will ye contend for God?”

- Job 13:8

Job and his friends spoke of God as having bodily parts, soul passions, and spirit faculties in a literal sense.

Hebrews speaks of the personhood of God:

“Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;”

- Hebrews 1:3

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were men who had experienced the visible appearances of God to the extent they saw His body, ate with Him, saw Him walking and talking and even wrestled with Him. All things a mortal human being might do. God does not have a literal body but uses these characteristics to help humans better understand who He is. Anthropomorphisms is one-way humans can, at least partially, comprehend the incomprehensible, know the unknowable, and measure the unmeasurable.



5. Proving the Existence of God

A. Theologians and philosophers use three primary arguments to prove God's existence:

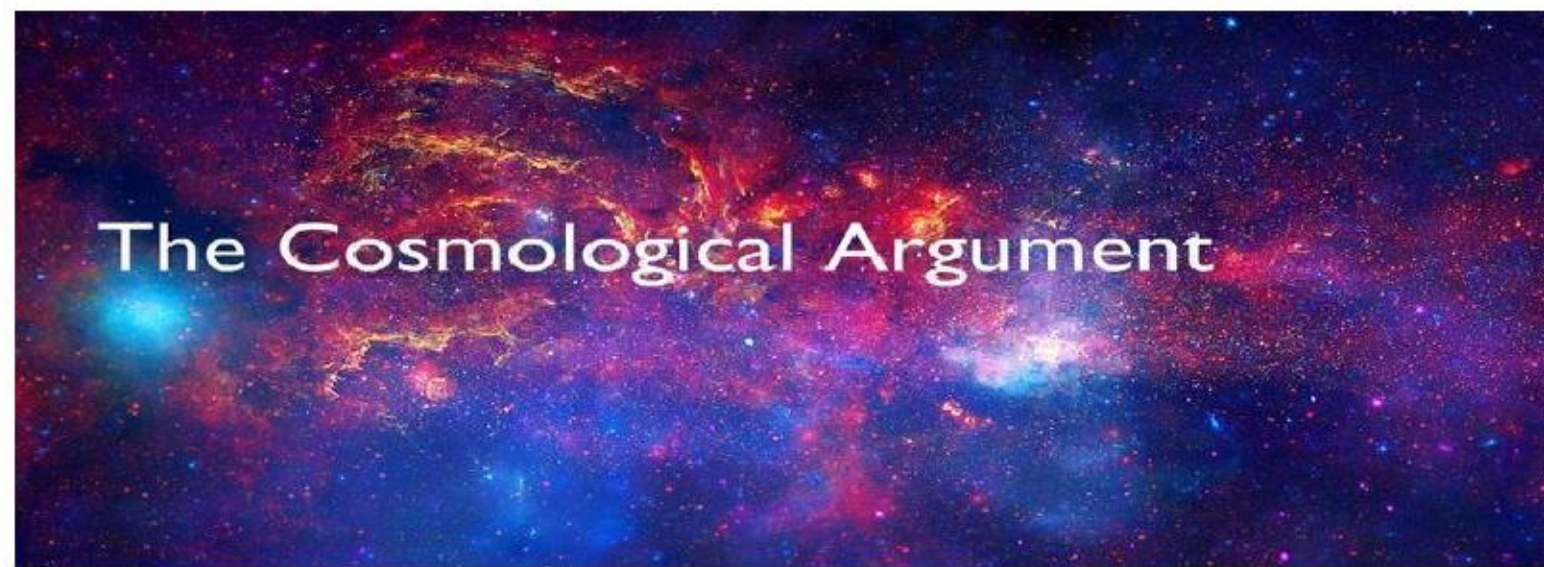
1. The *Cosmological* Argument
2. The *Ontological* Argument

3. The *Teleological* Argument (some modern theologians refer to this argument as Intelligent Design)

Thomas Aquinas, a 13th century Catholic theologian, addressed these in his writing “The *Quinque viæ*” (Latin for “Five Ways”), which can be found in his book *Summa Theologiae*. These “Five Ways” are known as the five logical arguments regarding the existence of God. These were not intended to be an exhaustive proof to the existence of God, but rather a guide to point people to God.

The first three Ways are generally considered to be cosmological arguments. The fourth Way has been called an ontological argument. The fifth Way is considered to be a teleological argument.⁷

6. The Five Ways



- I. The argument from **motion**:
 1. Our senses prove that some things are in motion.
 2. Things move when potential motion becomes actual motion.
 3. Only an actual motion can convert a potential motion into an actual motion.
 4. Nothing can be at once in both actuality and potentiality in the same respect (i.e., if both actual and potential, it is actual in one respect and potential in another).
 5. Therefore, nothing can move itself.

⁷ Copleston, Frederick, *Medieval Philosophy, From Augustine to Duns Scotus*. (New York: Doubleday, 1993) . pp. 241-243.

6. Each thing in motion is moved by something else.
7. The sequence of motion cannot extend ad infinitum.
8. Therefore, it is necessary to arrive at a first mover, put in motion by no other; and this everyone understands to be God.

II. The argument from causation:

1. We perceive a series of efficient causes of things in the world.
2. Nothing exists prior to itself.
3. Therefore nothing [in the world of things we perceive] is the efficient cause of itself.
4. If a previous efficient cause does not exist, neither does the thing that results (the effect).
5. Therefore, if the first thing in a series does not exist, nothing in the series exists.
6. If the series of efficient causes extends ad infinitum into the past, for then there would be no things existing now.
7. That is plainly false (i.e., there are things existing now that came about through efficient causes).
8. Efficient causes do not extend ad infinitum into the past.
9. Therefore, it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause, to which everyone gives the name of God.

III. The argument from contingency;

1. We find in nature things that are possible to be and not to be, that come into being and go out of being, i.e., contingent beings.
2. Assume that every being is a contingent being.
3. For each contingent being, there is a time it does not exist.
4. Therefore, it is impossible for these always to exist.

5. There could have been a time when no things existed.
6. At that time, there would have been nothing to bring the currently existing contingent beings into existence.
7. Therefore, nothing would be in existence now.
8. We have reached an absurd result from assuming that every being is a contingent being.
9. Therefore, not every being is a contingent being.
10. Some being exists of its own necessity, and does not receive its existence from another being, but rather causes them. This all men speak of as God.

IV. The argument from **degree** (this is an Ontological approach):

1. There is a gradation to be found in things: some are better or worse than others.
2. Predications of degree require reference to the “uttermost” case (e.g., a thing is said to be hotter according as it more nearly resembles that which is hottest).
3. The maximum in any genus is the cause of all in that genus.
4. Therefore, there must also be something which is to all beings the cause of their being, goodness, and every other perfection; and this we call God.



V. The argument from **final cause** or **ends** (this is a Teleological approach)

1. We see that natural bodies work toward some goal, and do not do so by chance. Most natural things lack knowledge. But as an arrow reaches its target because it is directed by an archer, what lacks intelligence achieves goals by being directed by something intelligent. Therefore, some intelligent being exists by whom all-natural things are directed to their end; and this being we call God.⁸

7. The Names of God

A. Much of what we know about God is revealed in His names and His actions.

B. Names of God in the Old Testament:

1. **Elohim**—This is the only name in Scripture that deals with an act of power. This is the Hebrew word for "God" in Genesis 1:1 and 2,700 other places in the Old Testament (Genesis 1:1).
2. **El Shaddai**—The All Sufficient One (Genesis 15:1).
3. **Adonai**—Master. It was after this that Abraham became a great intercessor (Genesis 18:2-3).
4. **Yehovah (Jehovah/Yahweh)**— The Lord God. used in connection with a covenant. This is the Hebrew word for "Lord" in Deuteronomy 6:4 and 7,600 times in the Old Testament. It means the Self-existent, Eternal and Immutable One, or Unity (Genesis 2:7).
5. **Jehovah Rapha**—The Lord that healeth thee (Exodus 15:26—1; Peter 2:24).
6. **Jehovah Jirah**—The Lord will provide (Genesis 22:14; Philippians 4:19).
7. **Jehovah Nissi**—The Lord My Banner (Exodus 17:15;1 Corinthians 15:57; 2 Corinthians 2;14).
8. **Jehovah M'Kaddesh**—The Lord our Sanctifier (Exodus 31:13; 1 Corinthians 1:30).

⁸ Theodore Gracyk, *St. Thomas Aquinas: The Existence of God can be proved in five ways. Argument Analysis of the Five Ways*
http://web.mnstate.edu/gracyk/courses/web%20publishing/aquinasFiveWays_ArgumentAnalysis.htm

9. **Jehovah Tzekenu**—The Lord my righteousness (Jeremiah 23:6; 2 Corinthians 5:17&21).
10. **Jehovah Shalom**—The Lord my peace (Judges 6:23-24; John 14:27).
11. **Jehovah Rohi**—The Lord my shepherd (Psalm 23; John 10:11).
12. **Jehovah Shammah**—The Lord is there (Ezekiel 48:35; John 14:18).

C. Names of God in the New Testament:

1. **Theos.** This is the Greek word for "God" and is used 1,332 times in the New Testament. It means Deity and God, and with the definite article means the Supreme Deity. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are all called God.
2. **Kurios.** This is the Greek word for "Lord" and is used 672 times in the New Testament. It means Lord, Master, and Sir and is used of man 31 times.
3. **Iesous.** This is the Greek word for "Jesus" 979 times in the New Testament. It is the Greek form of the Hebrew Yehowshua, rendered "Joshua" 215 times in the Old Testament. Joshua of the Old Testament is called "Jesus" in the New Testament in Acts 7:45; Hebrews 4:8. Jesus is never the name of the Father, or of the Spirit in either Testament, and it was not the name of the second person of the Godhead until He became divinely human and divinely God. It is the human name of the Son of God.
4. **Christos.** This is the Greek word which we translate "Christ," and it is used 575 times in the New Testament. It literally means anointing and is the equivalent of the Hebrew mashiyach, translated "Messiah" twice in the Old Testament (Dan. 9:24-26) and twice in the New Testament (John 1:41; 4:25). It has no reference to Deity, but to the humanity of Jesus Christ, who became the Christ or the Anointed One.

There are many other names used to describe Jesus, such as the Son of man, the Son of God, Jesus, Christ, Lord Jesus Christ, Messiah, Emmanuel, Son of David, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Lamb of God, Mediator, and many other names.

8. The Character of God

- A. The character of God and His relationship with humanity can be seen in His dealing with Jeremiah in Lamentations 2:22-33.
- B. The prophet Jeremiah was brought to the conclusion that the Lord was his portion and hope (Lament. 3:24), that He is always good to them that wait for His salvation (Lament. 3:25-26), and that all grief and suffering are just for a time (Lament. 3:32).
- C. Eightfold character of Jehovah:
 - 1. Merciful (Lament. 3:22,32)
 - 2. Compassionate
 - 3. Faithful (Lament. 3:23)
 - 4. Good (Lament. 3:25)
 - 5. Deliverer (Lament. 3:26)
 - 6. Just and righteous (Lament. 3:31)
 - 7. Longsuffering (Lament. 3:33)
 - 8. Kind

9. The Attributes of God

- A. **Omniscient**—God is all knowing. He is cognizant of all things precisely because they are present to Him immediately and as themselves. The divine mind perceives the entire temporal sequence, all events, simultaneously in one act of cognition.⁹ For God to be sovereign over His creation of all things, whether visible or invisible, He has to be all-knowing. Jesus' omniscience is just as clear. In many Gospel accounts, the following was true:
 - 1. He knew the thoughts of His audience (Matthew 9:4; 12:25; Mark 2:6-8; Luke 6:8).
 - 2. He knew about people's lives before He had even met them. When He met the woman collecting water at the well at Sychar, He said to her, "The fact is you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband" (John 4:18).
 - 3. He also tells His disciples that their friend Lazarus was dead, although He was over 25 miles away from Lazarus's home (John 11:11-15).

⁹ Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, (Nashville, TN.: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 120

4. He advised the disciples to go and make preparation for the Lord's Supper, describing the person they were to meet and follow (Mark 14:13-15).
 5. Nathanael before ever meeting Him, for He knew his heart (John 1:47-48).
- B. Omnipotence**—God is all powerful. Through this term we acknowledge God's ability to bring to completion His design for creation.¹⁰ If God is infinite, and if He is sovereign, which we believe He is, then He must also be omnipotent. He has all power over all things at all times and in all ways. Nowhere is God's omnipotence seen more clearly than in creation. God said, "Let there be..." and it was so (Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, etc.).
1. Man needs tools and materials to create; God simply spoke, and by the power of His word, everything was created from nothing. "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth" (Psalm 33:6).
 2. Being omnipotent, God can do anything.
 3. However, that doesn't mean God has lost His omnipotence when the Bible says that He cannot do certain things.
 4. For example, Hebrews 6:18 says that He cannot lie. That does not mean He lacks the power to lie, but that God chooses not to lie in accord with His own moral perfection.
- C. Omnipresence**—God is all present. All things are present to God in themselves, whether they be event in our past, our present, or our future. As this definition indicates, our affirmation of God's omnipresence is closely connected to our declaration that God is eternal.¹¹ God's presence is continuous throughout all of creation, though it may not be revealed in the same way at the same time to people everywhere. At times, He may be actively present in a situation, while He may not reveal that He is present in another circumstance in some other area. The Bible reveals that God can be both present to a person in a manifest manner (Psalm 46:1; Isaiah 57:15) and present in every situation in all of creation at any given time (Psalm 33:13-14).

¹⁰ Ibid, 121

¹¹ Ibid, 120

- D. God is not full of love but God Himself *is* love. This attribute of God shows that it is part of His nature to give Himself to bring about blessing or good for others. The love of God is manifested toward the Son and all believers. God demonstrated His love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for the ungodly (Romans 5:8).

10. The Trinity

One of the hardest things for anyone to understand is how one God exists in three distinct persons. This is known as the **doctrine of the Trinity**.

The Trinity is comprised of:

- I. ***The Father***. The term "the Father" in the New Testament is not once applied to men or to Christ or to the Holy Ghost, but only and always to the first person of the Godhead, "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."
- II. ***The Son***. The term "the Son" in the New Testament is not once applied to men, or to "the Father," or to "the Holy Ghost," but always to the second person of the Godhead, "the Son of the Father."
- III. ***The Holy Spirit***. The term "the Holy Ghost" is not once applied to men, or to "the Father," or to "the Son," but only and always to the third person of the Godhead, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is the *comforter* and the *source* of power for believers.
 - A. Each of these live in harmony and fellowship of purpose, passion, and plan.
 - B. Each has His own personality and function.
 - C. Each person of the Godhead has a different function:
 1. **The Father**—Creator and source of all things.
 2. **The Son**—The source of life and redemption.
 3. **The Holy Spirit**—Our comforter and source of power.



Jesus referred to God as "Father" 181 times, and later the disciples called Him "Father" 78 times, and not once is He confused with, or called "Jesus" or "the

Holy Ghost.” Jesus spoke of the Spirit 24 times as being a separate person from Himself and the Father.

The important lesson that can be seen in the doctrine of the trinity is that of **unity, teamwork, fellowship, mutual respect, and appreciation.**

The Trinity is the union of three persons: The **Father**, the **Son**, and the **Holy Spirit** in one (unified) Godhead or divinity-so that all three persons are one in unity and eternal substance, but three separate and distinct persons as to individuality (1 John 5:7-8; Daniel 7:9-14; Matthew 3:16-17; 28:19; Acts 7:56-59).