



## *Lesson Two*

# Is There a God?





Agnosticism says that God has not made man, but man has made God. A sociological view of religion sees religion as a *human projection*.

However, there is another point of view. What appears as a human projection in one frame of reference may appear as a reflection of *divine realities* in another. Peter Berger, the Austrian-born (now American) professor of sociology, mentions what he calls “signals of transcendence” within the human situation. By this expression he means “phenomena that are to be found within the domain of our ‘natural’ reality but that appear to point beyond that reality” (Berger, p. 70). Such phenomena belong to ordinary, everyday awareness.

One such signal of transcendence he mentions is the element of *play* that can be found in any human culture. The joy of play somehow takes on a timeless quality and provides a liberation and peace which transcends the moment. For example, children intently playing “make-believe” games in the park are oblivious to time.

Berger relates an experience of this transcendence from memories of World War II in his native city of Vienna. Just before the Soviet troops occupied Vienna in 1945, the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra gave a regularly scheduled concert. The invasion occurred and the entry of the Soviet army interrupted the concert schedule for about a week, and then they went on as planned. Invasion, the overthrow of an empire, the appearance of another, and yet only a small break in concerts. How could this be? Well, Berger says, it was “an affirmation of the ultimate triumph of all human gestures of creative beauty over the gestures of destruction, and even over the ugliness of war and death” (Ibid. p. 78). Within the reality of play is a signal of transcendence, pointing beyond man’s nature to a higher justification.

Such a signal relates to *faith*. For faith does not rest on a mysterious revelation open to only a mystic few, but on what we experience in our ordinary lives. Our whole human experience is oriented toward *hope*. In a world where we are surrounded by death on all sides, a certain “NO!” to death rises up, bringing with it the feeling that there *is more!* Where do such feelings come from? Is it possible that this signal of transcendence or higher justification comes from God? Is there a God? If so, what is God like? These important questions are the subject of this lesson.

**LESSON OUTLINE**

- Atheism and Agnosticism
- The Problem of Proving God
- The *A Posteriori* Evidence
- The *A Priori* Evidence
- Evidence From Axiology
- God As “He” Rather Than “It”
- A Challenge

**QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT**

1. What is the difference between an *atheist* and an *agnostic*?
2. Can the existence of God be proved in the same way that you could prove that water can be formed from two parts of hydrogen and one part of oxygen?
3. How is *a posteriori* reasoning used as a “pointer” to God?
4. How do the concepts of the *cosmological argument* and the *teleological argument* subtly differ?
5. How is *a priori* reasoning used as a “pointer” to God?
6. What is the *ontological argument*?
7. Does the argument from *morality* and *aesthetics* serve as an effective “pointer” to a personal God?
8. Should God be called “He” rather than “It?”
9. Have you ever tested the reality of God by talking (praying) directly to this Being?

**WORD STUDY**

- agnosticism** — The belief that the existence of any ultimate reality (as God) is unknown and probably unknowable.
- a posteriori** — Literally, *from the latter*. Conclusions derived by reasoning from the observed facts; backtracks from effect to cause.
- a priori** — Literally, *from the former*. Proceeds from cause to effect; deductive reasoning; relating to or devised by reasoning from self-evident propositions; presupposed by experience.
- atheism** — Disbelief in the existence of deity; the doctrine that there is no deity.
- cosmological** — Dealing with the universe as an orderly system; dealing with the origin, structure, and space-time relationships of the universe.
- ontological** — Relating to the nature and relations of *being*.
- teleological** — Having to do with the study of evidences of design or purpose in nature; character attributed to nature or natural processes of being directed toward an end or shaped by a purpose.

### LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Personal problems and tense emotional experiences can blot out all aspects of joy and hope in a person. Through a very complex process of rationalization, an individual suffering from such problems can be led to a position of atheism. Dr. Orlo Strunk, Jr. describes such a process as “neurotic atheism” (Strunk, p. 107). He quotes from the writings of Ignace Lepp, a former Marxist, now a Roman Catholic psychotherapist, to illustrate “a young girl’s flight to atheism” (Lepp, pp. 157-158).

Lisa gave up her belief in God because of the influence of existentialist philosophy. She felt Christianity “was all nonsense” and that life was “rotten” and absurd. Therefore she saw no reason to restrain herself from any pleasure or whim. She proudly quoted the writings of Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre<sup>a</sup> to justify her attitude.

However, it was not only this so-called “intellectual evidence” that turned her into an existential atheist. Lisa went through some difficult emotional and moral traumas. She met a well-known and distinguished man and became his mistress. After a few months he grew weary of her and left her totally disillusioned. She questioned how anything could be sacred in the world if a man of such distinction was in reality only a scoundrel. In reading Camus and Sartre she sought to find philosophical confirmation of her own personal disappointments in life. Finally came her personal revolt against society--unusual dress, petty crimes, even involvement in a murder.

Lisa’s was a life of despair and hopelessness with no God, no meaning, no fulfillment and no future. The picture is sad, but it has not been exaggerated. Sadder still is that many young adults can identify with Lisa. Perhaps you can too. If so, do not give up. There is *hope* and there are *genuine answers* to life’s problems.

### ATHEISM AND AGNOSTICISM



### **Atheism**

The literal and simplest definition of an atheist is “one who believes there is no God.” If you are convinced that there is not a God of *any* kind, if your mind is made up, then there is little point in going on with these lessons. But if you defend atheism in a soft voice, or if you are dissatisfied with atheism as an intellectual and spiritual stance, then read on and consider the evidence for the reality of God in the world today.

Martin Luther (1483-1546), often called the Father of the Reformation, once observed that “God is what we hang our heart on.” If it be power, or science, or revolution, or money, or the state, or any of a thousand other things, all of us depend on something and give our final allegiance to it. In this sense, real atheism is impossible because everyone “hangs his heart” on at least one thing. This one thing becomes our God.

### **Agnosticism**

In such a technological age as ours, agnosticism seems to be an appealing and tempting position. Agnosticism “is the view that knowledge of God is limited or impossible, it is neither possible to affirm nor to deny God’s existence” (Titus, p. 240). Such an open-ended, unanswerable position leaves the impression of genuine humility, but actually it is a depressing one. If you are of this persuasion, and can sincerely say, ‘I just don’t know!’--then I encourage you to consider the following pages, not only with your mind (intellect) but also with your heart (will).

A perceptive youth, acknowledging the complex problems of the twentieth century, wrote a poem entitled “Searching for Miracles” and sent it to a well-known clergyman. Attached to it was a note saying, “I hope it comes true.” Whether or not it came true for this person, I do not know. But I can say that it *is* possible! Here it is. Read it thoughtfully.

I’m looking for a miracle in my life.  
I’m looking for that Someone

Who does not condemn...  
Who will take me as I am...  
Who ends all strife...  
Who wants me to be free.  
I'm looking for that Someone  
Who really cares...  
Who makes me want to dare...  
Who can give me reality ...  
Who makes me tread grounds untrod  
I'm looking for that Someone everyone calls *God!*

### THE PROBLEM OF PROVING GOD

An outstanding American newspaperman, Louis Cassels, has faced the question of proving God's existence. He says,

Can the reality of God be proved? To give you a straight and unequivocal answer at once, it can. . . . But you can only prove it to yourself. No one can prove it to you. There are many logical arguments which may lead you to the belief that God is a reasonable probability, but the only proof which can finally resolve your doubts is to experience His reality for yourself (Cassels, P. 6).

I would agree with Louis Cassels that to *prove* God from merely an intellectual standpoint is impossible. Yet, there are many powerful, compelling "pointers" that can lead one to think in a "God-towardness" way.

In discussing evidence for the existence of God, I will not appeal very much to the Bible as a source. There are two important reasons for this.

First, the existence of God is assumed in Scripture. The Bible begins with the simple affirmation of God's activity: "In the beginning God . . ." (Genesis 1:1), and continues throughout to take God's existence for granted. As one theologian has put it: "It does not seem to have occurred to any of the writers of either the Old or New Testaments to attempt to prove or argue for the existence of God. Everywhere and at all times it is a fact taken for granted (Thiessen, p. 56).

Second, those who are examining the claims of Christianity and those who are assailed with doubt about the existence of God want some other proof besides what the Bible says. They question its authority. Therefore, we will consider rational, logical evidences for the existence of God.

### THE A POSTERIORI EVIDENCE

*A posteriori* reasoning is reasoning from the observed facts. It looks at the effect and moves back to the cause. It bases cause on the effect observed.

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), considered one of the greatest intellectuals in human history, proposed his famous “*Quinque Viae*” (*Five Ways*) in which God’s existence can be demonstrated. This material has long stood as classic theistic literature. It is interesting to note that today there is renewed interest in these pointers to God.

These “theistic proofs” were first addressed by Aquinas to thinking men, providing them with reasons “why it is more intelligent to believe than to disbelieve God’s existence” (Reid, p. 162).

#### Motion

“Anything which is moved must be moved by something else.” Such movement is not an infinite process; so, finally you work your way back to the “first source of motion which is moved by nothing else: and such a source all men understand to be God.”

This, in Aquinas’ own words, is the same idea as Aristotle’s<sup>b</sup> pre-Christian concept of an Unmoved Mover. After analyzing substance and movement in nature, Aristotle concluded that a First Mover or a First Principle must exist. An examination of his conclusion reveals that through nature, he became aware of the existence of God and became convinced that all nature depends upon God for its existence. Without this first cause, there would be no existence at all.

#### Causation

It is impossible for anything to be the cause of itself. An infinite regression of causes is impossible and contradictory. There must be a first cause somewhere. "We must therefore posit some first cause: and all men call this God."

Actually, this really adds nothing to Aquinas' idea of motion. But taken together, they are varieties of what has come to be called the *cosmological argument*. Since this argument was first formulated by Aquinas in the thirteenth century it has stood more or less unchallenged, except by a few writers and scientists.

### **Possibility and Necessity**

The third argument of Aquinas is taken from possibility and necessity and is as follows. Experience leads us to conclude that all things are interdependent, and indeed each depends on another for its own existence. Things are capable of existing or not existing. They are possible to be and not to be. But it is impossible for all things to always exist. Yet, if everything is possible not to be, then at one time there could have been nothing existing. But this is illogical, for from nothing, nothing would come. Thus, there must be something of which the existence is necessary. That which, by necessity, has always existed is what "all men speak of as God." Everything but God is dependent upon something else to bring it into existence.

### **Gradation of Being**

Gradations of perfection exist in the universe. "Among beings there are some more and some less good, true, noble, and the like." These beings are spoken of as good or less good, "according to their different degrees of approach to what is greatest of all." In other words, there is in the universe a standard of comparison which is itself perfect "and this we call God."

### **Governance of the World**

This is more commonly known as the teleological argument or the argument from *design*. *Telos* is the Greek word meaning "end." Order and arrangement in the universe imply that intelligence and purpose are behind it. "Things" exist but do not "know." Yet, they fulfill a purpose, not by chance, but by design or intention. Since this intention is not of itself, it is to be found

in some intelligent Being “by which all natural things are directed towards ends. And this intelligent Being we call God.”

Thomas Aquinas’ *Five Ways* may be considered as five distinct arguments which are interrelated, or as one proof with five aspects. There are some Christian philosophers who argue that the totality of these arguments is to be thought of as one argument and that this was the original intent of Aquinas. I grant that Aquinas’ line of reasoning has some weaknesses and that there have been those who have attacked it. But it is also true that when taken as a whole it does have a cumulative effect. The arguments certainly serve as “pointers” to a Being or First Cause, that is intelligent, free, eternal and incomprehensibly great. The basic weakness of these “proofs” is that they do not explain God in terms of personality, love, and response to man and the world. But this we will deal with later.

### THE A PRIORI EVIDENCE

*A priori* means that form of reasoning which proceeds from cause to effect, or knowledge that is self-evident, that is recognized to be true apart from observation or experience. In this sense, the *a priori* arguments for God’s existence say that there is something deep inside every man which acknowledges responsibility to Someone out there.

#### Ontological Argument

The term “ontological” comes from the Greek word *ontos*, which means “being.” During the Middle Ages a churchman by the name of St. Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109), a very original thinker, put this argument together.<sup>c</sup>

Anselm began with the Bible verse, “The fool says in his heart, there is no God” (Psalm 14:1). For Anselm, man could never think of a greater Being than God. Man is a “knowing center” who believes in the existence of Absolute Truth. All men have the capacity of knowing God. On this basis he sought to “prove” God’s existence in the very idea of God--“the Greatest Conceivable Being.”

Although Anselm's statement does not *prove* the existence of God, it indicates that God must be, and that He is infinite and perfect. God is a being in the truest and highest sense. God's existence has not been proved, but our mental powers will not allow us to think otherwise.<sup>d</sup>

### **Innate Idea of God**

The concept of the innate idea of God is similar to the ontological argument. In its simplest form it says that every person is *born* with the concept of God implanted in his mind. As a person grows older, the idea of God gets clearer, or stronger. From this impression comes the idea that there must be a God. Now the concept a person has may be very articulate or barely on the edge of consciousness, but during crisis times it may suddenly come alive.

Another way to say this is to speak of man having a "built-in" religious nature or an ultimate religious faculty like volition or thought. Henry Thiessen, a contemporary Protestant theologian, holds the belief that the knowledge of the existence of God is *intuitive*. He says, "both Scripture and history prove that the belief in God is universal" (Thiessen, p. 55).

History and anthropology both show that the religious element of man's nature is as universal as the rational and social ones. "This supreme Being is to be found among all the peoples of the primitive cultures, not indeed everywhere in the same form or the same vigor, but still everywhere prominent enough to make his dominant position indubitable" (Ibid).

### **Man's Finitude**

We are continually reminded of our limitations. According to Aristotle, man knows that he is a finite being. "Man has a sense of his finitude" (Ramm, p. 90).

In this century there has been a great awareness of the frailty of man. We live in an age of pessimism. The horrors of war, the

threat of nuclear annihilation and other forms of man's inhumanity to man have caused people to question the wisdom and good sense of modern man. Some current literature emphasizes the finiteness of man. A feeling of nihilism <sup>e</sup> seems to have gripped many today, especially among the younger generation.

During a time when man feels small and alone, is there not a longing for strength, comfort and support from some source beyond himself? It is when a person feels a deep sense of finitude that he is confronted by Infinity, *God*. Some theologians recognize in every man a "sense of dependence." The next step, then, is to realize that God—the Infinite—is That One on whom man can and should depend.

### EVIDENCE FROM AXIOLOGY

Axiology is a philosophical term meaning "the study of values." There are two significant areas of evidence from axiology which serve as important pointers to the existence of God. Both are born of the awareness in man of *values*. The first deals with *moral* values, and the second has to do with *aesthetic* values.

#### Moral Argument

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), a German philosopher, believed that Thomas Aquinas' *Five Ways* were theoretical and did not prove any knowledge of God as a moral Being. So on the basis of *conscience* he argues for the reality of God, as well as for freedom and immortality. <sup>f</sup>

Such great minds as C.S. Lewis (1898-1963)<sup>g</sup> and Carl Jung (1875-1961)<sup>h</sup> believed that every man has a *moral sense* which has been present in every people, age and culture known to history and anthropology. The great Viennese psychiatrist, Viktor Frankl (1905- ), founder of the concept of logotherapy, believes that one of the most basic human needs is the "will for meaning." Man, he says, can endure almost any suffering if he can see a purpose in it. On the other hand, he will be miserable

even amidst wealth if he cannot relate his life to some larger context which makes life meaningful.

Augustus Strong, a systematic theologian, states,

Conscience recognizes the existence of a moral law which has supreme authority. Known violations of this moral law are followed by feelings of ill-desert and fears of judgment. The moral law, since it is not self-imposed, and these threats of judgment, since they are not self-executing, respectively argue the existence of a holy will that has imposed the law, and of a punitive power that will execute the threats of the moral nature (Strong, p. 82).

In other words, “conscience recognizes the existence of a great Lawgiver, God, and the certainty of the punishment of all violations of His law” (Thiessen, p. 62).

### **Aesthetic Argument**

The aesthetic argument begins by assuming that a sense of beauty exists universally among men. The recognition of the sublime and the beautiful in the universe is seen as direct evidence of the existence of a *personal* God. For example, in nature there are no color clashes in flowers, sunsets, or trees. There is harmony and beauty in the human form, in animal life, and in the sea.

The fact that man has an aesthetic faculty by which he is able to recognize and appreciate beauty around him is strong evidence of this universal aesthetic value. The concept of what is described as “beautiful” may vary from culture to culture. But this is not the point. The point is that in every normal human being there is a *sense* of beauty, the ability to render judgment on what is attractive. Moreover, man has the ability and skill to create beauty himself--works of art, a symphony, a song, a poem, a building.

How is it that the beauty of the world and man’s aesthetic ability and appreciation correspond so favorably? It must have been by design. But design connotes intelligence, and



intelligence implies personality--which once again leads us back to *God!*

### **GOD AS “HE” RATHER THAN “IT”**

Belief systems tend to be accepted by a person when he is *ready* to accept them and not by convincing argumentation. For example, let's go back to Lisa's plight, presented at the beginning of this lesson. She admitted to being an atheist. If she had been confronted with rational evidences for the existence of God, we know what effect it would have had. No matter how clearly the rational arguments might have been presented, Lisa was not in the proper frame of mind to appreciate them.

The best that rational thought can do is to provide a series of “pointers” to the existence of God. If you can accept some or all of these, then at best you have insight into the First Cause, Supreme Being, or Great Intellect. This is not an act of faith, it is simply mental assent to logical hypotheses, drawn from clear evidence presented in a meaningful way.

Up to now, except for the poem quoted earlier, we have implied that God is an “It” rather than a Being with *personal* attributes. You would quickly catch a subtle shift to personal pronouns with reference to God, especially if no reason for doing so were given. But it is necessary to realize that God is “He” rather than “It.”

The Author of time and space is obviously not restricted by them as we are. God transcends all human categories. But when all of this is said, it still comes more naturally to speak of God as “He.” Louis Cassels says on this point:

We use personal pronouns to refer to God because we have personality--the attributes of living, thinking, purposeful being--the highest and most complex phenomenon in the created universe which is open to our rational observation. God, as the “Ground of all Being,” is infinitely more than we can conceive when we try to

project person-hood to the ultimate degree. He certainly is not *less* than a living person. Therefore, we refer to God as “He” not because we hold any anthropomorphic concept of Him, but because it is the least inadequate pronoun we possess (Cassels, p. 10).

A British scientist, Robert L. F. Boyd, professor of Physics, University College, London, and Professor of Astronomy in the Royal Institution, helps us on this point of God being a *Person*. He discusses three kinds of knowledge--mathematical knowledge, scientific knowledge, and personal knowledge (Boyd, pp. 10-11).

In *pure mathematics* the knower is isolated. His knowledge is the result of the axioms he has created. Until the axioms are related to the physical world the mathematics are sterile. There is simply the “I-and-nothing-more” relationship, if such can be called a relationship.

*Scientific knowledge*, on the other hand, finds its data outside, in the material world. This leads to new knowledge of the world. The scientist stands and surveys the phenomena, but they do not look back or respond. He is in the superior position, an “I-it” relationship.

The primary means of acquiring *personal knowledge* is by *encounter*. It may also be called experiential knowledge. Although knowledge by experience is sometimes more broadly defined, I am using the expression to refer to the “I-You” relationship. Observation is no substitute for a genuine encounter and an exchange between minds. The personal encounter involves a self-revelation, an unveiling, an “I-You” relationship.<sup>1</sup>

It is in this third category of knowledge that we see God as “He” rather than “It.” As Saint Augustine said more than a thousand years ago: “Thou hast made us for thyself, O God, and our hearts are restless until we find rest in thee” (*Confessions*, Book 1, paragraph 1).

## A CHALLENGE

The whole approach of the Bible differs from what we have been discussing in that the Bible *assumes* the existence of a personal, loving God. But there is yet another difference. Scripture records God's search for man rather than man's search for God. It is not enough merely to be convinced that God exists and then just walk away from Him feeling that you have solved one more philosophical question!

In spite of all that has been said, the point is not to "prove" that God exists by logical reasoning. Rather it is that God has acted on our behalf and has allowed Himself to be known.

God *does* exist—as the First Cause, Unmoved Mover, Ground of all Being, and any other philosophical term you may want to use! But more importantly, He is a person who has been speaking to and acting upon the human situation throughout history. He spoke first to Abraham, then through His prophets, as the Old Testament records. Then finally, in the fullest possible way, He spoke through the incarnation of Jesus Christ, His Son.

In closing this lesson I would like to challenge you to face God. Test His reality. I heard of one honest student who, while wrestling with doubts about God, prayed: "God, if there is a God, help me to understand You and know You. If you care, care for me. If You want me, come to me. Amen."

You have probably talked with many of your friends about God. Hopefully, you have applied this lesson to yourself. You have perhaps wondered and thought about this important question often. Take one more step and talk to God yourself. Just speak to Him as you would to a close friend, even though you may not feel He is very close at the moment. This will put you beyond the level of "cold proofs" into the realm of personal encounter, the "I-You."

If you feel you need a place to start, you can repeat the same prayer-poem quoted earlier. Another suggestion would be to speak to God in the following words:

One can fear a Reality  
and respect a Being,

But one loves a Father  
     who is all love in Himself.  
 Give me such unqualified love  
     for you, Father.  
 If others still choose  
     to mold their own gods,  
 Let it not be because of me (Gesch, p. 60).

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<sup>a</sup>Camus (1913-1960) and Sartre (1905 ), both Frenchmen, are two of the best-known modern existentialist philosophers. Their writings have had a great impact upon current thought.

<sup>b</sup> Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), a Greek and a student of Plato, wrote on almost all the sciences known in his time. He is one of the greatest philosophers of all time.

I am aware of the rebuttals to St. Anselm. His ontological proof was first attacked by Guanilo, a monk and contemporary of Anselm. He *criticized* the argument “on behalf of the fool.” Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) *denied* the proof. Duns Scotus (1265-1308) *rephrased* it. René Descartes (1596-1650) *reaffirmed* it. Gottfried von Leibniz (1646-1716) *modified* it. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) *refuted* it. Georg Hegel (1770-1831) *revamped* and *reaffirmed* it. Most modern philosophers have assumed that the critique by Kant was decisive. However, recently it has been given a new lease on life by two American philosophers: U. Malcom and C. Hartshorne. They say God’s existence is either logically necessary or logically impossible. Since it has not been shown to be logically impossible, it is therefore logically necessary. Nevertheless my purpose is not to provide conclusive evidence, but simply to present the ontological argument as a pointer to God. (The summary of the rebuttals to St. Anselm is adapted from Fremantle, p. 88.)

<sup>d</sup> For a rendering of the actual texts of Aquinas and Anselm see Bierman and Gould, *Philosophy for a New Generation*, chapters 54-55.

<sup>e</sup> Harold H. Titus, *Living Issues in Philosophy*, page 542, says that nihilism is usually used “to refer to the social doctrine that conditions are so evil that the present social order ought to be swept aside or destroyed to make room for something better.”

<sup>f</sup> It is interesting to note here that the apostle Paul used this basic argument as well in his Epistle to the Romans. (See Romans 1:19, 32; 2:14-16.)

<sup>g</sup> C. S. Lewis was an English author and professor who turned from agnosticism to Christianity. He is famous for his books on Christian themes.

<sup>h</sup> Carl Gustav Jung was a Swiss psychologist and son of an evangelical clergyman. He was greatly influenced by Sigmund Freud and introduced into psychology the now common terms “introversion” and “extroversion.”

<sup>i</sup> Viktor E. Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning* (New York, N.Y., USA: Washington Square Press, 1963), pages 2-154. The term logotherapy stems from the Greek *logos* which denotes meaning. Logotherapy focuses on the meaning of human existence as well as on man’s search for such a meaning.” According to Dr. Frankl “striving to find a meaning to one’s life is the primary motivational force in man.” As a psychotherapist, he uses logotherapy to stress the *future* rather than the *past* as is done in psychoanalysis. The patient is confronted with and reoriented toward the meaning of his life.

<sup>j</sup> Admittedly there are criticisms to be made for all of these arguments. I realize they are not “airtight” or perfect. But it is the collective power of these items which serve as convincing pointers to the reality of God.

<sup>k</sup> Cassels is using a term invented by the German theologian Paul Tillich (1886-1965).

<sup>l</sup> The Austrian Jewish philosopher, Martin Buber (1878-1965) first coined the dialogical terms of “I-it.” and “I-you.” His book on this subject dates in an early draft from the fall of 1919 but was not published until 1923 under the title *Ich und Du*.

Since that time many Christian thinkers, including Dr. Robert Boyd quoted above, have used the terms “I-You”, to describe the confrontation of a person with Jesus Christ. But Buber, being Jewish, did not think of the “You” as being Christ but God Himself. In these lessons the term is used to discuss the encounter between man and Jesus.

Probably the best translation into English from the German of Buber’s work is by Walter Kaufmann, *I and Thou* by Martin Buber; New York, N.Y. USA: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1970.

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10. Thiessen, Henry Clarence. *Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956.
11. Titus, Harold H. *Living Issues in Philosophy*. London, England: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1970.

### FURTHER STUDY SUGGESTIONS

Bierman, A. K. and Gould, James A. *Philosophy For A New Generation*. London, England: The Macmillan Company, 1970. Chapters 54 and 55 contain the actual text of St. Anselm and Thomas Aquinas on their rational arguments for the existence of God, as well as other helpful and interesting philosophical texts.

Boyd, Robert F. L. *Can God Be Known?* London, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970.

This 16-page booklet is excellent on the question of epistemology, discussed in the first lesson. It was useful in this lesson in talking about the three kinds of knowledge.

Brown, Colin. *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*. London, England: Tyndale Press, 1969.

Chapter 1 discusses the classical arguments for the existence of God. However, the entire book is highly recommended for persons interested in Christianity and philosophy.

Cassels, Louis. *Christian Primer*. Garden City, New York, USA: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1964.

Chapter 1 relates especially well to the subject of this lesson.

Frankl, Viktor E. *Man's Search for Meaning*. New York, New York, USA: Washington Square Press, 1963.

Though not a religious book in the strict sense, it is a moving first-hand account of man's need for a faith to live by, learned in the confines of a Nazi concentration camp of World War II.

Reid, J. K. S. *Christian Apologetics*. London, England: Hodder and Stoughton, 1969.

Chapter 6 relates to the topic of this lesson and especially the rational "proofs" for the existence of God.

Strunk, Orlo, Jr. *The Choice Called Atheism*. Nashville, Tennessee, USA: Abingdon Press, 1968.

Chapter 1 is particularly relevant to the section in this lesson on atheism and agnosticism.

Titus, Harold H. *Living Issues in Philosophy*. London, Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1970.

This book has a very good section on epistemology, the subject of the first lesson of this course. It also has good material on the subject of this lesson. See chapter 19 on values and chapter 24 on religion. It also has a very good glossary of philosophical terms.



**PERSONAL STUDY**

**1** Read in the New Testament Romans 1:1-2:29.

What do you learn from 1:18-25 about the relationship between man and God?

.....  
.....

What support for the moral argument for the existence of God do you find in 1:18-19 and 2:13-16?

.....  
.....  
.....

**2** Briefly write the strengths, or positive aspects, of the evidence presented under the following headings.

A Posteriori .....

.....  
.....

A Priori.....

.....  
.....

Axiology.....

.....  
.....

**3** If a Supreme Being makes sense to you, does it also follow that such a Being has personal attributes and can relate to man? Why or why not, in your opinion?

.....  
.....  
.....

**4** Do you want to discover the reality of God by means of a personal encounter--an "I-You" experience?

.....  
.....  
.....

**5** Compose a short prayer to God expressing your deepest thoughts, dreams and questions.

.....  
.....  
.....

**PERSONAL STUDY RESPONSES GUIDELINES**

Remember, these answers are only suggestive of the things you might include.

- 1 Man has deliberately chosen not to accept the truth God has revealed. This rebellion has resulted in a state where now man sees the wrath of God, but even that does not bring him back to a point of honoring or giving thanks to Him.

In verses 18-19 Paul states that men can and should know what is good and true, for God has made all things plain to them. There is a “moral sense” or “conscience” present in men, which they have chosen to ignore. This is the moral argument. In chapter 2, verses 13-16, Paul maintains that it is not written laws that show us what is right and wrong, but “laws written on the heart. Men, by nature, have a conscience by which they will be judged, and those who have “conflicting thoughts,” i.e., have not followed the conscience given them, will stand accused.

- 2 *A posteriori* arguments for the existence of God are firmly rooted in facts. The methodology is that of the scientific method: begin with what is and look for the cause.

*A priori* arguments appeal to the universality of the religious element (including man’s finitude) in man. Since it is universal, it must have a valid basis.

Axiology arguments again appeal to universality--the universality of the concepts right and wrong. If laws or morality are present in all cultures and times, Something or Someone had to make the laws and the moral sensitivity in man.

- 3 This answer depends entirely on where you are in your thinking. Reasons why you may see God as having personal attributes include the one given under “Aesthetic Argument,” the statement by Cassels, the argument of Boyd, or simply the religious culture of which you are a part. Reasons why you are not able to see this position may relate to your doubts concerning the existence of God in the first place.

**4** Your answer.

**5** Your answer, but it might include the following:

- feelings about yourself, your strengths and weaknesses, your good points and your bad points, your sense of accomplishment and your feelings of inadequacy.
- questions about life and God, the meaning of existence in general and your life in particular, the reasons for evil and tragedy.
- your hopes for the future, both in the world and in your own life, your particular aspirations for making something worth-while out of what you do and are.
- the needs you have or know about and want to see met, whether they are very general (“I need to know what to do with my life”) or very particular (“I need to find a cheap place to stay”).
- things for which you are thankful, which you have come to appreciate and to value, and which would make your life less fulfilled if you were to lose them.

**SELF-CHECK REVIEW**

**1** Atheists, agnostics, and Christians have a definite attitude toward the idea of God. Each has its basic stance, its appeal, and (on the level of argument) its weaknesses. Which group(s) might have used these arguments? Write the appropriate letter or letters in the blank in front of the arguments.

- .... **a** You can't be sure of anything including God.      1) Atheists  
 .... **b** Everyone has something which is "God" for him.      2) Agnostics  
 .... **c** Man does not need a God in order to live happily.      3) Christians  
 .... **d** The existence of God cannot be objectively proved beyond all doubt.  
 .... **e** It is a sign of psychological weakness to believe in God.  
 .... **f** We are alone in an uncaring universe.  
 .... **g** God can be proved only by personally experiencing Him.

Thought provoker: What are the weaknesses of these statements, judging from your experience and knowledge of life?

**2** Please complete these statements about the *a posteriori* arguments for the existence of God. Write your answers in the blank provided.

- a** The *Five Ways* were formulated by.....  
**b** The law of motion points to a.....  
**c** The argument from first cause is the ..... argument.  
**d** The degrees of perfection imply a.....  
**e** The argument from design is the ..... argument.  
**f** One weakness of these arguments is that they point to God only as.....  
**g** These are less proofs than..... to God's existence.

Thought provoker: Do you see reason and order in the universe, or do you disagree with bio-mathematicians who are now saying that the argument for *chance* in the origins and developing of life as we know it is statistically untenable?

**3** Please complete these statements about the *a priori* arguments for the existence of God. Write your answers in the blank provided.

- a** The ontological argument was first stated by .....  
.....
- b** For the thinking man, God is the .....  
.....
- c** The idea of God may also be argued to be.....  
.....
- d** The universality of belief in God indicates that it is .....  
.....
- e** In contrast, man recognizes the existence of God who is the .....  
.....

Thought provoker: What things in your society indicate a dissatisfaction with rationalism and a return (however misinformed) to a “sense of dependence?” (You may think of the preoccupation with the ESP, drug-experiences, astrology, and other occult practices.)

**4** Which of these statements is consistent with the arguments from axiology? Circle the letter corresponding to the correct statements.

- a) All men have an innate sense of right and wrong.
- b) Men can be miserable and rich if life is meaningful.
- c) Conscience recognizes the existence of God as lawgiver.
- d) A universal sense of beauty implies the existence of a Designer/Creator.
- e) Because artists have a great sense of aesthetics, they are very religious.
- f) "Beauty is truth, truth beauty. That is all ye know on earth and all ye need to know" (John Keats).
- g) Kant formulated an argument on this basis.

Thought provoker: Do you find the argument from values (moral and aesthetic) more or less valid than the earlier pointers? How basic are these values in your life?

**5** Relate the kinds of knowledge to the name given by Boyd and to the relationship implied. Write the numbers representing the appropriate name and relationship in the blank provided.

**a** ..... + ..... Knowledge through encounter with persons

**b** .... + ..... Knowledge created from axioms

**c** ..... + ..... Knowledge through observation of data

- 1) mathematical
- 2) scientific
- 3) personal
- 4) I-You
- 5) I-It
- 6) I-Nothing-More

Thought provoker: Does the idea of God as a Person have more meaning to you than God as a creative force (an It)? Do you think it likely that a personal God would want to make Himself known to an intelligent part of His creation?

**SELF-CHECK REVIEW ANSWERS**

- 1**
- a** 2)
  - b** 3)
  - c** 1)
  - d** 2) and 3)
  - e** 1) and 2)
  - f** 1)
  - g** 3)
- 2**
- a** quinas
  - b** First Mover/Principle
  - c** Cosmological
  - d** Perfect Standard
  - e** Teleological
  - f** Creator/First Cause
  - g** Pointers
- 3**
- a** St. Anselm
  - b** Greatest Conceivable Being
  - c** Innate
  - d** Intuitive
  - e** Infinite
- 4** a) c), d), and g)
- 5**
- a** 3) + 4)
  - b** 1) + 6)
  - c** 2) + 5)



