

Deism or the God of Revelation?

As a believing Catholic, I believe that God loves his entire creation. I believe that God loves you and me and each one of us and that he has revealed His plan for our eternal happiness. I believe that His commandments are from His love and are for **our** good, not His.

I believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God in many different kinds of language. I accept the first 11 chapters of Genesis as parable-like accounts that reveal extremely important truths about creation and our relationship with our Creator, similar to the parables of Jesus.

I believe that God entered human history with the call of Abram whose name He changed to Abraham as a sign of the Covenant.

I believe that Jesus worked true miracles like those more recently worked at Lourdes.

I believe that Jesus is true God and true Man, the Christ, the Messiah foretold by the prophets in the Church of the Old Covenant. In turn, the Lord Jesus founded the Church of the New Covenant upon Simon, son of John. Just as God had changed the name of Abram to Abraham, so also the Lord Jesus changed the name of Simon to Peter (rock) as a sign of headship in the New Covenant.

Why believe what the Catholic Church teaches?

At the Last Supper Jesus promised three times that the Holy Spirit would guide the Apostles and their successors into the fullness of the truth:

“The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your mind whatever I have said to you” (John 14:26; see also John 15:26; 16:12-15).

I believe that Jesus keeps his promises.

Why believe in Jesus?

I believe that Jesus is worthy of belief because of His resurrection from the dead. That is not true about any other religious leader. St. Paul was emphatic: “...and if Christ has not risen, vain then is our preaching, vain too is your faith (1 Cor 15: 12-19.) The apostles—ordinary folks, not dreamers or religious fanatics—went to their deaths witnessing that they had seen and eaten with the Resurrected Christ.

It is vitally important to realize in our hearts that God really does love us and that His commandments are for our good. Then we will want to love Him in return and say “Amen” to the Last Supper words of Jesus, “If you love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

Replies to two common questions.

Conflict between the Catholic faith and science? Not true. The Catholic Church founded most of the ancient European universities. A list of Catholic scientists would be very long indeed. For example, the pasteurization of milk is named after its developer, Catholic scientist Louis Pasteur (1822-1895). There is no contradiction between the Catholic Faith and true science.

Moral evils by churchmen? Of course. Ordination does not eliminate free will and temptations. For what the Faith looks like in practice, look at the lives of the recognized saints and also the millions of Catholics who **do** practice what the Church teaches.

I wrote this brochure initially for prison inmates who asked for help to respond to attacks on their faith.

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Why Believe?

Why should I believe in God? Sooner or later, every thinking and believing person has to make a decision. Do I really believe in God? And if so, why? These questions are normal. In fact, St. Peter tells believers to be ready to give a reason for their faith (see 1 Peter, 3:15).

These questions have attracted many thinkers, and various reasons for faith in God have been given; this little brochure will give a few of them. But first we need to address the huge problem of our day.

Practical atheism: materialism and indifference.

There are not large numbers of intellectual atheists. As logicians tell us, you cannot prove a negative. Also, as you will read a bit later, some atheists have discovered that dogmatic atheism simply doesn't explain life as we know it.

Far more numerous are practical atheists—those who act as if God doesn't exist. Their gods are money and pleasure and power. They don't build idols to these, although some of their houses might be called that, but these are the principles by which they make their decisions.

Perhaps even worse than these idol worshippers are those who are completely indifferent about the existence of God and act as if it doesn't matter. They don't deny the existence of God, but they seem not to care.

They are like little children who close their eyes and say, “I can't see you, so you can't see me.” It doesn't work for children or adults.

Pascal's wager certainly applies in these cases. I hope it leads them to think and then to pray.

Pascal's wager. Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) was such a brilliant mathematician that in 1970 a computer programming language was named after him. Some of his unbelieving friends were living ungodly lives so he made a bet with them. "If I live as if there is a God and die and find there isn't, I have lost nothing. If you live as if there is no God and die and find there is God, you have lost everything." This does not **prove** that God exists, but it certainly provides food for thought.

The "no consequences" approach. About 200 years later, Fyodor Dostoyevsky had one of his characters say, "If there is no God, everything is permitted" (*Brothers Karamazov*, 1879). That played out hugely during the times of aggressive Russian and Chinese atheistic communism when Stalin and Mao killed millions of their own people.

Also, just read the papers. Some public schools are so anti-theistic that they forbid the Pledge of Allegiance because it contains the phrase "under God." With that kind of education, why shouldn't people do whatever they think they can get away with? If the only purpose of education is to enable you to earn money so you can enjoy whatever you desire, why not take the shortest way to get money?

We are bombarded by the daily news that gives deadly proof that George Washington was right when he said in his 1796 Farewell Address, "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports."

The human existence approach. Does my existence have meaning? If there is no God and thus no meaning to life beyond money and pleasure and power, why not commit suicide?

Jacques Maritain (1882-1973) and his wife Raisa (1883-1960) were philosophy students in Paris learning the materialistic doctrines of the day and concluded that life has no meaning. They were considering suicide when they met Leon Bloy who introduced them to Catholic Christianity. That was truly a life-saving event for them.

The argument from Design: Anthony Flew, (died April 8, 2010) was an English philosopher in the field of the philosophy of religion.

A notorious atheist most of his life, he was caught up in the problem of evil beyond that caused by personal sin. In 2004 at age 81, he announced that he was now a believer in deism.

Mr. Flew gave two science-based reasons for his rejection of atheism.

1) DNA research "has shown, by the almost unbelievable complexity of the arrangements which are needed to produce life, that intelligence must have been involved."

2) Inconsistencies in the Darwinian account of evolution (NY Times, 2010/04/17). That is, a completely materialistic approach to evolution, as contrasted with a theistic guided evolution, is simply inadequate to deal with the real world.

The approach of logical reasoning. St. Thomas Aquinas developed the Five Ways of coming to the conviction that God exists. You can search them on the internet.

Here is one sentence from the Second Way concerning causality:

"There is no case known (neither is it, indeed, possible) in which a thing is found to be the efficient cause of itself; for so it would be prior to itself, which is impossible." Very briefly, nothing comes from nothing. We are here. Someone got us started. That Being we call God.

This Second Way is probably the easiest to understand because it starts with you and me and all of us. I don't need any education to realize that I am not the reason for my own existence. I was born from my mother, and no matter how far back you can imagine, you bump up against the reality that someone had to start the chain. In the language of philosophy, that Being is the First Cause.

Forms of belief in God. As former atheist Anthony Flew showed, there is more than one form of belief in God. Is God just the great Watchmaker who designed and created the universe and takes no active interest in it, or is God very much more?

Deism is belief in a God who created the universe and then left it alone except to energize it. God is the first cause and the sustaining cause of the universe. Period.

Theism is belief in a God who not only created the universe but guides it and intervenes in it.

Polytheism is belief in many gods—a god for war and a god for peace, a god for good weather, a god for health, etc. This is common in the ancient pagan religions.

Judeo-Christian theism is belief in the One God who is not only our Creator but who actually loves each individual man and woman, not just "mankind," and who wants us to love Him. Furthermore, this One God has intervened in human affairs as told in the Judeo-Christian history. Easter celebrates as a real historic fact the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.