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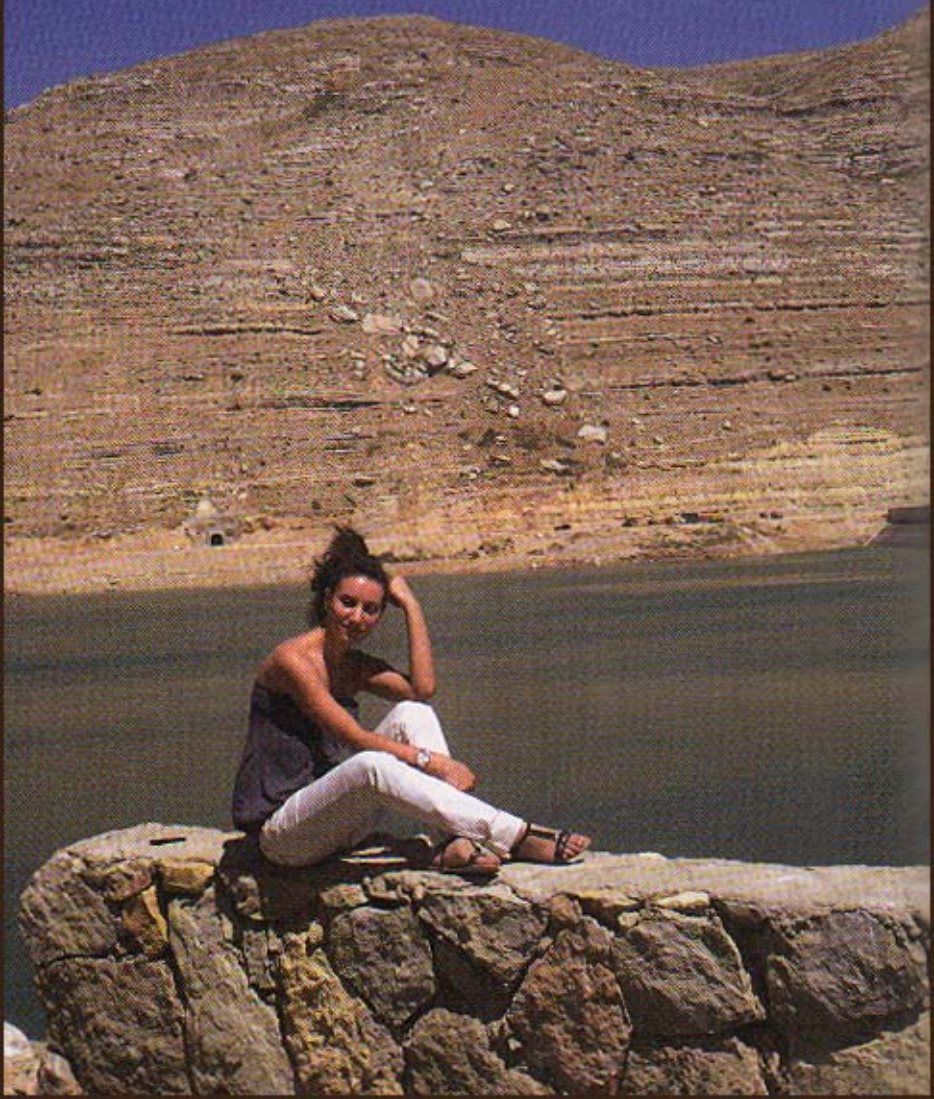
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HE EXISTS? HE DOESN'T EXIST ?...

2

What We Can Know about God



Why many people don't want to know about God

No doubt some people have already told you:

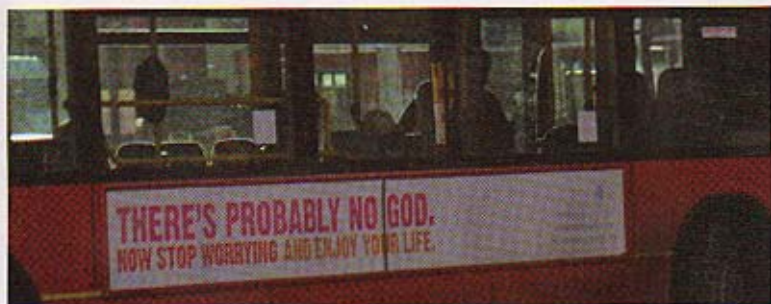
GOD doesn't exist! God is merely an invention.

Many people have a strange interest in saying that God does not exist. Why are they so aggressive toward God, wanting everything that reminds us of him to disappear from the world? Surely, it should be a matter of total indifference to them? Perhaps they don't want to know about God because then they would have to change their lives completely. If God does exist, if God is absolute goodness and desires nothing else but



→ 357

Is atheism
always a sin
against God?



goodness, then it is absolutely impossible to lie, to commit adultery, take drugs, cheat others, and regard ourselves as the center of the universe. That is, it is impossible to do these things without ultimately having to face the consequences of such actions.

Again, many people call themselves atheists simply because they think it is more cool to be, so to speak, their own "god" and to decide for themselves what is good and bad. But someone who puts his own ego at the center of everything is simply an egotist.



→ 5

Why do people
deny that God
exists, if they
can know him by
reason?

We have all met such egotists from time to time, and they tend to be rather unpleasant people. Such people are implicitly atheists, for it is clear that in their world view there can be no one bigger, better, cleverer, more beautiful, or more deserving than they are themselves.



(He made
... men ...)
that they should
seek God, in the
hope that they
might feel after
him and find him.
Yet he is not far
from each one of
us, for 'In him we
live and move and
have our being.'

Acts 17:27-28



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Does science
make the Creator
superfluous?



→ 42

Can someone
accept the theory
of evolution and
still believe in the
Creator?



And what if I can't find God?

But there are also people who are by no means ego-
tistical and yet still do not believe in God. They often say, I
can't find God; he is nowhere to be found. Perhaps it would
help them to stop and think very carefully. It is a matter of log-
ic—and for this we need to engage our little gray brain cells,
and engage them 100% (hence the following page is only for
people who can really think straight):

1. Everything we see in the universe has a cause, a reason
it exists. I exist because my parents gave life to me. The
rocky cliffs on the coast exist because of movements in the
earth's crust over millions of years that caused the land to
be raised higher than the sea. For each thing we see around
us, there must be something else that gave rise to it.
2. The universe (the totality of things and beings existing in
space and time) also exists.
3. Hence there must necessarily be something that is the
cause/the reason for the existence of the universe. It would
be totally illogical to assume that the mouse, the ocean,
and the stars all have a cause for their existence but that
the universe does not have such a cause. Even the universe
as a whole cannot exist "without cause".
4. The cause or reason for the universe as a whole must, how-
ever, be greater than, and above all entirely different from,

the universe itself and everything within it. What has brought forth both space and time cannot itself be a part of space and time.

5. This "something" that is greater than everything in the world and that must necessarily exist, since otherwise the universe itself would be without cause, we call **GOD**.

2.3

The miracle of the little grain of sand

TEST IT for yourself: Try for a moment to imagine "nothing"—in other words, absolute nothingness, not even a kind of darkness or a great emptiness—no: really, absolutely, nothing. Nothing, nothing, nothing! Not even thinking. Simply nothing.

Bet you don't succeed! The philosopher Leibniz once said that there is only one great question in the world:

Why is there anything at all, and not simply nothing?

- 🔥 The fact is, the one thing we actually simply cannot imagine—namely, nothing—is the one thing that should be self-evident. The normal thing to assume would be that there is simply nothing, and there's an end to it!



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Is the world
a product of
chance?

- 🔥 But in fact there is something. We know this with absolute certainty. And even if there were only a single tiny grain of sand and nothing else—even that would be an incredible miracle. For one single tiny grain of sand alone would destroy "nothingness".

- 🔥 There must be someone there who has uttered his great "Yes" to everything that exists, who has willed that "something" should exist and not "nothing" instead.

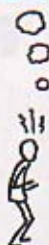
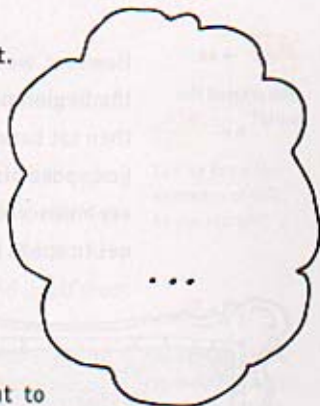
- 🔥 We Christians call this "Someone", who has created the universe out of nothing, God.



→ 2

Why did God
create us?

- 🔥 And we say that God is the **CREATOR** of the world.





Who created the world?

However, we must not imagine the Creator as someone who in the beginning made all things with a snap of his fingers and then sat back and rested. It was not only in the beginning that God spoke his great "Yes" to the world. He does so still, in every millisecond. Forever, until the end of the world, he continues to speak his great yes-world-I-will-that-you-exist.



99 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.

Without God's "Yes", which he speaks in this very second while you are reading these words, the universe with all its Milky Ways and solar systems would instantly sink into nothingness—just as though someone had switched off the projector and the film was over.

POPE BENEDICT XVI
April 24, 2005

The end of the little gray brain cells

How can we actually know anything at all about God?

In order to know *the fact* of God's existence, our little gray brain cells are enough. To know that God must exist, one does not need much more than a logical mind. The idea of a world in which everything has a reason except for the world itself must strike any reasonable person as nonsense.

But of course we would like to know more about this mysterious being without whom **EVERYTHING** would be **NOTHING**.

Who is this God, then? What is his relationship toward what he has created? What is God himself like? Is God perhaps cold and cruel? Is he without feelings, like a machine? Or is he perhaps full of love?

Of himself, man can give no answer to these questions. Not even the greatest philosophers and thinkers can do so. Not Aristotle, not Plato, not Kant, not Hegel. And anyone who claims to be able to know what God himself is like is either nuts or a fraud.

What? So do we humans have *no chance* of knowing whether the ultimate cause of the universe is good or evil? Whether we can trust in the Creator of the world because he is good? Or whether we have been thrust into this world by a cruel tyrant, who simply toys with us, only to utterly annihilate us tomorrow or the day after?

But there is such a possibility. God could decide to communicate with us. We call this **REVELATION**. In what way could he do this? Perhaps like this:

☞ He might write in giant letters of flame along the horizon:
"I do exist. And actually I am nice. God."



→ 4

Can we know the existence of God by our reason?



→ 7

Why did God have to show himself in order for us to be able to know what he is like?



In His goodness and wisdom God chose to reveal Himself and to make known to us the hidden purpose of His will ... by which through Christ, the Word made flesh, man might in the Holy Spirit have access to the Father and come to share in the divine nature.

Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*





In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the ages.

HEB 1:1-2

- He might announce divine news bulletins, ringing out over the world in a voice of thunder: "Today I have decided ... etc.", or: "The next news bulletin from me will be on Wednesday. God."

Think for a moment about the word **REVELATION**. It's a bit like when you fall in love. You know nothing about the boy or girl of your dreams until you suddenly click and one of you says to the other, "Do you know, I've fallen totally in love with you!" You may have watched each other and had your eye on each other—or you may even have read books about men and women and the meaning of love. But you know nothing! What counts is the moment when the other person **REVEALS** himself to you. He has to open his heart and say those amazing words: "All this time I have longed for nothing else but your love!"

Actually, God has revealed (or shown) himself to mankind in many different ways—sometimes as mighty and powerful (in natural events or in the fate of entire nations), and sometimes as quiet and gentle, in the way God touches an individual human heart. The amazing thing is that God really wants to talk to you and to me as though we were the only people in the world—and the most important.



→ 20

How can we respond to God when he speaks to us?

If we have understood this and choose to listen to God's voice, then that is what we call **faith**.



→ 21

Faith—what is it?

God shows himself to me. I hear God's voice—and I respond:

"There you are, my Lord and my God. Thank you for seeing me and speaking within me. I **BELIEVE** in you. Lead me and guide me. Bless my life and the life of every person."



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How does one go about believing?

When a person recognizes the God who reveals himself, when he believes in him and responds to him in his heart, then that is what we call **PRAYER**.



A God who reveals himself, and a book like no other
God has to reveal himself so that we can understand

more about him. And that is exactly what HE does. The eternal, Almighty God, who is unfathomable to us men, actually did (and does) emerge from his silence. HE reveals himself. God even lays bare something of his innermost thoughts. He allows us to look into his very Heart—if one can speak of God in such terms. That is what happens in your life and in the lives of all those who listen in prayer to the voice of God and who seek and have sought for the footsteps of God in their lives. And we aren't starting from scratch in this.

The **BIBLE** is the book where you can read how God first showed himself in the history of the people of Israel, how he revealed himself little by little to mankind, until in Jesus he gave expression to the most profound truth about himself—that is to say, how immense his divine love is.

For long ages men had only vague notions about God or the gods. Entire nations imagined God to be a being to whom they even had to offer human sacrifices in order to gain his favor. Only in the life of the people of Israel does it become clear that God is no many-headed monster of whom they must live permanently in fear. The truth that there is only one God, that he is good and faithful to those who trust in him, has been revealed in the lives of many individual men and women—mothers, fathers, children, prophets, kings, and saints. Abraham encounters God beneath the starry sky, while Moses encounters him in the burning thorn bush. You know the stories.

All these experiences of God's presence were written down—in an unbelievably colorful and rich book. Pope Benedict XVI once compared the **BIBLE** to a garden, a bright and wonderfully beautiful garden in which the most profound insights about God appear like exquisite flowers. If we read the **BIBLE** and stay in touch with God as we do so, then "it is as if we were to find ourselves strolling in the garden of the Holy Spirit", the Pope said. "We talk to him and he talks to us."



→ 8

How does God reveal himself in the Old Testament?



→ 9

What does God show us about himself when he sends his Son to us?



→ Genesis 19:
→ Exodus 3



→ 16

What is the right way to read the Bible?

