

OUTLINE: CATHOLICISM EPISODE 3

I. The Mystery of God

A. Moses

1. Moses was living a "second life"
2. Moses had been saved before from death
3. God spoke to Moses from the bush
 - i. "I Am Who I Am" (Ex. 3:14)
 - ii. "This divine name is mysterious just as God is mystery" (CCC, 206)
 - iii. Tetragrammaton: "YHWH," rendered as "Lord"
4. God is not a *being*, but *being itself (ipsum esse)*
5. God is a mystery

B. Anselm's "Ontological Argument"

1. God as "that than which nothing greater can be thought"
2. God cannot be limited by the categories of human understanding

II. The Five "Ways" and the Argument from Contingency

A. The "Five Ways" of St. Thomas Aquinas

1. Argument from motion
2. Argument from efficient causes
3. Argument from contingency (only argument featured in Episode Three)
4. Argument from gradation of being
5. Argument from design

B. *Contingency*: all things come and go; everything is changing

1. It is not possible for all things to always exist
2. They must, then, depend for their existence on some necessary reality

III. Ratzinger's Argument from Intelligibility

A. The possibility of an intelligible Universe is conditioned by there being a

Divine Intelligence, the Logos

- B. All science is conditioned by this assumption
- C. All knowledge is *K-cognizing* the forms
- D. The universe is marked by intelligence

IV. Naming God

- A. God is transcendent and radically other
- B. God is intensely immanent and present to us (Psalm 139)
 - 1. Omnipotence
 - 2. Omniscience
 - 3. Omnipresence
- C. The only proper response to God is love

V. The Provident Creator

- A. God is "maker of heaven and earth" (cf. Gen. 1:1)
- B. God created *ex nihilo*, from nothing
- C. God sustains all creation (CCC, 301)
- D. God is involved and immanent
- E. God and freedom (*Veritatis Spondor*)

VI. The Problem of Evil

- A. Why does evil exist? (CCC, 309)
- B. Evil is the deprivation of what ought to be
- C. The example and witness of Job
- D. Georges Sauret: God the Artist with a canvas of all space and time
- E. William James and the limited capacity of minds to understand
- E The need to consider the Cross of Christ

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VII. The Trinity

- A. The central mystery of the Christian faith (CCC, 261)
 - B. A mystery of faith, revealed by God
 - C. Revealed through Jesus Christ, at his baptism and through his teachings
 - D. God is a family of Love
 - E. St. Augustine's analogies (*De trinitate*)
 - 1. Lover, loved one, love in human experience
 - 2. Mind, self-knowledge, self-love

VIII. The Meaning of It All

- A. The question after Being
- B. Christian answer is love
- C. God is Love

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QUESTIONS FOR UNDERSTANDING:

1. Why do you think God spoke to Moses from a burning bush? In what two ways did God identify himself to Moses? (Ex. 3:1-14)

2. God said to Moses, "I Am Who I Am." What does the name suggest or indicate about God? (CCC206, 213)

3. Explain the difference between God as *a being* and God as Being itself. (CCC 213)

4. What are the five ways Aquinas stated that the existence of God can be demonstrated? Which, for you, is the most understandable of the "five ways"? The most difficult? Why? (CCC 31)

5. What does it mean to call God "Father"? (Matt. 28:19; CCC 238, 239)

6. If God is provident and all-knowing, why is there suffering and evil? (CCC 309)

7. How has the Trinity been revealed to us? (CCC 261, 237, 244, Matt. 3:16-17, Matt. 28:19)

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION:

1. If you had been Moses, standing before the burning bush, how might you have responded?

2. In what ways have you responded to the call of God? What are some things you can do to "listen" to God more closely and be more attentive to his presence?

3. What about God do you wish to understand or contemplate more deeply

4. Have you ever struggled with your belief in God in the midst of suffering or facing evil? How did you address your doubts and questions? Any new insight from this lesson?

5. What obstacles—intellectual, emotional, spiritual—do you face in seeking to grow in your love for God and your knowledge of him? What can you do to address those obstacles?

TERMS AND NAMES:

Anselm, Saint, (c. 1033-1109). Archbishop of Canterbury and a Doctor of the Church. A great theologian and a great philosopher, Anselm is especially known for his defense of the existence and being of God on rational, philosophical grounds and for his writings on the atonement of Christ.

Aquinas, Saint Thomas, (c. 1225-1274). Dominican philosopher and theologian, and Doctor of the Church. He is widely considered, with St. Augustine, to be the greatest theologian in the West. Aquinas drew deeply on the thought of Aristotle and Augustine, addressed the objections of pagans and Muslims, and was a profound commentator on Scripture. His *Summa Theologica* is arguably the greatest work of theology ever composed.

Book of Job. One of the Wisdom Books of the Old Testament. It describes an innocent man's experience of inexplicable suffering and delves into the question of why there is unmerited suffering if God is just.

Deism: The disenchanting theology that asserts God is akin to an impersonal clockmaker who solely designed the cosmos without having any personal interaction with it. This belief is contrary to the Biblical faith in the Personal God who is the providential creator and sustainer of the cosmos.

Eckhart, **Meister (c. 1260- c. 1327 A.D.).** A German Dominican theologian, philosopher and mystic whose writings have had a profound impact on Christian mysticism.

Francis of Assisi, Saint, (c. 1181-1226 A.D.). An Italian friar, preacher, and founder of the Franciscan Order. He lived a life of radical poverty and preached the coinherence of all things in Christ. His life has had a profound affect on Christian living.

Gilson, Etienne, (1884-1978). A highly-regarded French Thomistic philosopher and historian of philosophy who was one of the leading Thomists of the twentieth century. He taught at the University Paris and at Harvard, and set up the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies in Toronto, where he taught until his retirement.

Manichaeism: A Gnostic religion founded by the Persian Mani in the third century A.D. Its central teaching is that reality is reducible to two opposing principles, spirit and matter. Viewing matter in disdain, the goal of the spiritual life is to liberate the soul from its embodied existence.

Maritain, Jacques, (1882-1973). A very prolific and influential French philosopher. Originally an atheist, he converted and soon began studying the work of St. Thomas Aquinas. His books addressed a wide range of topics, including metaphysics, education, art, politics, and theology.

Mill, John Stuart, (1806-1873 A.D.). British philosopher, economist, moral and political theorist who is famous for his contributions to Utilitarianism, the moral philosophy that has the greatest happiness for the greatest number as its guiding principle. His influence is primarily found in modern liberal democracies.

Patriarch: The head of a tribe, family, or clan in biblical history (e.g. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob). While being the genealogical fathers of Israel, they are also Israel's spiritual fathers.

Plato (429-347 B.C.). He is one of the most influential thinkers of Western thought. The disciple of Socrates, he wrote many philosophical dialogues featuring Socrates conversing with friends about the good life and the nature of reality. Alfred North Whitehead, a 20th century English philosopher/mathematician, said, "the safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato."

Pointillism: a technique in painting in which small, distinct dots of color are applied to a given surface to form images. Georges Seurat developed this style, branching off of impressionism.

Pseudo-Dionysius the Aeropagite. A Christian theologian of the late 5th to 6th centuries whose writings have a mystical nature of a Neoplatonic influence. His most famous work is *Divine Names, Mystical Theology*.

Ratzinger, Joseph /Benedict XVI (1927-). A German theologian and the current Pope. As an academic and the former Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, Benedict XVI has eminently covered many doctrinal issues. He stresses that Christianity is fundamentally a personal encounter with Jesus Christ in the Church, and he warns of the dangers of today's increasing secularism and relativism.

Secularism: While it has many forms, secularism is the belief that religion (or some notion of ultimate reality) should be relegated to a "private" sphere. Hence, religion should be absent from the public sphere. It is an ethos that asks for tolerance and/or indifference to faith.

Seurat, Georges (1859-1891 A.D.). A French Post-impressionist painter who developed the artistic technique Pointillism. His most famous work is *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* (1884-1886) which is exhibited today at the Art Institute of Chicago.

Shema: The Jewish affirmation and proclamation of faith in one God. The first line of the Shema is, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One."

Sistine Chapel:

The Sistine Chapel is the principal chapel of the Vatican Palace, originally built for Pope Sixtus IV in the late fifteenth century. Well-known for being used by the cardinals for the election of new popes, it is probably most famous for the incredible frescoes rendered on the walls and ceiling by Michelangelo, especially his painting, *Last Judgment*, which is on the wall behind the altar. Michelangelo was commissioned by Pope Julius II (1503-13) to paint in the Chapel, a task he worked on from 1508 to 1512, with one lengthy interruption.

The finished frescoes are extraordinary, especially considering the physical challenges faced by Michelangelo. In order to paint on the chapel's ceiling, he had to design his own scaffolding. This structure was supported by brackets in the walls, since a scaffold resting on the floor would have been a logistical nightmare and would have kept the chapel from being used. Michelangelo did not paint lying down, as is commonly believed, but the task was still formidable (he wrote a humorous poem about the work, describing the chapel as "this den").

Michelangelo's finished masterpiece depicts over 300 different figures and numerous biblical events, notably Creation, the Fall, the promise of salvation through the prophets, and the genealogy of Christ. Key figures include God creating Adam, Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, King David, the destruction of Baal, numerous prophets, and Elijah being taken up to heaven, as well as the ancestors of Jesus Christ. The *Last Judgment* is a particularly powerful work, a chilling depiction of "writhing pyramids of bodies ascending the wall into Heaven or tumbling down it to Hell," remarked historian Paul Johnson in *Art: A New History* (HarperCollins, 2003). "The impact is frightening, as it should be, and therefore edifying. The colour is gruesome, as is also right" (p. 280).