

## Doctrine of Theology

### Aquinas vs. Kant

1. The Italian, Thomas Aquinas (1225 – March 7, 1274) died at the age of 49 having defended Christianity against the rise of Islamic philosophy.
2. In particular, Aquinas, called “The Angelic Doctor” in Catholicism, argued for natural theology as a way to know God. He was reacting against Muslim philosophy of the Double Truth Theory.
3. Aquinas advanced what is known as “classical synthesis” by showing that philosophy and theology manifest the truth of the existence of God.
4. The arguments for the existence of God include the following constructs.
  - Ontological Argument. This is an argument for God from “Being”. God is that Being apart from which no Being greater than He can be conceived (Anselm of Canterbury, c. 1033 – April 21, 1109). God is the greatest conceivable being. “God is that which nothing greater can be thought.”

#### *Special Note.*

Anselm was challenged by the thought of Gaunilo, a contemporary monk, that a person might conceive of an island that does not exist. Anselm’s response was that Gaunilo missed the point. He is not conceiving of an island, or anything else that might exist but that Being by “which nothing greater can be thought.” Anything which does not actually exist is necessarily excluded from his reasoning, and anything which might or probably does not exist is likewise aside the point. God does exist of necessity. He is greater to exist than not to exist. God is not a figment of imagination.

- Cosmological Argument. The existence of the universe necessitates a Creator based on the Law of Causality. For every effect there must be a cause.
  - Teleological Argument. The Greek word “telos”, is the word for “end” or “purpose”. The design of the universe necessitates a Designer since it is obvious the universe has a purpose of design. Nature is not a random accident of cosmic proportion. Nature operates in a logical way with incredible symmetry.
  - Moral Argument. The fact that in every society there is a moral code of conduct necessitates a Moral Law Giver. In every society people know it is wrong to lie, to steal, to cheat, to murder, and to covet.
5. The belief in God made it possible for Christianity to survive, and thrive. Great advancements were made, in particular in the academic world, because of the theological beliefs of scholars.

***Special Note.***

During the Middle Ages (AD 500 – 1500), Theology was viewed as the Queen of the Sciences, and Philosophy was Her Handmaiden. Philosophy was a servant of theology because there was a unity between theological affirmation, philosophical thinking, and nature. There was a synthesis.

6. Centuries later the German theologian Immanuel Kant (April 22, 1724 – February 12, 1804), who died at age 79, would challenge the teaching of Aquinas, the synthesis between the sciences.
7. In 1781, Kant rejected that nature was a valid way to know God in his *Critique of Pure Reason*.
8. While the America Revolution changed the course of world history, Kant's book changed the intellectual world in a profound way.
9. In his famous *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant had been alarmed by the empirical skepticism of the Scottish philosopher David Hume (May 7, 1711 – August 25, 1776).
10. Kant was afraid that Hume's skepticism would sow the seeds of destruction for all science, religion, and faith.
11. What motivated Kant was to rescue science from skepticism. In so doing he laid his axe to the root of the tree for the traditional arguments for God.
12. Kant was not an atheist. He was trying to attack reason in order to make room for faith. He thought Christianity had descended too much into human reason, and no longer relied upon faith.
13. At the heart of Kant's critique for the arguments for the existence of God, he concluded that a person cannot know God from natural theology.
14. Kant believed there were two realms.
  - There was the Noumenal Realm, which consisted of three concepts.
    - ❖ There is the idea of God. Kant did not deny God, self, or essences. He did say they cannot be known through sense perceptions.
    - ❖ There is the idea of self. While we have self-consciousness, "How can self be measured?"

- ❖ There is the idea of essences (what a thing is in itself). In the idea of essences there is a reality beyond human senses to comprehend, or perceive. We do not perceive essences, we only see outward appearances. We do not see “chairness”, or “rockiness”, or “humanness”. We cannot go to a doctor and ask, “What kind of shape is my soul in?” No one has ever seen a soul.

The soul cannot be perceived by the senses. Kant declared there was something beyond physics, (meta, beyond; physics, physical) that could not be known through sense perceptions.

- There was the Phenomenal Realm. This Phenomenal Realm is the world that can be perceived by touch, taste, smell, sight, and sound. It is the world of appearances. It is the world which can be studied when subjected to scientific inquiry.
15. Kant asked, “Can we know anything about the realities of the Noumenal Realm?” “Do they even exist?” “Can they be known through rational inquiry?” His answer was, “No. All of our knowledge is restricted to the Phenomenal Realm.
  16. Because man is limited to the Phenomenal Realm, he must take a “leap of faith” into the Noumenal Realm to know God.
  17. Kant said that through scientific inquiry humans cannot go from the Phenomenal Real to the Noumenal Realm. There is an unbridgeable chasm between the world we perceive, and the world of essences. We can have no real knowledge of what is up there.
  18. The reason for this chasm is because we do not know if the scientific methods, based upon cause and effect, can be applied to the metaphysical realm.
  19. Kant’s presuppositional position was in opposition to divine revelation, whereby God has declared in His Word that we can know Him through the natural world.
    - *Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; 19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. 20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: 21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, 23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. 24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: 25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.*

- *Galatians 4:9 But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?*
- 20.** God has not only given individuals permission to look to natural theology to bridge the chasm between the phenomenal realm and the noumenal realm, He has commanded it.
- *Psalms 19:1 To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David. The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.*
- 21.** In another work, *Critique of Practical Reason*, published in 1788, Kant argued that men must live as if God exists in order for civilization to exist and function. Only the “God Hypothesis” makes life meaningful.
- *Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the Heaven and the earth.*
  - *Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*
- 22.** If there is no Moral Law, if there is no virtue based on an objective standard, society will disintegrate, and every person will do that which is right in their own eyes. Only the Law of the Jungle shall prevail where might, makes right. Law is reduced to preferences. There is no “ought” which is to be done.
- *Judges 21:25 In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.*
- 23.** “If there is no God, all things are permissible” (Fyodor Dostoyevsky, November 11, 1821 – February 9, 1881).
- 24.** Because of Kant, many Christians turned away from Natural Theology to Fideism.
- 25.** Fideism is based upon the Latin term for faith, and means that we take the idea of God on a “leap” of faith and apart from any empirical, philosophical, or rational evidence for His existence.
- 26.** We can “assume” the existence of God. We can “suppose” the existence of God.” We can build a concept of God based upon a philosophy of First Principle, but what cannot be done is to prove the existence of God.
- 27.** However, Christians do not need to capitulate to Kant’s critique. Indeed, it should be rejected. Christians should be aware of deceptive philosophies of men, and oppose them.
- *Colossians 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*

- 28.** The deity, and eternal power of God can be known through general revelation. That knowledge is so manifest, so clear, the world is without excuse.
- 29.** If there is a barrier between the known world, and God, as Kant postulated, then the unbeliever has an excuse before God for not loving Him or receiving His Son, Jesus Christ the Lord. All the unbeliever has to say is, "I could not get there from here."
- 30.** If Paul is right, then Kant has to be wrong. If Kant is right, then Paul has to be wrong.
- *Romans 3:4 God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.*
- 31.** Some skeptics tried to argue that just because reason demands the existence of God, that does not mean God exists. All it means is that reason demands God exists. But, in the final analysis reality may not be rational.
- 32.** A philosophy soon developed called Existentialism, promoted by Dostoyevsky, and Jean Paul Sartre (1905 - 1980). This philosophy pervades modern culture to the present hour.