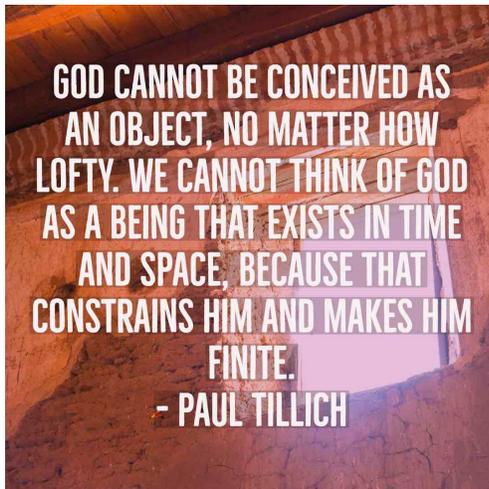


Study Guide:

What do we mean by God?



What do we mean by God? Being itself!

We are of the genus *homo sapien sapien*, the being that knows it knows. St. Thomas Aquinas argued that God is not any genus, in fact, he is nothing at all. He is not even a type of being. He is not a thing, nor an individual. God is the act of being in and of itself.

Is there a Yeti or a Bigfoot? Probably not. God is not a bigfoot.

By his very nature he is outside of time and space. He is, metaphorically, the ocean of existence that contains the universe, but is not limited by it. Here are some ideas about God that still have proponents.

Polytheism: The Greeks, the Roman and the Egyptians had multiple gods that were responsible for natural phenomenon.

Pantheist: Druids, animists, Wiccan and wizards believe God is nature and

worship sacred oaks or spirits present in nature

Deists: Thomas Jefferson, Voltaire, Ben Franklin and other deists believed that the material world ran by strict natural laws. Deists based their conception of God on Sir Isaac Newton's physics. There was no room for God's intervention and so he was like a watchmaker who set up perfect laws for the universe to operate. Miracles couldn't happen because God would not vary his own laws. Prayers are not answered because the original plan provided for everything.

Biblical view: God is the creator. God is like a bush. The bush, that is nature, burns, but is not consumed by the fire. Nature, that is us, is radiant with God, but we are not consumed by God. God is not our competitor. God saves and loves tenderly. The glory of God is seen in the heavens and the earth.

Consider what Bishop Barron said:

God and Reason

- Bishop Barron argued that we are all contingent creatures, dependent on some preceding cause. Something must exist that is not dependent on anything. Is it contrary to reason that some power started it all?
- The Big Bang suggests that the universe had a beginning some 14.5 billion +/- years ago. Did the universe always exist or did it have a beginning? Would it matter to your belief in God?

God as Father

- Why does Jesus call God "Father? Does God come in a sex? Does God have fingers or limbs?
- Mother and Father are not the same to a child. What does the image

of 'Father' suggest about the otherness of a Creator? Does a Father contain us in his womb?

- Why do we call earth "Mother Earth?" Do you think it is because we feed from Mother Earth metaphorically like an infant feeds from her mother's breast?

God as Mother

- "As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you" (Is 66: 13). "Can a woman forget her suckling child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you" (Is 49) How is God like your mom?
- The mystery of God's maternal love is expressed with particular power in the Hebrew word *rahamim*. Etymologically, this word means "womb," but it was later used to mean divine compassion for man, God's mercy. Do you think the image of God in the human person is expressed in male or female or both male and female?
- God is never named or addressed as mother, either in the Old or in the New Testament. "Mother" in the Bible is an image but not a title for God. Why not?
- Mother deities in the peoples surrounding Israel were pantheistic and the difference between Creator and creature disappeared. But, the image of the Father expressed the otherness of Creator from creature and the sovereignty of God's creative act. Only by excluding the mother-deities could the Old Testament bring its image of God, the pure transcendence of God, to maturity. What do you think about that idea?