

Sr. Margaret Dorgan's Weekly

This reflection appeared first in *The Church World*, the diocesan weekly of Maine.

[<<Hub](#)

© copyright 2005 by Sr. Margaret Dorgan, DCM

DOES GOD EXIST?—Part Two

Does God exist? The question challenges us as our world seems torn apart by natural disasters. We ponder how faith and and reason re-enforce each other. It won't be just a mental exercise, since your thoughts will, I trust, lead you to that awe which held the Psalmist when he sang, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the sky proclaims its builder's craft" (19:1).

We meet the arguments philosophy offers to prove there is an all-powerful deity throughout the scriptures, though without heavy metaphysical language. The God philosophy proclaims does not unveil all that revelation tells us about the divine nature. Scripture presents the mystery of God in more literary terms. Furthermore, our inspired writers also describe what this omnipotent Creator is like: merciful, loving, caring, always in contact with us. "I have loved you with an everlasting love," (Jer 31:3) God says to each one of us.

For many inquirers, the most convincing proof for the existence of God is the one based on design. An intelligent Being makes the universe operational, keeping all aspects of it functioning. Science tries to probe these secrets, tries to unlock the step-by-step process. Farmers understand design in the planting of a seed, the growth into flower and fruit. The sight of a tree in springtime, moving out of winter's grasp into new life beside the Charles River in Cambridge, converted Avery Dulles, now a Cardinal of the Church. He describes his awakening in the book, *A Testimonial to Grace*, How does the seed become transformed into bloom? The design in its being.

Design. Think of the ingredients of a simple cake. A cook has to combine flour and eggs, baking powder, milk, vanilla and butter in a specified order. The mixture must be baked at a particular temperature for a specified amount of time. Do it the wrong way and you have a mess, not a cake. Even the family dog won't eat it.

Design. Look at a house. A site has to be selected, the floor plan determined, a blueprint drawn up. The builder must know what heavy equipment will be needed, what tools will be used. Purpose determines the steps that will be taken at every stage, from the deed for the land the house will sit on to the very last nail pounded in. Design. Who designed this much bigger house of our universe? How did it originate, with laws for its development imprinted within its being? Consider planet earth: seasons, skies announcing sunshine or rain, air in motion, moving slowly or with a whirlwind's speed. A skeptic says, "Aw, it just happens." But the response to that is, "How does it just happen? What makes it happen?" These questions take us to the Being Who is in charge of all that we experience, Who keeps the whole creation in existence. Our minds reach up to God. The Divine Will chose to make us and everything that is. We ascend to the infinite One Who designed our finite nature and all finite natures. Listen to Psalm 33. "The plan of the Lord stands forever: the

design of God's heart through all generations" (Ps 33: 11). Nothing is merely random or simply left to its own devices.

For the famous Catholic convert Gilbert Keith Chesterton, the need to say thank you drew him to belief in God. Wonder aroused him to gratitude and he looked for the source of all that made up his human life. He said to himself: how do I express thanks? With this question, he found his answer in God. He must have repeated the lines of Psalm 69. "I will praise the name of God...I will magnify God with thanksgiving" (31).

Beauty can be a strong drawing card for belief. Appreciation of loveliness moves the heart and gives it joy. What a panorama is laid before us, and we in Maine are especially favored. In great things and small, beauty beckons to us. A child's face, the kind eyes of a grandparent, a symphony of Beethoven, Da Vinci's art, and always the marvel of nature—so much feeds our hunger for the beautiful. "God summoned the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting....Perfect in beauty, God shines forth" Ps 50: 1,2).

The proof that moved John Henry Newman was the sense of moral consciousness. Moral responsibility is involved in the free will of every child of Adam and Eve. Free will means we can choose to do good or its opposite. The opening line of Psalm 14 and Psalm 53 declares, "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'" No God. What follows? The next line tells us, "Such are corrupt; they do abominable deeds." Though we may recognize instances where the psalmist's words prove true, we have also known atheists who live by an upright code of conscience.

Nevertheless we can understand the statement often made: without God, anything is possible. No obligation to my Creator can lead to no obligation to my fellow mortals. All my energy can go into getting what I want at whatever cost to others: prosperity, fame, success. I make my ego the center of the universe. Yet this self involvement can lead to my own personal hell, a construct where all my decisions reach out to a fulfillment that has only me in mind. I am not lifted up above myself. I am enchained within myself. God offers freedom from this captivity in the words of the Incarnate Son. "I am come that they might have life and have it more abundantly" (Jn 10:10).

Believing in God takes me on a path with special demands, yet I am never alone. God says to me, "I will instruct you and show you the way you should walk. I will counsel you, keeping My eye on you" (Ps 32:8). The beating of every human heart takes part in the rhythm of a lovingly designed universe. **"I will bless the Lord at all times. God's praise shall be ever in my mouth"** (Ps 34:1).

Sister Margaret Dorgan, DCM