

Study Guide for Body of Divinity

Chapter 1

Being of God

It is important to constantly remind one's self while studying God that this is both an academic exercise and a spiritual exercise. The academic provides the information, but the processing and meditating on the knowledge learned provides the spiritual growth and joy.

In studying theology from a Biblical perspective, two foundational truths must first be established: 1) the being, or existence of God, and 2) the inerrancy of the Bible. The student must be convinced of these two truths before the study of God will have any lasting affect upon the life. If God does not exist, this study and any resulting devotion, love, or service towards God is a waste of effort.

God Revealed in Two Ways

- General Revelation – evidence outside the Bible
- Special Revelation
 1. Regeneration – The work of God the Holy Spirit that gives spiritual life and provides the ability (faith) to see and believe God
 2. Bible – God's declaration and revelation of Himself – superior to general revelation.

This study will focus on the proof of the existence of God from general revelation. It is important to know and believe these proofs, particularly when discussing God with an unbeliever (II Peter 3:15)

Law of Cause and Effect

This law is key to establishing the existence of God from general revelation.

“Every limited affect has an antecedent cause greater than itself.” In other words, one can know there is a cause (even without observing the cause) by observing the effect. Examples: Rain, electricity.

*God is not limited. From this law, it follows that He has no cause. Therefore, He is God.

Proofs of the Being of God (General Revelation)

- 1 **General Consent of Men in all nations and all ages.**
 - An innate knowledge that surpasses cultural, sociological, economic differences.
 - Even in times of great idolatry when the knowledge of the true God was nearly lost, humans have always retained some idea of a “God”
 - Not necessarily the true God, but a general concept of a higher being, a greater force.
 - Read the quotations from the heathen (decidedly not Christian) philosophers (Aristotle, Cicero, Aelianus, etc.) agreeing with this concept.
 - Ps. 14:1 the fool says there is no God. Note: Passage does not say the fool “believes”, but says – this is a wish that even the fool knows is not true.
 - To the students – You can desire to get away from the shackles and constraints of religion, parents, upbringing, etc, but you cannot escape from the innate knowledge of and your responsibility to God.

1 Law and Light of Nature

- Man has an innate knowledge of good and evil.
- Example: Murder(Cain and Abel-Cain immediately knew it was wrong even though he had never expressly been told not to murder), society's horror over child abuse.
- Law of Cause and Effect: If there is an objective moral law, there must be a moral lawgiver.
- These notions appeared (Cain) before formation of societies, politics, or human initiated law.
- Not peculiar to tradition(I know right and wrong b/c my parents taught me)
- Nations are diverse, but still these innate laws are common to all mankind.
- Romans 2:14,15 Gentiles had innate law within them even though they had not formally received the law from God as had the Jews.
- Innate desire for happiness – this is a universal human desire. This must have an end object, an antecedent cause that can produce true happiness(God). Ecclesiastes 2:17, Psalm 73:25

1 Works of Creation

- Romans 1:19ff
- Law of Cause and Effect. Creation is limited(2nd Law of Thermodynamics). Therefore, it must have a cause greater than itself.
- Design – order, symmetry, efficiency – 24 hour days, 4 seasons, atmosphere containing the exact mixture of gas to sustain life; plants-produce oxygen which humans need to survive/humans-produce carbon dioxide that plants need to survive
- Read Plutarch's Statement
- Read Greenlander's testimony
- Even IF creation came from preexistent matter, there had to be an antecedent cause. For something to arise out of nothing, there must be a God.
- Read Gill's statement on the human form.
- Soul of man – has understanding, reason, judgment, a mind to learn, will, affections, conscience, soul – all pointing to an antecedent cause.

1 Sustenance and Government of the World

- Provision made for creatures
- Universe continues to function.
- Safety – animals have natural fear for man.
- Laws – do work to restrain man to some degree

Note: The next three proofs could fall under the category of special revelation, although there is evidence in general revelation to these proof

1 Miracles – Read Gill's section on this.

2 Fulfilled Prophecy – Read Gill's section on this.

3 Fears of Men, Guilty Conscience, Dread of the Future State

- Example of death experiences of the heathen – Be familiar with what Gill says regarding Nero.

1 Judgments in the World

- Example of Joseph and famine.
- Flood.

Closing: With these proofs (from outside Scripture), the honest person must conclude that God does in fact exist. The question then takes another form: What will you do with this God?