

# **A Young Catholic's Guide to Defending the Faith: A Teacher's Guide**

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**This guide is meant to offer assistance to anyone who wishes to use the book *A Young Catholic's Guide to Defending the Faith* as an educational resource. Each section will include assignment prompts for students, as well as an assessment guide for teachers. In a classroom setting, this curriculum is most effective taken one chapter a week with one week devoted to the midterm project and one devoted to the final project for a total of fourteen weeks. For personal usage, one may self-pace as needed.**

**Instructors are encouraged to personalize each assignment as needed. Each section includes Short Answer writing responses as well as longer essay prompts. If a student learns better through discussion or through hands-on projects and activities, educators should find ways to address the topics in each prompt without requiring as much writing.**

**Each section also includes a list of activities for outside of class; they are not required but can be useful ways to continue moderating learning in new ways. Instructors should supplement with their own activities targeted to individual student's learning styles as well.**

**Finally, this Teacher's Guide includes ideas for two projects: one in the middle of the term and one at the end. These projects are meant to help students consolidate their ideas resulting in assignments that they can use in the future while debating with non-believers. They should also inspire discussion and further exploration as moderated by the instructor. If an instructor senses that the student does not fully understand a topic or is experiencing nervousness at the idea of explaining a section to a non-believer, instructors should set aside time to address those concerns explicitly.**

**At the end of the course, a student should have a better understanding of their faith, should feel more confident in their ability to debate with non-believers, and should feel motivated and inspired in their identity as a missionary.**

# **Chapter One:**

## **Introduction and Preliminary Steps to Take**

### **Chapter Description**

Chapter One introduces the idea of the book, the purpose that it fulfills, and gives one example of how the strategies were successful in practice (the college life of the author.) *A Young Catholic's Guide to Defending the Faith* aims to equip readers with the arguments and strategies they will need in order to explain their faith in a logical and formulated manner. Therefore, each chapter includes descriptions of each argument for God, Christianity, and later, the Catholic Church explicitly. It also includes strategies for debates with disbelieving audiences. Readers should pay attention to both the arguments and the strategies and how they intersect in order to best prepare themselves for any manner of debate. The first step then, is for the reader to prepare their own self before undertaking to convince others of the faith. This first chapter offers suggestions for how to do so. These include:

- Actively studying the faith continuously using as many resources as possible in order to gain a well-rounded understanding of many different facets of the faith;
- Placing oneself in the shoes of an unbeliever and considering what questions they would have. Use those questions to guide research into the faith;
- Living by example in all areas of life: the family, the classroom, the workplace, the interpersonal relationships, etc. Bring the inspiration of the Gospel to every environment and situation;
- Practicing remaining patient and calm, even in emotionally charged discussions. Debates can become tense, which often leads to one losing composure and, as an extension, credibility;
- Praying often and pursuing virtue;
- Regularly taking part in the sacraments.

Converting souls is a process that requires many discussions and encounters. Therefore, a missionary must be able to invest in the long-term goal while also maintaining their own spiritual life. This chapter aims to lay the foundation for that type of dedication and commitment. Readers should take away a better understanding of what debating with non-believers requires as well as some motivation for how to best prepare for success in argumentation.

## **Learning Objectives**

After reading this chapter, the student should be able to:

- Describe several strategies for preparing for a debate (forethought, practicing patience, avoiding emotionally charged language or ad hominem attacks, considering questions from the perspective of a non-believer, praying regularly, taking part in the sacraments, using a variety of resources for research)
- Identify potential areas for research based off questions they imagine they would have if they were not already Catholics
- Utilize a variety of resources for their research (papal encyclicals, the writings of the saints, the Catechism, online blogs and articles, teachers, priests, family members)
- Formulate a plan for preparing to take on the role of a missionary for Christ

## **Short Answer Questions**

1. Imagine that you are not a Christian, but are interested in the reasons that someone would believe in the tenets of the Church. Writing from this perspective, think up three questions that you might have for a believer, as well as your reasoning for why the answers to those questions are not immediately apparent. Next explain why those answers would matter for whether or not you could believe in God.
2. Using the three questions that you came up with in the previous prompt, write down your answers to those questions as you currently understand them. If you do not have a full answer, that is fine, but be sure to explain what resources you intend to use to figure out the rest of your response.
3. Consider the traits that would help an individual to be successful in arguing for the existence of God. Make a list of virtues (at least five) that you think would help you to exhibit those traits. Give a brief explanation (one to two sentences) for why you chose each virtue.

## **Assessment Guide**

1. A good answer to this question will include thoughtful obstacles to Christianity as might be held by an atheist or other non-believer. The answer should be fair without hint of sarcasm or emotional language (example: *I don't believe in God because I'm an idiot.*) These questions are meant to reveal that the student can

place themselves in the mindset of a non-believer and empathize in some regard. The student should not suggest that the answers to these questions are self-evident but should exhibit understanding as to why an individual might not be well-versed in the beliefs of the Church. The student should also be able to consider not only questions about Christianity, but why an individual might take these questions seriously.

2. The answers to the questions of the previous prompt are not meant to be fully-articulated and perfect. Instead, good answers will be as thorough as to be expected but honest about where the student lacks knowledge. When a student does not have a full answer to a question, they should explicitly mention resources where they can go to find out what they are missing.
3. The student may need to look up a list of virtues online in order to answer this prompt. A good answer will reveal that the student has considered the needs of their future audience as well as what traits would best be able to address those needs. The student should be able to place themselves in the role of both their future audience as well as their future self and make decisions accordingly

### **Writing Prompt**

In three paragraphs or more, explain what it means to be a missionary for Christ and spreading the Gospel. Some things to address: consider who your audience would likely be if you were to go out to make arguments for the existence of God and the Church: other college students, co-workers, family members, etc.? What would be the best strategy to reach these people and why do you think they do not believe in God? What are some of the reasons people are not attracted to the idea of Christianity? How can you address those obstacles to belief? Describe what you imagine your role to be in spreading the Gospel and how you intend to fulfill that role.

### **Assessment Guide**

A good answer to the writing prompt will reveal that the student has considered the role of defending Christ from many different angles and can also imagine what traits would be needed to maximize success in a future-debate situation. The student should be able to imagine their future audiences, the mindsets and histories of those future audiences, and then how the student can address their audiences' needs. Style and structure is much less important than expressing a thorough understanding of debating for Christ. Look for descriptions of real problems as well as pro-active solutions.

### **Activities outside of class**

- Taking part in the sacraments: going to confession and Mass for the intention of better aligning oneself with Christ before going out to defend Him;
- Adopting a daily sacrifice or chore to promote a certain virtue (example: visiting an elderly neighbor for the sake of practicing patience and charity or waking up an hour earlier than usual in order to gain more self control)
- Taking time to read some sort of religious writing each day that addresses topics in which the student is not yet especially confident;
- Interviewing non-Catholic friends and acquaintances to gain a better understanding of what they find unattractive about the Church and what they would be interested to know about it.

# **Chapter Two: What God Is Not**

## **Chapter Description**

Chapter Two continues to offer more of a foundation for students wanting to defend their faith, but this time from the context of having already entered into a debate. The important point to take away here is that one must set a good foundation before they can have a meaningful conversation with anyone: when talking about God, this means clarifying what you do *not* mean almost as much as one must describe what they do. Everyone has preconceived notions not only about what they believe God to be, but also what they believe everyone else believes God to be, and this is what a student should be prepared to address first. In order to best be successful here, this chapter encourages students to:

- Focus on audiences who express interest in learning more about one's faith. One cannot argue effectively for God if one's audience is not going to listen or take the discussion seriously. Laying out a formulaic, logic and philosophy-based argument for one's faith takes time and attention from everyone involved-- not everyone will be willing to devote that much energy to a discussion about something they disagree with;
- Gain some sort of understanding about the audience's background and experience with Christianity. This can indicate to the student what sorts of issues the audience is going to have with the ideas of the Catholic faith as well as how best to address them;
- Lay a strong foundation by explicitly addressing what one does *not* believe about God. Ask the audience to start with a blank slate and then be prepared to remind them of this agreement if they start arguing against what they *think* one believes about God as opposed to what one *says* they do;
- Avoid using the Bible, stories of the saints, religious constructs, or personal anecdotes to try and prove the existence of God.

In starting a conversation in this way, a student will already reveal that they wish to be thoughtful and fair, but also have put some forethought into their beliefs and are serious about having a productive conversation. One of the biggest obstacles a student will encounter is undoing their audience's preconceived notions about God, Christianity, and

the Catholic Church. Therefore, it is best to begin addressing these issues as early as possible.

## **Learning Objectives**

After reading this chapter, students should be able to:

- Initiate conversations about an audience's history with Christianity in an open and thoughtful manner;
- Articulate various stereotypes for God and explain why those descriptions of God are not accurate representations of the Catholic deity;
- Continue to place themselves in the mindset of a non-believer in order to better understand what their obstacles to the faith would be and how to best address them;
- Identify resources that would be beneficial to use to argue for the existence of God (philosophy, universal human experience, objective truths) and resources that would not (the Bible, religious texts, personal anecdotes)

## **Short Answer**

1. Imagine that you are an atheist college student who is pretty convinced that God is not possible. Write down: a. What your previous experience has been with Christianity, b. How you imagine most Christians understand God, and c. What it is that convinces you that God could not exist.
2. Using your answers from the previous question, describe your strategy for how you would address such a person. Consider: a. How their background influences their preconceived notions about what Christianity entails, b. How you will make sure their preconceived notions do not inhibit them from receiving and understanding your argument, and c. What topics or arguments you would use to address whatever topic convinces them that God could not exist.
3. This chapter offered three descriptions of stereotypical understandings of God: the Ex-Hippie in the Sky, the Enemy, and the Propaganda Piece. Describe a false understanding of God that you have either encountered in your own experiences with non-believers or one that you imagine they could hold. Explain where this idea of God could originate from and also describe what strategies and arguments you would use to argue against it.



## **Assessment Guide**

1. A good answer to this question will include an in-depth description of the atheist character that the student has adopted including their past experiences and current mindsets. It will be free from sarcasm or flippancy but will instead offer a fair analysis that would be believable in real life. The student should be able to connect all the points together: how previous experiences influence current belief.
2. The student's answers to the previous question should be just as fair and thoughtful in their response as they were in their objections to God. They should be able to analyze how the atheist character's previous experiences would influence current belief as well as how to address those obstacles. A good answer will include a concrete strategy to make sure those preconceived notions do not inhibit the atheist's experience of the student's arguments for God. The student should also be able to make clear connections between objections to God and the arguments to address those objections. It is not as important that the student currently be able to articulate their arguments against the atheist's obstacles to Christianity; instead, they should merely be able to identify which arguments would be effective.
3. A good answer to this question will be fair and believable and will reveal a student's ability to put themselves in the mindset of a non-believer. This skill is especially important in debate because it is crucial to prove that one can argue against what their audience actually believes as opposed to what one thinks they believe. Therefore, one must be able to imagine thought processes that they disagree with. If one cannot entertain opposing beliefs, they cannot be said to be strong in their own beliefs: a student convinced of his or her belief should not feel threatened by exploring the mind of an atheist.

## **Writing prompt**

In three paragraphs or more, describe the importance of making sure that your audience is on the same page as you are before entering into a debate. This can include having the same ideas about how much time and energy you are willing to place in your discussion, your understanding of what you are *not* going to be arguing, and how you both imagine coming to a better understanding of God. You can describe the detrimental effects on your discussion that could occur if this foundation does not exist as well as the benefits of preparing your audience beforehand. Conclude with a description of three strategies that you will use to make sure this occurs.

## **Assessment Guide**

A good response to the writing prompt will reveal that the student has a working understanding of what occurs during a debate as well as strategies for effective communication. Look for references to the fact that understanding cannot occur if two people are arguing past each other as well, and that a person cannot understand an argument if their preconceived notions are influencing how they are receiving information. In contrast, a student should provide clear strategies for how they will make sure this does not occur, as well as the benefits of doing so.

## **Activities outside of class**

- Watching atheist speakers online and writing down the attributes of the God they describe;
- Reading books, articles, or blog posts by atheist writers and restating their arguments against God in the student's own words;
- Engaging in a mock debate with a friend or family member in which the student has to argue a point that they *disagree* with. This can be a fun exercise for everyone involved and does not have to be too serious. Make sure that the student defends their false beliefs gracefully and fairly: the temptation can be to fall into sarcasm or use humor instead of acting genuine.
- Compiling a list of resources that would be good to use in a variety of situations. The student should have a plan for where they will find answers when someone asks a question that they are not prepared for.

# **Chapter Three:**

## **Objective Truth**

### **Chapter Description**

This is the first chapter in which the student will begin to explore how to argue for what God *is* as opposed to merely setting the foundation for future arguments. We begin with Objective Truth because it is universally experienced and more accessible (despite the fact that not everyone will be familiar with the term) than starting with explicitly religious ideas. The important points to take away from this chapter are that in discussing Objective Truth, one can begin to talk about the infinite, the eternal, and that which is outside of time, and also that this is our first conception of God for the sake of the arguments that students will be studying here. The progression of the argument is as such:

- Some Truths are necessary and unchangeable (Example:  $1 + 1 = 2$ ;  $A = A$ )
- If they are unchangeable, they are outside of time (the measurement of change) which means they are also eternal (because to come into existence or to stop existing would be to change)
- If they are eternal, they extend infinitely and are therefore also infinite;
- We call these Truths 'Objective';
- These Truths are not created by mankind and would be true even if there were no sentient beings to experience them;
- In order for anything to exist, it must have first been true that that thing could exist. Therefore, these Truths are the very foundation of reality;
- If someone can accept this description of Truth, similar descriptions of God should be significantly less unappealing.

In beginning a conversation about God by describing Objective Truth, a student will undoubtedly stand out as having a much different understanding of the divine than what their audience is probably used to. Moreover, this is an excellent way to lay the foundation for future discussions about the attributes of God because it gets one's audience comfortable talking about things like "infinity" and "eternity" and "outside of man's creation"-- which are typically some of the biggest hang-ups atheists have about religion.

## **Learning Objectives**

After reading this chapter, a student should be able to:

- Articulate the attributes of Objective Truth (infinite, eternal, outside of time, outside of man's creation, unchanging, and necessary)
- Describe how those attributes connect with one another and necessitate each other;
- Explain how, with these attributes, Objective Truth becomes the foundation of all existence;
- Connect these ideas with their own understanding of the existence of God

## **Short Answer**

1. Restate the arguments about the attributes of Objective Truth. Start with the premise that Truth exists, and explain why Objective Truth must be infinite, eternal, outside of time, unchanging, and outside of man's creation. Each point should build upon the last. If you prefer, you may draw a diagram instead of writing out your answer; just be sure to label it in a way that describes how each point works with the others.
2. Consider how the existence of Objective Truth influences one's understanding of morality. If certain things are True, a person can either align themselves with the Truth or deny it. This suggests that there are right ways to act and wrong ways. In three to four sentences, explain your thinking on how Truth and morality could be connected.
3. Make a list of three to five reasons why you think beginning a discussion about God by referencing Truth (instead of more typical religious ideas) might draw the attention of your audience. How does it go against their expectations? What does it reveal about your relationship with your faith? How might it inspire curiosity?

## **Assessment Guide**

1. A good answer to this question will create an argument that builds upon itself. A student should be able to start with one idea (Some Truth exists necessarily) and from there derive that if a Truth is necessary, it cannot change. To be unchanging means to be outside of time, and therefore eternal and infinite. The student can draw a diagram, write a description, or use some other visual means

of expressing the argument. The important thing to look out for is that they understand how the various points work together and are able to identify and explain their connections to one another.

2. The answer to this question does not need to be very elegant or descriptive: it is more of a thought provoking activity than something in which the student should be expert. This is an opportunity for the student to begin making their own connections and practice forming their own arguments. A good answer will take what the student knows about Objective Truth and apply it to what they believe about morality. If one can align oneself with Truth, that could be considered a good way to act, whereas to deny Truth would be the opposite.
3. A good answer to this question will take what the student imagines their audience's mindset and experience with religion to be and then apply that to their reception of the argument for Truth. The student should be able to visualize their imagined audience's history with other arguments for religion, and then be able to compare their argument in a thoughtful way.

### **Writing prompt**

In three or more paragraphs, explore the necessity for some Truths to be unchanging in order for us to be able to make meaningful inferences about them. Consider a universe in which certain Truths-- math, for example-- could change randomly at any point in time. Would you be able to interact with those Truths if you couldn't be certain about what they dictated? Could you know anything in a meaningful way? Would your opinion about what the Truth was have any weight if someone else disagreed with you? In contrast, what does the idea of an unchanging Truth offer to the universe? How does it influence your capacity to know something?

### **Assessment Guide**

The purpose of this writing prompt is to make students aware of the importance of unchanging Truth. A good answer will explore the implications of changing truth (we would not be able to know anything with full certainty, and even if we did know something, the facts of the situation might change randomly) and would therefore nullify any future knowledge. If I use math to build a bridge, but one day the math itself changes, my bridge will collapse. The student should be able to identify that knowledge requires stability. Therefore, certain Truths must be unchanging, which places them outside the realm of time.

### **Activities outside of class**

- Describing Objective Truth to a friend or younger family member-- someone who is not familiar with these ideas and will need them to be simplified in order to understand. If one can teach an idea, they must first understand the idea themselves;
- Making a chart or diagram that visually expresses the argument for Objective Truth in a clearly labeled and easy to follow manner. Visual aids can be very useful in arguments with non-believers. Being able to quickly draw one up is a good skill to have;
- Watching videos online about the existence of Truth: both for and against it. A student should be well-versed in arguments against Objective Truth so as to have a better understanding over how to argue for it

# **Chapter Four: Coming to God**

## **Chapter Description**

Chapter four is the chapter in which the student will begin to explicitly connect the existence of Objective Truth to the idea of God (as limited as that idea may be in its current form.) The student will take the arguments from the previous chapter and apply them to God as well; in beginning with Truth, the foundation is already prepared for the student to initiate discussions about the divine. Many atheist audiences will not respond well if one begins by talking about a Creator figure, but they will listen to discussions about abstract ideas such as Truth. The important skill is to be able to connect those two ideas in a way that is natural and easy to receive. Strategies to do so include:

- Informing one's audience that Truth *is* God, or at the very least, our first understanding of Him. Clarify that Truth isn't one's only conception of God, but that it paves the way for other attributes that extend naturally;
- Describing that within the existence of Truth is contained every Truth about Truth, and therefore, God has perfect self-knowledge;
- Reminding one's audience that if they were willing to believe in an infinite, eternal, and unchanging Truth, belief in those attributes are not so difficult to accept and applying them to God is not as big a leap as it may initially appear;
- Explaining that the traits of Objective Truth are necessary for any conception of God to be legitimate and nothing about God will ever be contradictory, irrational, or based on faith alone;
- Continuing to ask one's audience to suspend doubt and to avoid their preconceived notions about what a belief in God entails: the arguments the student presents will probably be unlike anything they have heard before.

Students will not only read about how to connect the attributes to the attributes of God, but they will also learn tips for doing so during a debate in a way that is accessible for their audience. Using the strategies outlined in the book, audiences will first recognize that a belief in the infinite is not as outlandish as they may have originally assumed, and then will walk through the arguments that re-imagine a deity discovered (not created) through those premises.

## **Learning Objectives**

After reading this chapter, a student should be able to:

- Clearly articulate the attributes of Objective Truth;
- Explain why belief in those attributes are not inaccessible or illogical;
- Connect those beliefs to a belief in God by explaining that Objective Truth works well as a first conception for who and what God is-- God *is* Truth (but Truth is not the extent of what God is)
- Describe the importance of God having the traits of infinite and eternal in order for His existence to have any meaningful bearing on humanity or our obligations to Him;
- Articulate how, if God is Truth, that entails that He also has perfect self-knowledge about Himself and all Truths and thus is sentient to some degree

### **Short Answer**

1. Imagine that you are currently in a debate with a non-believer. Write out a short dialogue (two or three lines for both you and your imaginary audience) in which you introduce the idea of Objective Truth as being a good first conception of God. Make sure you address why you see a connection and how it is important for your belief.
2. Consider other understandings of God that you have encountered (either by other Christians or by atheists) but do not agree with. This can include a God who does not have consistent rules, a God that we cannot learn about in any meaningful way, a God who is a merciless tyrant, or some other example you can think of. Explain how, in your understanding, this conception of God does not fit the criteria of infinite, unchanging, and eternal.
3. We can define knowledge as “an accurate identification of Truth.” Within Objective Truth would be contained every true statement, both in general and about Truth itself. Therefore, Truth is inherently self-identifying and can be argued to have perfect self-knowledge. Explain how you can use this to answer the question of whether or not God is sentient.

### **Assessment Guide**

1. A good answer to this question will reveal the student’s capacity to put themselves in both the mind of their audience as well as their own mind as they would be thinking in the middle of a debate. Both sides should be represented fairly and



thoughtfully. The connections between Objective Truth and a basic understanding of God should be clear and informative as would be needed in a real debate. An excellent answer will bring up counterarguments from the side of the atheist audience, as well as ways of addressing those arguments (Example: *Atheist: Even if these traits do exist-- infinite, eternal, unchanging-- that doesn't say anything about me having to worship them or follow a religion. Me: That's true; at this point we are only talking about a very basic understanding of what God could look like. The important thing is that if God DID exist, He would have to have those traits. Otherwise, we couldn't know anything about Him and He may as well not exist at all.*)

2. In answering this question, a student should reveal how other understandings of God (especially those which their audience may take as the standard) do not fit the standards that would make a belief in God reasonable. A student should feel comfortable agreeing that not all ideas of God make sense and that certain beliefs are illogical. They should also be able to articulate why this is the case, as well as what makes their belief in God different.
3. A good answer to this question will reveal that the student has connected the existence of Truth to the existence of God and sees them as being the same thing. They should feel comfortable directly applying the attributes of Truth to God, and using this strategy to explain one way of considering God's sentience. An excellent answer will begin with a description of how Truth can be said to be perfectly self identifying: the existence of Truth is the same thing as it's own identification. Contained within Objective Truth is every True statement-- including those about Truth. If Truth is God, then contained within the existence of God is every true statement about God as well, and therefore God is inherently self-knowing. This may be a more difficult question for some students to answer. If they need extra help, consider drawing diagrams together or working through the argument in a different way.

### **Writing prompt**

In three or more paragraphs, explore the necessity for something infinite and eternal to exist if God is to be a meaningful figure in any way. Why can't God be changing or confined within time? If God were able to change indefinitely, how would that influence our relationship with Him? Could we know anything about Him with certainty-- and as an extension, could we know anything about how we are meant to act? Why is it important the God be the exact same for everyone at every point in time and what does that say

about our capacity to discover Truths about Him? How can you express these answers to your future audience?

### **Assessment Guide**

A good answer to the writing prompt will include an in-depth exploration of one important attribute of God: that He is unchanging. A student should be able to explore the implications of a God who does change-- if God could change at any point in time, and if we are incapable of knowing whether or not He has, we can never know if what we believe about God is true. This is a good opportunity for the student to practice expressing the argument, "This is what I'm *not* saying" which will be especially important in real debates. Afterwards, the student should be able to clarify what they *are* saying, where the differences lie, and why those differences are important to distinguish. An excellent answer to this prompt will include explicit strategies for expressing these thoughts to an audience. Strategies may include giving explicit examples of what one does not believe, setting aside time to address counter-arguments, using diagrams or other visual aids to address the necessity of unchanging Truth, etc. It is important for the student to understand that addressing and explaining beliefs that one does not agree with can be just an effective strategy as explaining what one does believe: especially when discussing topics that come with preconceived notions.

### **Activities outside of class**

- Make a list of 3-5 non-religious concepts or ideas that people tend to believe in as being infinite or eternal. These may include math, logic, the Universe, love, the mind. Have a discussion about how belief in these things might make an audience member feel more comfortable about belief in an infinite and eternal God.
- Watch videos or read articles online dealing with the concept of infinity. These do not have to be focused on infinity through a religious lens, but should merely help the student to conceptualize the infinite in new ways.
- Make a chart or diagram that illustrates how the existence of Truth necessitates its own self-identification. Have the student explain each part of the diagram and make sure they can connect those concepts back to God in order to prove that God, as we have defined Him so far, is inherently self-identifying.
- Introduce the idea that if God contains every Truth by merit of His own existence, this includes Truths about the Universe and existence itself. Initiate a discussion

about how this may connect to our understanding of God as all-knowing. (It is okay if the student is not yet comfortable or well-versed in these ideas; the goal here is to have the student work through arguments that they may not have considered yet.)

# **Chapter Five: The Existence of the Soul**

## **Chapter Description**

Chapter Five explains how our capacity to interact with and identify Truth has serious implications for *what* we are: more specifically, that we have a soul. If Truth exists infinitely and eternally, that makes it outside of Time as well as outside of the physical plane. We can say that Truth exists on the abstract plane. That being said, we have the ability to think about Truth, to identify it accurately, and to use it in the physical world (using math to build a bridge, for example.) Therefore, we must have some form of common ground with Truth, and as an extension, the abstract plane. This can be the first description of a soul. The argument looks like this:

- Truth has the traits discussed in Chapter Three (go back there if the student needs a refresher. Make sure the student is very comfortable describing the attributes of Truth before they move too far ahead)
- Those traits (eternal, infinite, outside of time) are not contained within the physical plane (which is inherently changing and finite)
- Human beings are changing, finite creatures within the physical plane;
- Human beings can also interact with Truth, which is not on the physical plane;
- For one thing to interact with another, there must be common ground between the two. Otherwise, the two things would not even be able to experience each other, let alone interact;
- Therefore, we must have common ground with the abstract;
- There is something about us that allows us to interact (meaningfully) with the abstract plane;
- This thing is our soul.

This is not a very elegant definition of the soul; it tells us nothing about what the soul is or where we can find it or why we have it. The goal here is to merely get one's audience to begin thinking about human nature and what it entails. This is important to establish before diving into more complicated arguments, so the student should spend as much time as needed to feel confident in this section.

## **Learning Objectives**

After reading this chapter, the student should be able to:

- Explain the attributes of Objective Truth confidently and clearly;
- Articulate how those attributes are not contained within the physical, finite Universe and therefore necessitate the abstract plane;
- Describe the implications of our capacity to interact with the abstract plane--there is something about us that is also abstract;
- Make an argument for why, if there is something about us that is abstract, it must also have the same attributes that other abstract concepts have.

### **Short Answer**

1. In three to five sentences, explain why the attributes of Truth (infinite, eternal, and outside of time) cannot be contained within the physical plane. What does it mean for something to be physical? Could something physical be without beginning or must it have been caused by something else? If something was caused, can it be unchanging?
2. Consider two things that operate on two entirely different planes: for example, a rock operating completely on the physical plane and math existing on the abstract. Can these two things interact with each other in any meaningful way? Can they be 'aware' of each other, or even be aware of the possibility of each other's existence? What would it take for the two to interact in a meaningful way?
3. Given that we clearly can interact with the abstract through contemplation and even application in the physical world, what does that say about what we are? Why does this tell us that we are not entirely confined to the physical realm? If part of our being is abstract in nature, what does it tell us about that side of our existence? What are some attributes that we can deduce about our abstract self containing?

### **Assessment Guide**

1. A good answer to this question will identify that infinite and eternal things do not exist in the physical world. If something is physical, it definitionally will crumble and decay. Moreover, by merit of being physical, that means that it was caused by something else, which entails a state of change: there is a "before" its existence and then an "after." Therefore, for something to be truly eternal, it

cannot have a beginning or an end which means it also cannot be caused by anything else. Therefore, it can only be abstract.

2. A good answer to this question will identify that if two things are operating on completely different planes, there is no way in which the two could interact. If an object is entirely physical, it would have no conception of the abstract to even interact with ideas that exist there. Similarly, if something is completely abstract, it would have no capacity to conceptualize the physical. In order for the two to be connected, there would have to be common ground: they could not be all-abstract or all-physical.
3. Building upon the arguments in the last question, a student should be able to identify that we are physical beings capable of contemplating the abstract. Therefore, there must be something about us that can bridge the two planes. For all intents and purposes, this we can call the soul. We can also identify the attributes of the abstract in order to understand this side of ourselves better. That which is fully abstract is uncaused and therefore eternal. It also takes part in the infinite. In this way, our souls are eternal.

### **Writing prompt**

Consider the implications of having a soul: in three to five paragraphs, analyze what the nature of a soul entails about the bearer of that soul. If the soul is, on a basic level, that which gives a person the capacity to analyze and contemplate the abstract, and we know that God as Truth exists on the abstract, then what does this say about our capacity to interact with God? If God designed us to exist as we do, what does our design indicate about His desire for our relationship with Him? Consider the belief that mankind was created in the image and likeness of God: how can you attach that teaching to this discussion about souls in an argument with a non-believer?

### **Assessment Guide**

A good answer to this writing prompt will identify that to have a soul means that human beings are inherently connected to the abstract by merit of their own nature. We take part in the infinite and the eternal just through our existence. Moreover, if God exists in the way that this book has been arguing, we inherently have the capacity to discover God and contemplate Him (even if only at an extremely limited level.) This should address any concerns a non-believer may have about belief founded solely on blind faith. If God designed us actively, and if He gave us a soul, then that indicates that He wants us to be able to discover Him. He wishes for us to find Him and He has built that

desire into our very essence. One could extrapolate that we could not be fulfilled unless we are acting upon that side of ourselves; a student need not come to this conclusion in this answer, however, as that is not manifested in this text.

### **Activities outside of class**

- Make a diagram that exhibits the connection (or lack thereof) of the physical and abstract planes. The student can be very creative in figuring out how to display how these two spaces cannot possibly interact without some sort of mediating bridge. Make sure they can explain every part of the situation;
- Because this point is potentially more dense than other points we have covered so far, the student should have tools at their disposal to use during a debate. Have the student come up with a list of two or three things they could do in the middle of a discussion to make this point more accessible. This could include: drawing a picture, creating a metaphor, acting these ideas out, using real world examples (such as asking how math could interact meaningfully with a rock) or any other ideas the student can come up with;
- Have the student practice using what they came up with in the previous activity by implementing those strategies in a mock argument with a friend, younger sibling, or another student.

# **Chapter Six:**

## **The Existence of Sin**

### **Description**

In Chapter Six, the student will explore the implications of mankind's capacity to sin, or to deny Goodness (God,) and what the results are in the Universe. The most important part of the argument is that God is the foundation of all of reality: nothing exists that is not taking part in existence, which is another way of saying all things are connected to God. Therefore, when we explicitly contradict God through a denial of Goodness, we are also contradicting our own existence. Clearly this should already have some serious consequences, but the implications become even worse when we consider our capacity to make up for the sins that we commit. To understand why this is so, the student must consider the differences between how humans experience sin versus how God does.

- We experience sin within in time: a sin begins and then it ends;
- Once a sin ends, it no longer exists for us (although its effects may still)
- God, however, is outside of time, and experiences all time equally;
- He is also infinite and eternal, making His experiences infinite and eternal as well;
- Thus His experience of sin becomes infinite and eternal;
- To make up for our sins, we would have to go back in time at every point in time at which the sin exists and undo the action for all eternity;
- This is clearly impossible for us

This chapter sets the stage for conversations about Christ as the redeemer of mankind: He is the one who can make amends in the way that would be required to reinstate justice as would be required by the existence of God. We are not yet at a point in which a student would be prepared to argue for the existence of Christ, but this argument is the precursor. Students should focus here on understanding how God experiences sin, what that says about what we owe Him, and what would be necessary to make Justice occur.

### **Learning Objectives**

After reading this chapter, a student should be able to:



- Utilize a working definition of sin that identifies it as a denial of Goodness and a contradiction of reality;
- Explain how God's experience of sin differs from ours;
- Describe how God's experience of sin necessitates a certain series of actions to make up for that sin in order to reinstate Justice (going back in time to every point in time that the sin exists and undoing it for all eternity)
- Articulate what makes sin wrong as well as why to avoid certain arguments for what could make sin wrong

### **Short Answer**

1. Describe the implications of what sin is using the working definition that sin is a denial of the Good. What do we know about the Good and its connection to God? What attributes can we place upon it? If we are denying the Good, what else are we denying by merit of that which is connected to the Good? How does this affect our connection with existence itself?
2. Explain how God's experience of sin differs from ours. Give a brief description of our experience of sin. Use a specific example of a hypothetical sin. Then describe how God experiences sin by merit of his existence as infinite, eternal, and outside of time.
3. Using the description in your previous answer, explain the process that would have to occur in order to "undo" a sin from the perspective of God. Explain why we are incapable of bringing this about. Why is our incapacity to do so problematic, given the necessity of Justice to occur?

### **Assessment Guide**

1. A good answer to this question will identify that Goodness is God and therefore sin is a denial of God (and all His attributes.) A student might also make the argument that Goodness is the state of being aligned with Truth/reality, which is also acceptable. Because Goodness is God, it shares in all His traits, including being the very foundation of reality. We are denying the very thing that makes our existence possible, and should therefore be a direct contradiction. That we can do so is a testament to our own free will.
2. The student should identify that God experiences all things at once by merit of being outside of time. Therefore, God's experience of sin is infinite and eternal whereas ours occurs on a timeline and has a starting and ending point. The

student should write an example to illustrate what these various experiences look like.

3. The most important part of the student's answer should be that to undo a sin from the perspective of God, one must go back in time to every point in time that the sin existed (an infinite number of points) and undo the sin at every point that God experiences the sin (all eternity.) Clearly this is impossible for a human to achieve given that we are confined to time and are not infinite. Justice dictates that this must be done, however, because God exists and His existence necessitates that all be given what they are owed in order to be aligned with reality.

### **Writing Prompt**

There are many reasons that people allude to for why sin is wrong. For the sake of the clarity of your argument, it is important that you be familiar with the most thorough and accurate explanation. A less convincing argument would be that sin is wrong because it brings about bad effects. A second would be that sin is wrong because God says that it is wrong. Address these two points in one paragraph for each (two paragraphs total) and explain why they are not enough to explain why sin is evil and should be avoided. Then devote one or two paragraphs explaining why sin is actually evil and what this reason provides that the other two do not. Imagine that you are debating with an atheist and have to explain why sin is evil; why should you avoid less accurate arguments and focus on the most thorough one?

### **Assessment Guide**

A good answer to this prompt will identify why accurate explanations matter during debates, which will in turn encourage clarity of thought and word. A student should be able to analyze the two example explanations and explain why they are not sufficient for explaining the seriousness of sin. The first answer is not enough because one could make the argument that some sins bring about good results. The sin might make people feel better or might make someone else's life more comfortable. If the only reason to avoid a sin is because it brings about bad results, one need only find sins that bring about good results to prove that sin is not inherently evil. The second explanation is incorrect because it suggests that God arbitrarily made decisions about Good and Evil and that our reality has its foundation in random whim. One could deduce that God could have come up with a better system of morality, which in turn suggests that we could think of something better.

Instead, a student should identify that sin is wrong because it is a denial of the Good, which is in turn an alignment with Truth. Truth exists objectively and is something stable that mankind can aim for. It exists inherently which makes it meaningful. The student should also explain that one should not go to other explanations to prove this point because other explanations leave holes in the argument or can be confusing for one's audience. Using other answers can be tempting, but the best strategy is always to aim for the clearest and most thorough description.

### **Activities Outside of Class**

- Make a visual description of how humans experience sin versus how God experiences it. Students can have a lot of freedom with this assignment so long as they are able to accurately use the visual to explain the differences. One good tool is a timeline to show how sin begins and ends from the perspective of mankind but how it does not for God;
- Have the student find videos, articles, blog posts, or books about the philosophy of time. Ideally the topics will cover ideas such as being outside of time, what time is, how one would experience it in different dimensions, and what it would be like to see all time at once. This should help the student to prepare for explaining how God experiences all sin infinitely and eternally;
- Have the student videotape themselves explaining to a friend or family member why human beings do not have the attributes necessary to make up for the sins they commit. The student can then re-watch the video with their audience member to discuss where they were especially clear and where they were a little confusing. Have the student think about how they can better the parts of their argument where they were not as clear.

## Midterm Project

This is the end of first half of the book: laying the foundation for the existence of God and preparing the stage for discussions about the Christian Trinity, Christ's mission on Earth, and the Catholic Church. At this point in the curriculum, instructors are encouraged to take a week to focus on an intensive mid-term project. Suggestions for projects include:

- Have the student make a video of themselves going through the argument for God that they have studied so far in the book. Make sure they begin with the claim "Truth exists" and work their way through each following argument. Assess for clarity, logical progression, good use of examples, and confidence in addressing the camera.
- Have the student pick one topic addressed in Part One and write a longer essay (5-7 pages) exploring the topic further. Assess for mastery of the text as well as critical thinking surrounding the topic.
- Have the student read a separate but related text and do a book report (at least one page of summary and one page of response, including connection to this book) over it. Assess for the student's ability to use the new text to inform their reading of *A Young Catholic's Guide*.

Each of these projects can be used to inspire discussion between the student and the instructor. Encourage the student to contemplate the work they have done so far and to track differences in their understanding of God, their attitudes toward debate, and their expectations as they move forward through the course.

# **Chapter Seven:**

## **The Necessity of Christ**

### **Description**

This is the first chapter in Part Two which is where the arguments shift from setting the foundation for a believe in God to specifically arguing for Christianity. Chapter Seven builds directly off Chapter Six in arguing that Christ (or someone quite like Him) is absolutely necessary for perfect Satisfaction, which is in turn necessary by merit of the existence of God. To begin arguing for Christ as the necessary Redeemer, a student must first be able to articulate the traits that such a redeemer must have. These traits are:

- He must be sentient so that the Satisfaction can be active and purposeful. Our sins were committed in such a way and so too must be that which makes up for them;
- He must complete it by His own free will. To force someone to bring about Satisfaction would be unjust, which would in turn be bringing about more sin into the world, and would nullify the act;
- He must be human. This may be the biggest point of contention, but the Redeemer must be human because it was human beings who brought sin into the world. To sacrifice a lesser creature would not make up for our sins; to sacrifice a greater Being would be to demand the victim pay for the crimes;
- Seemingly in contradiction to the last point, He must be God as only God has the traits necessary to infinitely and eternally undo each sin.

Christ is the only person in human history who has explicitly claimed to be each and every one of these things and here for the purpose of Redeeming mankind from the horror of their sin. That being said, at this point it is more important for a student to be able to explain how Christ fits the traits of the necessary Redeemer more than it is that they be able to convince an audience that He truly is the one who brought about our perfect Satisfaction.

### **Learning Objectives**

After reading this chapter, a student should be able to:

- Describe to an audience why Satisfaction is necessary given the existence of God (Justice) and His experience of sin;
- Articulate the traits that would be necessary for a Redeemer to have in order to bring about perfect Satisfaction;
- Connect the idea of this description of a Redeemer to Christ by explaining that He is the only one who has claimed to hold each of these attributes while also claiming to bring about Satisfaction;
- Explain why it is not contradictory for the Redeemer to be all God and all man, since the infinite can contain both.

### **Short Answer**

1. Write a paragraph that serves as a script you could use to detail why a Redeemer is necessary based on the existence of God and how His experience of sin differs from ours. Direct this paragraph to an imaginary atheist audience member; write as if you are speaking to them.
2. Make a list of all the traits that a Redeemer would have to have in order to bring about perfect Satisfaction. You may use the list in the book, but make sure you are describing those traits in your own words and using your own examples when necessary.
3. Explain why a Redeemer would need to experience suffering in order to make up for the sins of the world. What is it about the nature of sin that brings about pain? You may begin with a definition of sin and build from there but do not have to.

### **Assessment Guide**

1. A good answer to this question will clearly be directed towards an imaginary audience member; this could include addressing potential counter-arguments, explaining what the student is *not* arguing, refer back to previous arguments, etc. The writing should be clear, as if the student is explaining to someone who is not already familiar with the subject matter. Focus more on style as opposed to content-- although it is of course important that the student be accurate as well.
2. This answer need not be especially elegant: it can even take the form of a bulleted list. What is important is that the student include each attribute listed above: the Redeemer must be sentient, operating of His own free will, He must be a human and He must also be God. This answer should not copy directly from the list given in the book.

3. A good answer to this question will explore the implications of sin and what sorts of effects it has in the world. Sin is inherently painful because it is drawing a soul away from Goodness and fulfillment itself. Moreover, no sin exists in a vacuum and those around the sinner will experience the effects, regardless of whether or not they are aware of what is happening. Therefore, the Redeemer does not only take on the sins of the world, He must also take on the effects. Furthermore, if sin is a disorientation away from reality, one could make the argument that sickness and natural suffering are the results of sin too, thus taken on by the Redeemer as well. This last point is not covered in the book however, so it is not necessary for the student to explain.

### **Writing prompt**

Some audience members may ask you why if God is all powerful, He couldn't just change the rules about the price that must be paid to bring about perfect Satisfaction. In three to five paragraphs, explain how the process of Redeeming the world is not just an arbitrary set of commands decided upon by God but is instead a natural extension of His existence as well as the effects of sin. Describe how being "all-powerful" does not entail that God can do all things, like contradict His own being. How would changing the rules be an example of God contradicting Himself? Try to use arguments that you would be comfortable utilizing in the middle of a debate.

### **Assessment Guide**

A good answer to this question will first and foremost identify that the perceived rules and regulations set down by God are not in fact arbitrary decisions that He made randomly, but are instead the mere effects of His existence. Perfect Satisfaction is not necessary in the way that it is because God wants it that way; it is necessary because God exists, and as an extension so does Justice, which brings about obligations within the Universe. Because these obligations extend directly from the existence of God, to change them would be for God to deny His own existence: a contradiction. God cannot contradict Himself, and this is by no means going against His identity as "all-powerful" which merely means that God can do all that is possible. Therefore, it is not a limit on God or on the Redeemer to say that they both *must* follow a certain set of rules. An excellent answer will include each of these points in a style that is conducive to utilization in future debate settings. Look for clear points that extend naturally from one another as well as examples or preemptively addressing counter-arguments.

### **Activities outside of class**

- Have the student go through the different requirements that would be needed to bring about Satisfaction and then have them explain how the necessary traits of the Redeemer are directly connected to those requirements. This can take the form of a conversation, a speech, a visual aid, or a presentation.
- Using the findings from the previous activity, have the student explain (again, in whatever presentation style would be most fitting) about how Christ fits those attributes. Encourage the student to use evidence from the Bible, and especially from places where Christ is speaking about Himself, who He is, and what His mission is on Earth.
- Have the student go through the Bible (preferably a physical copy but online will do) and compile a list of 10-15 passages they could use in a debate to simply show that Christ explicitly addresses the topics surrounding the role of the Redeemer and the mission of Satisfaction. The student should either put tabs in their Bible, or make a note that lists the passages so that they can quickly access them if needed during a conversation with a non-believer.



# **Chapter Eight:**

## **The Justice of Christ's Substitution**

### **Description**

Explaining how Christ fits the necessary role of Redeemer is not enough; students must also be able to address the important question of how Christ's Satisfaction for our sins could ever be considered just. An audience member may understandably make the claim that if mankind is the one bringing about pain and suffering through sin, taking on the negative consequences seems to be depriving us of a much-needed lesson. If God is justice itself, then this seems to be a direct contradiction. In this chapter, the student will learn how to present our Redemption, not as an unjust display of mercy, but instead as a buying of our debt. The important points to take away are:

- We can first conceptualize the price of sin as our debt to God;
- Debt can be bought and sold. To buy someone else's debt, a third party must first pay off the person who is owed;
- Once the original owner has been paid, the third party is the new owner of the debt and the debtor now owes him;
- At this point, the third party is free to name a new price so long as it does not exceed the original amount (unless the buying of the debt was done for the sake of the debtor and an agreement has been made)
- All of this is completely in accordance with justice so long as it is undergone with the free will of the original debt owner and then new debt owner and is fair towards the debtor

In dying for our sins, Christ is paying God the price of the sin that humankind has amassed during our time on Earth. This includes all past and future sin because Christ, being God, exists outside of time. Once He has paid the price to God, He is the new owner of our debt: thus forming the New Covenant. He also names a new price for His followers; we now owe Christ our Faith in Him and our belief in His Church.

### **Learning Objectives**

After reading this chapter, a student should be able to:

- Describe the process of buying and selling debt (including how the debt owner must be first paid the original price, how once the debt owner has been paid there is a new owner that the debtor must now pay, and how the new debt owner can name a new price)
- Articulate the attributes that must occur for the buying of the debt to be just (nobody can be coerced and the exchange cannot be unfair to the debtor)
- Argue for how Christ's dying for our sins was aligned with Justice and what His Redemption entailed for the price that we must pay (He has changed the price, initiated a New Covenant, and now asks that His followers have Faith in Him)

### **Short Answer**

1. Write a paragraph *from the perspective of an atheist* explaining why it seems that Christ's Satisfaction for our sins seems unjust. Use the definition that Justice is giving what is owed, and then extrapolate why taking on our punishment appears to be an attack on that definition.
2. In response to the imaginary atheist of your first answer, explain why Christ's Satisfaction is in fact in perfect alignment of Justice using your understanding of the buying and selling of our debt. Write as if you are actually having a conversation with the person from your previous answer. Feel free to take a more casual tone, but not at the expense of thoroughness and clarity.
3. Explain the nature of sin and what it truly entails. Why do all sins affect people beyond the sinner themselves? Why can't a sin exist in a vacuum? What is it about sin that makes it inherently bring about pain and suffering? Considering the nature of human beings, what are the effects of sin on our souls. Stay within the confines of arguments that you have already explored in the book; do not extend beyond arguments that your audience would be familiar with.

### **Assessment Guide**

1. A good answer will be fair and understanding of potential counter-arguments to the idea of Christ experiencing the pain of sin in our stead. It will illustrate why such an idea seems like we are not suffering the direct consequences of our actions and, as an extension, not learning a lesson. An excellent answer will identify that if the Universe is built on cause and effect, then our causing of sin has the effects of suffering which we should have to encounter. To interrupt that seems to suggest the Christ Himself is going against the very nature of reality (or God.)

2. The response to the first answer should be thorough but also take on the challenge of writing in a more conversational and organic style. This answer should reveal a well developed understanding of the buying and selling of debt, and then the ability to connect that idea with the specific instance of Christ dying for our sins. The student should include the attributes of fair buying of debt and also articulate how doing so can be in perfect alignment with Justice.
3. The student should identify that sin is inherently a denial of existence and the Transcendentals. Given that existence is the very foundation of the sinner's own being, sin is a contradiction of the self. No sin can exist in a vacuum because a sin is a directing of the self to an absence of Goodness; it will inherently influence how a person acts in their immediate environment. The student should articulate that sin brings about pain and suffering inherently because the soul is meant to be aligned with existence and sin is in stark contrast to that pursuit. It is unnatural and damaging to our most basic of needs. Students should not take arguments from sources that have not been covered in the book (such as teachings of the Church that extend beyond the subject matter, personal experience, or other arguments) but should instead focus on using the arguments they have explored throughout the curriculum.

### **Writing prompt**

Many people-- believers and non-believers alike-- are familiar with the idea that Christ came to Earth to initiate a New Covenant, but few have a clear understanding of what this entails. In three to five paragraphs, explain how His buying of our debt and changing the price that we owe for it informs your understanding of this New Covenant. How does the creation of a Church play into the situation at hand? Explain how this New Covenant changes our relationship with God.

### **Assessment Guide**

A good answer should indicate a student's understanding that "New Covenant" is a term used by many but understood well by few. The student's future audiences may have preconceived notions about what the New Covenant means, and should therefore be prepared to address those understandings and present a new definition using the arguments of this chapter. The student's definition of the New Covenant should be heavily focused on the nature of buying and selling our debt for sin: how that process brought about a new system for our redemption once Christ changed the price. Moreover, His initiation of a new Church is an outward sign of how we are supposed to

interact with Him while paying off this new debt (which is significantly less painful than our previous one.) The student should explicitly articulate that, because of Christ's sacrifice, He has introduced the world to Him as a human: one of us. In this way, He is more approachable and we have more common ground. This New Covenant is clearly one marked by compassion.

### **Activities outside of class**

- Have the student create a chart detailing the differences between the Old Covenant and the new. Make sure they identify the change in our price toward God, the change in our outward signs toward Him (the new Church), and the overall attitude surrounding our interaction with God.
- Have the student do some research into the attributes of Christ's Church and make a list of what it entails. Encourage them to look at a multitude of different resources so as to have multiple perspectives; these can include the ceremonies involved, the symbolism, the understandings surrounding the Old versus the New Covenant, etc.
- Have the student go back to the attributes of the soul and what it entails about our human nature. Ask them to make an argument through a speech, a presentation, or a visual aid about how sin is an inherent denial of the soul and, more broadly, existence itself.

# **Chapter Nine: The Holy Ghost**

## **Description**

Many believers are intimidated by the idea of arguing for the existence of the Holy Ghost and try to avoid the topic for as long as possible while engaged in a debate. This intimidation is understandable given that the Holy Ghost is typically the least addressed person of God, but students will be able to overcome any uncertainty they may have. This chapter will help the student to gain confidence in explaining their belief in the Holy Ghost, and as an extension the Holy Trinity, by carefully going through the argument for a three-personed God. The basic argument looks like this:

- God is Truth and within Truth is contained every single True statement about Truth;
- Therefore, God contains perfect knowledge about Himself-- including the knowledge of His own perfection;
- To recognize perfection and to respond perfectly would be to love it;
- God loves Himself
- God the lover and God the loved are two different instances of God. Therefore, we find the second Person of the Trinity who shares all the same attributes of God;
- Because of this, the Second Person of the Trinity loves the First;
- The love between the two Persons share all the attributes of God (infinite, eternal, True, perfect, exists inherently)
- The love between the two Persons is the third Person of the Trinity.

Non-believers tend to have many preconceived notions about the Holy Spirit being a mystical, illogical remnant of polytheism, so this chapter also includes ways to talk about the third Person in a more accessible way. Once students are able to argue for the Holy Trinity, they have bridged one of the biggest gaps that many non-believers have in regards to a belief in God.

## **Learning Objectives**

After reading this chapter, a student should be able to:

- Articulate why God must love Himself if He is Truth itself and therefore contains perfect knowledge about Himself-- including perfect knowledge about how to respond to Truth in the objective best way (love)
- Use God's love of Himself to form an argument about the second Person of the Trinity;
- Connect the attributes of God to the attributes of God's love to recognize that they are one and the same;
- Argue that the Holy Spirit is the manifested action of God as God's action, by merit of His being unchanging and outside of time, shares in all of the same attributes that He does.

### **Short Answer**

1. Imagine that you are an atheist who does not know anything about the Holy Spirit or why Christians believe in him. In three to five sentences, imagine several questions that you might have, reasons the idea (as you understand it as a non-believer) seems illogical, and also a description of how you imagine Christians think about him. Be fair to this imaginary atheist and really try to understand how the common image of the Holy Spirit may look to a non-believer.
2. Using your answers from the last question, develop a response to the fears, questions, and preconceived notions of your imaginary atheist. You do not need to develop a full description of the Holy Ghost. Instead, focus on clarifying how you conceptualize of the third Person of the Trinity and why it is not irrational.
3. Explain why God, by merit of being Truth itself and therefore containing all truths about Himself, must love Himself perfectly. What is the perfect response to perfection? Why does perfect knowledge entail a perfect response in this case? What does God's response to Himself tell us about His attributes? (Hint: remember that God's action contains the same attributes of God Himself.)

### **Assessment Guide**

1. A good answer to this question will be thoughtful and fair to the student's imaginary atheist audience. The student should be able to put themselves in the mindset of someone who does not share in their beliefs in order to pre-emptively consider their future audience's backgrounds and beliefs. The answer should include at least one sentence devoted to a description of the atheist's overall

understanding of what the Holy Spirit is within the Christian narrative and why individuals believe in Him.

2. This answer should directly address the specific arguments, worries, and preconceived notions raised in the previous answer. Having a well-developed argument for the Holy Spirit is much less important whereas being able to gracefully address disbelief is the main focus here. The student should mention that their understanding of the Holy Spirit also comes from logic and philosophy and that one does not have to dive into the realm of unintelligible spirituality to have a basic conception of the third Person of the Trinity.
3. A good answer to this question will carefully analyze one aspect of God: his identity as inherently containing perfect self-knowledge while also being perfection itself. The student should identify that to know perfection perfectly would be to love it, and therefore God's love of Himself is written in to his very existence. Moreover, the student should identify that God's actions are the same as Himself because He is unchanging and outside of time: God's love for Himself is infinite, eternal, exists inherently, is inseparable from Truth, and perfect. Students need not make the connection explicitly, but this is the argument for the Holy Ghost.

### **Writing prompt**

In three to five paragraphs, go through the argument for the Holy Ghost in your own words. Start off with the argument that you made in the third Short Answer response: that God necessarily loves Himself. From there, make an argument for the second Person of the Trinity. Afterwards, use the Father and the Son's love for each other to make an argument for the Third person of the Trinity. Extend this argument to the Holy Ghost as the action of God. How do we experience the action of God in our lives? How does this action influence our souls?

### **Assessment Guide**

A good answer to prompt will go through the argument for the Holy Ghost based upon God's attribute of inherently self-loving. The student should understand that God must love Himself by merit of what He is (and that this does not limit God's power by saying that He cannot not love Himself) and that this creates a Lover and a Loved one: the first and second Persons of the Trinity. Moreover, the student should indicate that if

something has all the same attributes as God, which the love between the Father and the Son does, then that thing is actually God as well. God's love is identical to Himself, which is how we discover the third Person of the Trinity. This applies to all of God's action, however, and that is why the Holy Ghost is the one who comes to interact with our souls directly. The soul is the way that the Holy Ghost connects with us and directs us in certain ways. This is how we become "temples of the Holy Ghost."

### **Activities outside of class**

- Have the student make a chart or a diagram that illustrates the relationship of the Persons of the Trinity to each other. Have the student include labels that work the viewer through the argument;
- Have the student make a different chart or diagram that illustrates God's inherent identity as self-loving;
- Have the student use one of the diagrams that they made to give a presentation to a friend, younger sibling, or neighbor about the topic. This should be focused on practicing running through the argument in a clear and thorough manner.



# **Chapter Ten:**

## **The Problem of Evil and More on Free Will**

### **Description**

Chapter Ten diverges from the pattern of the other chapters in that this one does not further the argument for God and His Church, but instead addresses two points of contention for many non-believers. One of the biggest complaints that atheists have about the existence of God is that God could not be all good while also allowing evil to come into the world. Believers should never write off this point as being overly combative; the Catholic answer to the problem is not immediately apparent and is based upon an unpopular understanding of evil. Moreover, to truly explain why evil exists in our Universe, we must also bring in the existence of free will. The argument structure looks like this:

- God is Goodness itself (the state of being aligned with Truth) and He exists inherently-- therefore, Goodness exists inherently;
- Evil, or the opposite of Goodness, must also be the opposite of “existing inherently”;
- Evil does not exist in and of itself-- it is merely the absence of Goodness-- in the same way that darkness is the absence of light;
- Therefore, God doesn’t allow us to choose evil so much as He allows us to deny Him. We must be able to deny Him if we are to be said to have the capacity to choose Him. Thus, as an extension of God’s love for us, we have free will;
- Pain and suffering comes when someone chooses to deny God and act without His influence. One’s bad choices can negatively affect the innocent because to truly have free will, we must be allowed to bring about negative consequences, and denying God inherently brings about the negative.

There is an entire chapter devoted to these questions because students who go out to debate non-believers will inevitably have to address these worries. Many people (whether they are actively aware of it or not) conceptualize evil as being a separate, equal force in opposition to goodness. When one reframes the argument to view evil as a lack of something instead of a thing in and of itself, the problem of evil becomes much more manageable and clear. After explaining how evil can exist while God maintains His identity of all-good, students will be ready for the final point, which is to argue for His one True Church.

## **Learning Objectives**

After reading this chapter, a student should be able to:

- Conduct an argument that presents evil as being a lack of goodness as opposed to a distinct opposing force;
- Describe why free will is necessary if we are going to have the capacity to discover and love God;
- Explain why we must have the capacity to bring about suffering and negative effects for other people if we are going to be said to have free will;
- Illustrate that suffering existing in the world is not an attack on God's identity as all-good.

## **Short Answer**

1. Imagine that you are an atheist who is contemplating the existence of evil within the Universe. Craft an argument of 3-5 sentences that explains why the existence of evil may influence you to believe that a Christian God could not exist. Be sure to address a direct comparison between how you imagine a Christian God versus how that idea is contradictory to the reality that you experience.
2. Using your answer to the previous writing prompt, conduct a response that addresses how the atheist's understanding of God as all-good is not contradictory to the reality of our Universe. This answer should be more focused on the atheist's faulty preconceived notions about the nature of God and the state of being all-good, and less on an explanation of what evil is.
3. Go through the argument for why evil is not a tangible, opposing force to goodness but is instead a lack of Good. If the Good exists inherently, what does that say about evil? Moreover, what can we determine about the way that mankind can interact with existence itself in a pursuit for fulfillment? How would you suggest that a person seeking wholeness should conduct themselves?

## **Assessment Guide**

1. A good answer to this question will be fair and thoughtful toward the imaginary atheist and will reveal the student's capacity to put themselves in the mindset of

someone who does not already understand the Catholic version of the divine. The student should include a description of how their imaginary atheist perceives the Christian God, while also making direct comparisons to our Universe to show how these two concepts are mutually exclusive. The student should also avoid trying to address why these preconceived notions are false in this answer and should instead give their imagined atheist their own platform for raising counter-arguments.

2. In this answer, a student should explicitly address the points of contention that they raised in the previous answer. They should focus mostly on how the atheist's conception of God does not align with the Catholic understanding of the divine. The student does not need to have a full argument about the nature of evil in this answer, as they will explain that topic in the next answer. Instead, they should stick to arguing for God's identity of all-good and that God can be all-good while still allowing us to use our free will to its full extent. If God changed the laws of reality every time our negative actions were about to harm other people, we would not actually have free will and could not choose to deny Him. As an extension, we would not be able to accept Him.
3. In this answer, the student should have a clear and thorough explanation of why evil is not a distinct force in the universe but is instead a lack of the Good, which exists inherently. The student should also be able to make the connection that in pursuing Goodness, we are also pursuing a closer connection to Truth and Existence, and that to deny Goodness is to pursue emptiness. Therefore, if someone is seeking meaning in their life, they should focus on the Good.

### **Writing prompt**

In three to five paragraphs, make an argument for why mankind must have free will in order to be able to discover, know, and pursue God. In order to have free will, one must be able to imagine alternate possible futures, and then use a creative act to bring them into reality. If we have a soul that allows us to contemplate the abstract, how does this connect to the nature of free will? Imagine an existence in which we could not choose to deny God; would this existence include love on either end-- from God or from us? Why does God allowing us to deny Him not limit his identity as all-powerful? We can argue that God gave us the potential to gain an infinite and eternal gift through free will-- explore this point further.

### **Assessment Guide**

A good answer to this writing prompt will focus on the existence of free will and how its presence within the Universe is a gift to mankind as well as a necessary precursor to our capacity to love. Before we can have free will, however, we must first have a soul that allows us to contemplate the abstract. It is our soul that gives us the ability to imagine alternative realities and take part in the creative act to bring those possibilities into fruition. The student should also spend a portion of their writing exploring a hypothetical situation in which human beings were not able to bring negative effects into the world. If mankind could only will a denial of the Good but could not see it into being, then we would be slaves to God. This is contradictory to love, which makes it impossible. Therefore, free will and suffering are inherent to the Church's understanding of God-- but with it comes the promise of goodness, fulfillment, and love.

### **Activities outside of class**

- Have the student write out an imaginary discussion between an atheist and a Catholic believer about God's state of being all-good and how that is not contradictory to the fact that suffering exists. The discussion should have at least 3 sentences for both the atheist and the believer and should resemble a realistic conversation;
- Have the student create a diagram that illustrates how free will connects with the capacity to pursue Truth and, as an extension, to love God. The student can have a lot of freedom with this assignment, but they should be able to explain the argument using their visual;
- Have the student find three to five videos, articles, blog posts, or other materials covering different understandings of free will. Encourage the student to look for arguments that they do not agree with so as to develop a better understanding of how many different people understand what free will is.

# **Chapter Eleven:**

## **One Church**

### **Description**

This chapter addresses the final step for students arguing with non-believers: coming to the existence of the One, Holy, Apostolic, and Catholic Church. The student must be able to take all the previous arguments and conclude with the fact that Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, initiated a Church during his time on Earth and that discovering and joining this institution is the calling of all of mankind. Moreover, it is not enough to merely identify as a Christian: we have an argument for picking one denomination too.

- If there is One God who is the very existence of Truth of itself, and if we can make choices that allow us to grow closer or farther to Him, then there are right and wrong ways to pursue Him;
- Therefore, in any question concerning morality, there will be a correct answer;
- If two denominations profess differing or even contradictory positions on a question, one of them will be more correct;
- We can extend this argument to determine that there is one denomination that is most correct;
- The role of religion is to offer the best tool to assist believers in reaching salvation, which means that any denominations that do not offer the correct set of answers are actually potentially detrimental to their followers.

From this idea, the next step is figuring out which denomination best fits in with the argument that we have established so far for the existence of God. Whichever one it is, it must profess a God who is Transcendent, a Redeemer who accomplishes perfect Satisfaction, and a Church that is based in logic and tradition. The Catholic Church is the only one to teach all that we have studied so far and also to have apostolic succession. Therefore, students must be able to make the connection between the foundation that they have laid and the final step to the Church.

### **Learning Objectives**

After reading this chapter, the student should be able to:

- Describe the argument that if there is one God who is objective Truth itself, then for every question concerning how best to discover Him, there will always be one objectively best answer;
- Use the example of two churches professing contradictory answers on any question of morality to deduce that there will result in only one Church that is most aligned with the will of God;
- Articulate why it is in the best interest of all of humanity to spread the one True Church as opposed to taking a more lackadaisical view (it doesn't really matter; we all worship the same God) when eternal souls are at stake

### **Short Answer**

1. Imagine that you are a Christian believer but not a Catholic. The Protestant church that you go to is very active in the community, but it professes that divorce is acceptable and that once an individual has accepted Christ into their hearts, they are "saved" forever. In three to five sentences, explain why you believe that denominations don't matter so much as belief in God. Why might you think that different churches could interfere with the overall Christian community?
2. Write a response to the Protestant in your last answer. Explain to them why merely believing in God is not enough to sustain a soul throughout life. Articulate what a Church is meant to offer in times of weakness, confusion, or uncertainty. Why is it dangerous to be aligned with a church that does not aim to perfectly discover and profess the will of God?
3. Use the question, "Is it okay to get divorced and remarried?" and explain how an individual could use churches' various answers to this question (and any like it) to come to the conclusion that there is only one True Church. If denominations are split around fifty percent on the issue, what can you do to narrow down your search for the One True faith once you have their answers? Why can't there be multiple most correct answers to this question? Why does it matter that we seek out the denomination most aligned with God's will?

### **Assessment Guide**

1. A good answer to this question will take the stance of an imaginary Protestant believer and will treat their opinion thoughtfully and fairly. The student should include some of the main focuses that Protestants typically take: the importance of community outreach, personal relationships with God, and private interpretation. They should identify that many non-Catholics see denominations

as a distraction from the main issue-- being one's own church. The argument tends to go that if everyone is focused on which denomination they identify with, this will cause division within the universal Christian family where there should be none.

2. The second answer should respond directly to the objections raised in the first. The student's counter-arguments will depend on what they addressed as the Protestant, but they should include the point that the Church is the institution that Christ initiated in order to help His followers best achieve union with God. If a certain church is not fulfilling that duty in the best way possible, an individual should seek out a better Church for the sake of their eternal soul. Moreover, merely having faith in Christ is not enough to merit heaven; the Church is also supposed to mediate action as well as faith.
3. A student's argument should take directly from the claim that for every question concerning morality, there will be an objectively best answer by merit of the fact that God-- that which all morals aim-- is One unified Being and Truth itself. Therefore, the student can take the question about divorce and theorize that all denominations will be split about 50/50 on the answer (this does not reflect actual opinions, but it works for the sake of the argument.) If half of all denominations profess the Truth, that divorce is wrong, then an individual can disregard the other half. From there they can ask another question concerning morality, and narrow down their search by another fifty percent. They should be able to continue doing so until they are left with only one denomination.

### **Writing prompt**

In three to five paragraphs, explain the importance of the Catholic Church. Why was it so important that Christ institute a Church to leave behind after His mission on Earth? Why did He have to develop His Church while still on Earth and not leave it to be discovered at a later date? What is some of the evidence that the Catholic Church is the One True Church that Christ initiated? Give some personal examples of the role that the Church has played in your own life, family, and/or community.

### **Assessment Guide**

The student will have a lot of freedom in answering this question, but there are a couple points that every answer should include. First, a student should identify that the Church is the tool that Christ has left for us to continue to know and love Him even when He is not present in the same way He was during His life on Earth. The Church is an outward

sign of the New Covenant, and therefore it must remain unchanging throughout time. We see this in the Catholic Church through apostolic succession, as well as the fact that Church doctrine does not change. The student should indicate understanding that Christ must be the one to determine the qualities of His Church, not someone else at a later date. They should also include at least one example of their own connection to the Catholic Church.

### **Activities outside of class**

- Have the student pick one Protestant denomination and make a list of at least five reasons that the denomination cannot be the One True Church. The reasons can be historical, doctrinal, or aesthetic-- as well as anything else the student discovers;
- Have the student read through the list of Popes from St. Peter all the way through to the present day: this should inspire them to consider what it means that there has always been a Pope since the time of Christ;
- Have the student make a chart or a diagram that illustrates how to narrow down denominations until one is left with only the Catholic Church. Begin with around ten denominations and a moral question that can be supported by Biblical evidence. Cross out all the denominations that do not profess that which is aligned with Christ's teaching. Pick another moral question and continue crossing out denominations. Moral questions may include: Is it okay to be divorced and remarried? Is Christ truly present in the Eucharist? Is contraception a sin? Can we pray to angels and saints? Is there apostolic succession?



## **Chapter Twelve: Final Thoughts**

### **Description**

In this final chapter, the student will revisit the argument progression that this book covers for the existence of God, the necessity of the Trinity, the New Covenant, and the One Catholic Church. Moreover, the student will explore some final reflections about the importance of living out the faith and sharing it with non-believers. This book ends on an encouraging and uplifting note: expressing the beauty of sharing the love of God where it was not as immediately clear before.

### **Learning Objectives**

After reading this chapter, the student should be able to:

- Feel more confident about the prospects of living out their faith in a public and open manner;
- Experience a heightened willingness-- and even excitement-- about entering into discussion and debate with non-believers;
- Articulate how the love of God can grow exponentially through one's pursuit of virtue, thus becoming more lovable as well as more capable of loving;
- Argue for the existence of God, the necessity of a Redeemer, and the authority of the Catholic Church in a logical, structured, and accessible manner.

### **Short Answer**

1. Consider the metaphor of faith overflowing like a fountain and touching the souls of those around you. Make a list of three to five ways that you can let your faith be seen by the world.
2. Using your answer to the last question, develop one plan for doing so. Where are you going to focus on being more publicly faithful? How will you address potential problems such as feeling embarrassed, making other people angry, or starting debates? What idea or mental image can you take with you to inspire you to be faithful regardless of discomfort or fear?

3. Pick a friend, relative, or other acquaintance who you believe would be receptive to discussions about the existence of God. This person may be someone who seems dissatisfied about their current philosophy for life, is open to lots of new topics, or who is already interested in theology and abstract thought. What evidence do you see that they would be receptive to a discussion? What would be a way you could initiate a discussion with them? What would be some topics you think they would be especially interested in?

### **Assessment Guide**

1. A good answer to this question will be thoughtful and realistic. The student should try to think of ideas that could be easily implementable into their daily practices. Examples could include praying before meals, wearing a scapular, saying "I'll pray for X" when something goes wrong, bringing a rosary with them throughout their day, being explicit when they can't go to an event due to a religious occasion such as Mass or a Holy Day of Obligation, etc.
2. This answer should take directly from the student's list in the previous answer. Look for indications that the student has truly considered how to implement strategies for professing the faith into their life. In regards to potential obstacles, students should consider picking a saint to pray to in times of temptation, reading religious texts about saints and missionaries, having an arsenal of articles, videos, and diagrams to use in the middle of debates, and asking for support from other Catholic believers. Good images to meditate upon would be Christ's passion, favorite angels and saints, and one's own family or religious community.
3. Whoever the student picks should be someone who would be open to conversations about religion and philosophy over a long period of time. Therefore, it should be someone that the student comes into contact with regularly. It should also be someone who is already interested in these types of topics and who can follow arguments about denser abstract ideas. The student should be able to pick out explicit traits that indicate that they would be a good match. They should also have a general idea of some of the topics that would be most interesting in a debate with said acquaintance.

### **Writing prompt**

Having finished the book and becoming familiar with the arguments for God using logic, philosophy, and universal human experience, write a reflection about how you conceptualize God. How has your understanding of God changed since reading this

book? How do you expect your understanding will continue to change throughout your life? What would be the one thing you would want non-believers to take away from the arguments presented in this book? How do you feel about the idea of being a person who spreads the love of God with you wherever you go-- what talents and strengths can you use to become more successful in that endeavor? Many people believe that religion is an emotional, irrational fear-response to death and suffering. What would you say to a person who holds such an opinion? What will you take with you the most as you move forward as a missionary for Christ and His Church?

### **Assessment Guide**

A good answer to this final reflection will be thoughtful and honest. The student should reference specific points in the book that they feel they can take with them as they continue on as missionaries for Christ. This reflection need not be especially structured or elegant-- the idea is to have the student end on an introspective note. Ideally, a student will feel more confident in their capacity to explain their beliefs, and should even feel excited at the prospect of sharing their faith with the world. All answers should include a specific reference to the strengths that the student sees themselves having which will be helpful in future discussions with non-believers.

If at this point there are any serious lingering worries about certain topics or the idea of entering into a debate, take an opportunity to have a discussion with the student. Give them explicit strategies to deal with their fears; encourage them to focus on their successes rather than on potential failures. Remind the student that being a missionary can be something they take with them every day in small, simple ways. Not all students will have the disposition or calling to go out and debate with non-believers. They should still have a solid foundation for their faith, however, and can still live an open faithful life. This course should end on an encouraging and inspirational note-- therefore, focus on the positive and remember that becoming a missionary for Christ is a lifelong endeavor.

### **Activities outside of class**

- In an explicit attempt to become more fully aligned with Christ before moving forward as a missionary, have students go to Confession. Encourage them to make a full examination of conscience and to take this opportunity to focus on bad habits, regular venial sins, and any mortal sins that they may have on their souls;

- Offer up a Mass for a friend or family member who the student would like to see convert to Catholicism;
- Make a poster that illustrates the arguments outlined in this book from beginning (Truth exists) to end;
- Buy or check out a book in the suggested reading list;
- Initiate one discussion with a person who could be interested in debates about the existence of God, the nature of Being, religion, or philosophy.

## Final Project

Having reached the end of the program, students should undertake a cumulative final project in which they revisit everything that they have learned over the duration of the course. Ideally, this project will be something that could aid them in future debates and will continue to boost their inspiration to live out an identity as a missionary for Christ. Projects may include:

- Recording an interview/discussion with a non-believer about any topic covered within the book. Aim for 15-20 minutes (although can go longer if needed.) Afterwards, have the student listen to the recording and make notes about what they described well and what they could practice more. Assess for mastery of ideas, as well as student's capacity to be constructively critical of their own performance;
- Have the student make a poster that illustrates the entire series of arguments illustrated in this book. Begin with "Truth exists" and end with the authority of the Catholic Church. Encourage the student to use visuals and diagrams to illustrate the connection between the arguments. Assess for the clarity of the design and the thoroughness of the poster;
- Have the student write a book report over *A Young Catholic's Guide to Defending the Faith* including a summary, an analysis of the student's developing understanding of their own beliefs, and a connection to their own experiences. Assess for critical thinking and mastery of materials.

Each of these projects should initiate discussion beyond the project itself. Check in with the student to help ensure that they understand the materials and are able to make connections outside of the text. Supplement learning where necessary--feel free to revisit previous chapters or look for other sources. Encourage students to continue to explore these topics on their own and to use *A Young Catholic's Guide*, the student's diagrams and posters, and the other materials the student has found throughout the course as resources in future debates with non-believers.