

George Pappas

Fr. Daniel Torson, CPPS

THEO 10600

February 4, 2019

### Who is God for You?

This essay question is very similar to the question I was asked on the first day of this theology course. When asked this question in class, I answered that I was always thought of God as a guide through which people can live their lives. In return, I was asked if I believed in this way of thinking; to which I replied yes and that I agreed with it. In the short amount of time I was given to answer this question, I briefly thought about my past experiences with religion to come up with my belief. This was only a small part of what I believe God to be in my own personal life; God is not only a guide in life, but can also be a friend if you choose to accept him as one.

I don't believe I ever choose the religion that I am apart of; I was born into it and it was strengthened by my family. I am born a Greek Orthodox and practice, to a certain extent, the traditions of the Greek Orthodox religion. The Greek culture, especially in Greece, is very centered around religion. If you ever visit Greece, you will find that you are almost always within a 30 to 40-minute drive of a church. Even in the middle of nowhere, on top of a mountain, there will be a place nearby where a person can gather and pray. To a Greek cultured person, religion isn't only a suggestion, it is directly imbedded into our culture.

That being said, I wouldn't be entirely honest if I proclaimed that I was a perfect religious person that followed all 10 commandments and followed in God's footsteps; that is far from the truth. For example, when I was younger, my family and I used to go to church on

Christmas and Easter at the very least, however in recent years, my family and I haven't even done that. In addition to that, also when I was younger and learning about God and religion, I, as I feel many others do, had doubts if God even existed. I feel that it is a normal thing to contemplate at a young age, or any age for that matter. I wondered if all my prayers were just being sent to nowhere. Regardless, those thoughts did not stop me from praying and did not stop me from believing. Unknowingly, I was following a mindset that I have only recently just learned about; this mindset being Pascal's Wager. Pascal suggests that it is more beneficial to believe in God than not to believe in God. If God does exist, and you believe, then you have a greater chance of going to heaven. If God does not exist, and you believe, then you don't lose anything and that you may have actually gained good character (Park 72-83). This mindset is what kept me believing throughout that period of doubt and has translated into me being a firm believer of God. I believe this realization of God is because of my family and the schooling I attended.

From the 7<sup>th</sup> grade to the end of high school, I attended a private and Catholic school where I had classes like religion and theology; I also attended Greek school and some religious classes during one summer through my church. In high school is where I had to learn about the history of the Catholic Church. I was taught everything from the 10 commandments to different saints to even the dioceses in the area. During this time of learning, I will admit that I was more focused on practicing to be a good Christian more than compared to now. However, these classes never made a huge, or lasting, impact on my life. That being said, there was one class in high school that did make a lasting impact on my life. The teacher of the class had a very interactive teaching style compared to the teachers I had previously experienced. He taught the class with stories that were prevalent and current with the events at that time. He also shared stories about

his own life; explaining to the class how he discovered his calling was to follow God and spread his teachings. Hearing about his journey was inspirational to me because, at the time, I too was trying to find my calling in life.

These are some of the events that I believe have shaped my current religious beliefs. I believe that God is present in my everyday life and is with me whenever I need him. Every time I need help in my life, that I or another physical being cannot solve, I turn to God to help and guide me in the right direction. I also believe that God looks after my family and I to keep us safe and healthy. This is one of things I ask for in my nightly prayer. Anything that is out of my power to control, I feel that God can control. I have been taught, through church and school, that God knows all; he can see a person's life from start to finish simultaneously. This is a very strange concept for me to think about; however, it should be strange concept to me because I am not God and human life does not have the ability to see the past, future, and present all at the same time. This idea of understanding a concept not familiar to us creatures of earth is similar to the reasoning behind Elizabeth Johnson's views regarding the usage of feminine analogies. A very small segment from Elizabeth Johnson's writing states that "The mystery of God transcends all [...]" (Moltman 41-43). In Elizabeth's context, she is referring to God transcending the male and female genders; however, in my situation, I am stating that God's power transcends our abilities to understand the future, past, and present. The same reasoning can be said for St. Thomas Aquinas's opinion regarding the use of analogies for God. St. Thomas Aquinas states that "We cannot speak of God at all except on the basis of creatures, and so whatever is said of both God and creatures is said in virtue of a certain order that creatures have in relation to God as their source and cause in which all their perfections pre-exist" (Moltman 32-34). This is simply

stating that God is above all creatures of earth and cannot truly be compared to people or objects on earth. It is because of this reason that we cannot fully and truly understand God's power.

After my reflection, I still believe that God is a guide in which someone can live their life. Expanding from that, God is an all-knowing being that helps you through life and that will answer calls of prayers. He is a supreme being that will never be fully understood by the creatures of earth and will continue to be mystery until he reveals himself to us. God is not only someone that will give you advice but will save you from distress when you choose not to take it. He is not only someone to look up to in life, but he is also a friend that wants the best out of you.

Work Cited

Moltman, Jurgen. "On the Suffering of God." *Theology: The Basic Readings*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Ed.

Alistair E. McGrath. Wiley Blackwell, 2012, 32-43. Print.

Park, Andrew Sung. "The God Who Needs Our Salvation." *Readings about God: Introduction to Christian Theology*. Eds. Christie Billups & Daniel Torson. Professor's Choice, 2013, 72-83. Print.