

Kenneth A. Bryson, *What do we Know About God: Theological, Philosophical, and Existential Arguments Concerning the Nature of God*, ed. by John Carter, Hayesville, NC: The American Journal of Biblical Theology, 2020, Paperback, 235 pp., \$12.85, ISBN: 979-8665332376

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God's nature goes beyond human understanding, and it is a matter of concern that people know more about the physical origins of the universe than they do about the existence of God. Kenneth Bryson's teleological argument for God's existence rests on evidence of intellectual coherence and design, including the purposiveness of nature. Bryson begins by citing instances in his life, as a philosophy student and teacher, in which he encountered atheist viewpoints before presenting a fascinating ontological argument resting on the notion of God as proof of His existence. In addition to this Bryson advances a cosmological argument that attempts to prove God's existence by the fact that things exist. If the universe has things that exist, there must be a supernatural power behind their existence. Aside from these classical philosophical topoi, Bryson includes personal stories that provide evidence of God's existence in human experience; the author states that "the experience of God is loud and clear in the trenches of war, the death of a child, the agony of divorce, unemployment, bankruptcy..."²⁰⁷.

Moses and Job represent different experiences of the divine. For Bryson, God's declaration "I am who am"⁹ indicates that Moses' personal experience of God is conceptual rather than real. In contrast, both Job's suffering and his repentance in dust and ashes after he meets God face to face, is more personal and existential indication that God exists. Bryson does not blame those who do not believe in God's existence but rather thinks critically about their background, culture, and formative politics.

Some weaknesses compromise the quality of Bryson's study. Although Bryson claims that "a second source of spiritual meaning and

deepened relationship with God comes from [his] cancer experience, biopsy, lobectomy, and recovery from cancer",⁵² he cannot account for the suffering and death of innocent beings. He presents the example of a young girl, believed to be innocent, who is struck and killed by a car. The question of God's omnipresence and power arises in such a scenario. For Bryson, the loss of innocent victims, animals, and plants results from separation from God, and the pain we undergo strengthens human beings' relationship with God. The author emphasizes that God is also hurt by the tragedies that human beings undergo in their lives.

Bryson relates such incidents to the story of Job. When God revealed Himself to Job, Job recognized himself as inferior. Bryson also cites the example of Jesus, who begged God to take away the cup of suffering. This implies that God exists, and He is actually the one who saves us from suffering. In addition to this scriptural evidence for God, Bryson also presents the ideas of great scientific thinkers. He asserts that intellect is spiritual, and, in the same way that scientists believe that matter exists, so does God.

Bryson emphasizes that he has felt God's presence in his personal experiences: "The fact that God exists permits me as Christian to find meaning in suffering".¹³⁹ His experiences, his fight with cancer, are a living testimony that God exists. Bryson's meditations on Jesus' sufferings, and his belief that God suffers for him, help him endure suffering and emerge triumphant. Bryson explains that hope in one's personal life is realized in God's presence. The discovery of the sacred in the universe, in one's fellow human beings, and, more particularly, in ourselves, is discovered because of God's presence in our daily lives.

Overall, Bryson presents a compelling argument for the existence of God. However, he also acknowledges that nonbelievers have their reasons, and does not condemn them. Although Bryson tries to provide an unbiased argument based on personal experience, and philosophical and biblical evidence, his argument tilts too much to biblical authority. Only a few contemporary arguments emerge. For this reason, the book offers critical insights that inform readers about God's existence and nature, but further reading is essential to evaluate atheist arguments. A more exhaustive argument would also require consideration of other religions' viewpoints.