



## The famous "five proofs" for God's existence

The 13th-century Italian philosopher-theologian St. Thomas Aquinas developed five proofs for the existence of God. They've been widely cited, debated and defended ever since.

The first three are very similar. The fourth appears modeled on the thought of Greek philosopher Plato. The fifth looks an awful lot like modern arguments for "intelligent design." Here they are:

**Proof one.** Some things are in motion. All things in motion were put in motion by something else. But this chain cannot go on to infinity. Therefore there is a First Mover, who is God.

**Proof two.** In nature, we observe cause and effect. No effect can be its own cause; it is caused by something else. But this cannot go on to infinity. Therefore there is a First Cause, who is God.

**Proof three.** In nature, we find things that come into existence and die; they are able to "not be." But if everything was able to "not be," nothing would exist, because "that which does not exist only begins to exist by something already existing." Therefore there must be some thing in existence that is not dependent on others for its existence; this we call God.

**Proof four.** We observe that some things are more or less good, true, noble, etc. "More" and "less" is defined in terms of what is the "most." (For example, something is called "hotter" if it is closer to the "hottest" than something else.) Further, the maximum is also the cause (like fire, the maximum, causes other things to be relatively hot). Therefore there must be something that is the cause of being, goodness and other perfections; we call this God.

**Proof five.** In nature, we see things that lack intelligence acting for an intelligent purpose. It is obvious this is not by chance but by design. Therefore some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their purpose; and that is God.