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HOW CAN WE KNOW THAT GOD EXISTS?

By Tom Snyder, PhD

Some people say, "I don't know if God exists," but how do they know that they don't know? Other people say, "It is impossible to know whether God exists or not," but how do they know it is impossible to know? Such statements are absurd. They defeat themselves.

Just because you personally don't know whether or not God exists, doesn't mean that no one knows. Secondly, if it is possible to know that you don't know whether or not God exists, then it must also be possible to know that you do know whether or not God exists. Finally, it is not logical for you to claim that it is impossible to know whether or not God exists. If we can never really know whether or not God exists, then we can never really know whether or not that statement itself is true.

It is possible to know whether or not God exists. We can indeed look at the existence of God objectively and logically. Otherwise, we wouldn't even be able to hold any belief about God whatsoever, including the belief of atheism, agnosticism, or skepticism. It is intellectually arbitrary and absurd to exempt religious claims about God from the categories of objectivity and logic. Therefore, I propose the following argument to prove the existence of God:

1. You either exist or you don't exist. To claim that you don't exist, however, is self-contradictory, because at the same time that you deny your existence, you actually affirm it. To quote philosopher Norman L. Geisler, "One must exist in order to deny that he exists, which is self-defeating. But whatever is undeniable is true, and what is unaffirmable is false. Hence, it is undeniably true that I

exist."¹ You exist

2. The universe is either real or it isn't. If the universe is not real, then where do people get the idea that it is real? Also, if the universe is an illusion, as some Eastern religions believe, then who is having the fantasy, who is having the dream? What some people call an illusion, other people call reality. Objectively, there is no difference between the two words when they are used in this way. A difference that makes no difference is no difference at all. Finally, if the universe is not real, then I could never rely on the reasoning of my own mind, because it is through that mind that I perceive the universe around me. I couldn't even rely on the thought processes which tell me the universe is an illusion. The universe is undeniably real.

3. Either the universe is eternal or it is not eternal. If the universe is eternal, why is it changing? If the universe is eternal, why is every element of the universe, such as my body, not eternal? If the universe is eternal, why is there error in the universe and where does logic, reason, personality, and consciousness originate? If the universe is eternal, then human reason and logic is undependable because it seems to have arrived purely by chance. The universe therefore is not eternal: it had a beginning.

4. Either the universe created itself or it was created by something or someone else. However, if the universe created itself, then at the very moment it created itself, it would have to exist and not exist at the same time in the same place. This is clearly impossible. Furthermore, if the universe created itself, where does human personality originate and why should we rely on the human reasoning that says the universe created itself? The universe was created by something or someone else: for practical purposes, we shall call this something or someone "God".

5. Either God is personal or impersonal. If God is impersonal, then where does personality originate? How does something impersonal produce something personal? Only persons can create other persons. Also, how could we rely on the thought processes of our minds if God is impersonal? The person who says that God is impersonal relies on thought processes in order to make that claim. Thus, he undermines his own argument by claiming that God is impersonal. God is personal and the universe was created by a someone, a personal God.

6. The universe was created either by many gods or by only one God. If the universe was created by many gods, then these gods could not be eternal or non-caused. You can't have two or more ultimate, eternal gods. One of them would always lack some essential attribute that the other one possesses. You can have only one best of anything. Why postulate two or more gods to create the universe when you really only need one? The universe was created by one God.

7. Either the one God is absent or he is immanent, which means he is present and active in the world. If he is absent, then how is the universe sustained? God must be immanent and he must be able to communicate with people, or else he could not be an ultimate ground of your existence. The one God is immanent: he is outside the universe, but he is active in that universe and everything in that universe is immediately in his presence.

8. Either the one essence of the one God also contains more than one person, or it does not. There must be more than one person in the godhead, or else God is not an ultimate god. God cannot have a personal relationship with individual persons and groups of people unless there also exists an ultimate, personal, transcendent, and eternal relationship among the persons of the godhead. How can there be true love if there is only one person within the unitary essence of the one true God? God must also be eternal, transcendent, and infinite in order to truly be an ultimate, supreme being. Within the eternal, transcendent, infinite, and non-material essence of the one true God, there exists more than one person.

Christianity is the only major religion which believes in the eight conclusions stated above. It is the only major religion which says that within the divine nature of God, there exists more than one person. Therefore, Christianity must be closer to the truth than any other religion.

Christianity's concept of the Triune God or Trinity is not illogical. This concept merely states that within the godhead there exists three separate persons. In other words, there exist three whos but one what. Whatness and whoness are separate rational categories. They do not contradict each other. In combining these two categories, Christians do not violate the basic laws of logic.

Viewed in this light, Christianity becomes the most rational belief about the existence of God and the universe. Its world view is more logical than any other

religion. It is more logical than any form of pantheism, polytheism, or deism. It is more logical than Judaism and Islam. And it is more logical than atheism, agnosticism, or materialism.

The Triune God wants a real relationship with you. Turn away from evil and submit your mind, heart, and strength to the Triune God by the power of Jesus Christ's sacrificial death on the Cross.

NOTES

1. Norman L. Geisler, Christian Apologetics (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 239.

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