

THEISM

Arguments Affirming The Existence of God

Believers in the existence of God automatically turn to scripture, the word of God, to prove the existence of God. However, unbelievers reject all arguments from scripture saying that God's self-testimony is not creditable for proving the case. They argue that one's statements about oneself may be false. While that's true, self-testimony is still permissible in any court of law provided that other witnesses agree. Non-biblical arguments are therefore needed. Here are brief summaries of five philosophical arguments that affirm the existence of God, plus one argument from scripture. While these are not the only arguments for the existence of God, they are among the more noteworthy.

1. The intuitive argument, first presented by Augustine (354-430 AD), is that mankind has a direct intuition of the existence of God. This argument relies on two significant facts. First, all humanity, throughout history and in all cultures, is incurably religious. Second, when people try to comprehend the immensity and grandeur of the universe, they realize some great intelligence and power is surely ordering the affairs of the universe. People are thereby forced to look beyond the material to the spiritual. People gaze upon the universe in awe, and then bow down in worship. Therefore, since all people are by nature worshippers and since nature demonstrates an awesome intelligence and power, then intuition suggests that something exist to be worshipped. That something is God. This intuition regarding the existence of God is surely what caused David to say, "The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork" (Psalm 19:1).

2. The ontological argument, first presented by Anselm (1033-1109), asserts that the perfect being (God) must actually exist because man can conceived of him. Anselm declared that God is that than which nothing greater can be conceived. Since mankind cannot conceive of anything that does not exist, and since mankind can conceive of the idea of God, then God himself must exist. This is similar to the idea that if there is a shadow, then there must also be some substance to have caused that shadow. When the fool says that there is no God (Psalm 14:1; 53:1), he has a concept of God in his mind. Therefore, to deny the existence of God is foolish.

3. The anthropological argument (also called the moral argument) is that within all people of whatever nation, tribe or ethnic group there is an innate capacity to know right from wrong. Aside from humanity, this moral quality is not within the animal kingdom. This sense of "ought" in all humanity is not the result of education or the mores and customs of various cultures. What can explain why individuals seek to justify their own conduct? People want the approval of their own consciences, as well as that of their fellow human beings. Whenever people argue about right and wrong human behavior, they recognize that there is a standard of right and wrong beyond themselves, beyond human customs, and beyond legislative decrees to which they may appeal. The fact that there exists a recognized sense of "ought" that is beyond human making requires that someone greater than mankind originated the moral law and placed it within all humanity. Such could not have evolved. The capacity to discern right from wrong indicates the existence of a moral governor of the universe, a moral creator whose goodness is absolute. That moral governor is God. (Paul mentioned this universal moral order in Romans 2:14-15.)

4. The cosmological argument, generally credited to Thomas Aquinas (1225?-1274 AD), is concerned with the laws of nature. The central idea of this argument is that the existing cosmos is undeniable evidence of a creator. The natural law that supports this idea is that for every effect there must be an adequate cause. Since nothing can come from nothing and since the cosmos is

something, then something or someone must have produced the cosmos. The cosmos is the effect. What then was the cause? If one effect becomes the cause of another effect, then causes and effects may be traced backwards to a beginning, except for the fact that the beginning requires an uncaused first cause. The best way to identify the uncaused first cause is God. Moreover, movement exists, but there is no such thing as perpetual motion. That means someone or something had to start the motion. That demands an unmoved mover, a prime mover. That something could not have been an evolutionary development, because evolution is theorized to operate in an upward progression, but the natural laws of thermodynamics indicate that the universe is decelerating. Finally, all natural things in the cosmos are capable of not existing. All natural things are contingent, i.e. dependent, upon something else. That dependence requires the existence of some necessary being, God. Scripture supports the concept that the creation makes God known (Romans 1:20).

5. The teleological argument for the existence of God is also credited to Thomas Aquinas, although William Paley (1743-1805) popularized it as the argument from design. The basic premise of the teleological argument is that the world exhibits intelligent purpose, as proven by experience from nature. Since nature demonstrates design, complexity, unity, coherency, and order, then there must be an intelligent designer to account for what is observed to be intelligent purpose and order. Paley used comparison to illustrate the argument. He said that just as a watch indicates by its intelligent design and complex function that it was made by an intelligent watch-maker, so also the universe, with all its enormous complexity and greatness, must have been designed by an intelligent and powerful creator, God. The argument from design is often illustrated by the anthropic principle, which indicates that the universe is designed for life. The sun is 93,000,000 miles distance from the earth. That distance is just right. Any closer would be too hot. Any further away would be too cold. The moon's distance of 240,000 miles is just right for tide movements. The earth's tilt provides for the seasons of the years. Facts of this nature lead to the conclusion that only a master designer of supreme intelligence and power (God) could have produced this magnificent universe.

6. The Bible also offers proof for the existence of God. Scripture claims to be inspired – the product of God's breath (2 Timothy 3:16; see also 2 Peter 1:20-21). Some 3800 times, the Bible declares "God said" or "Thus says the Lord" (e.g. Exodus 14:1; 20:1; Leviticus 4:1; Numbers 4:1; Deuteronomy 4:2; 32:48; Isaiah 1:10, 24; Jeremiah 1:11; Ezekiel 1:3; etc.). If the claim is true that the Bible did indeed come from God, then one would expect the Bible to present itself in ways that indicate it could have come *only* from God. That presentation would serve as proof that God does indeed exist. The Bible presents itself in many different ways that could be considered proofs that God exists. Only one is given now. Here it is. ***The scope of biblical content is such that no human being could have written it.*** The Bible encompasses the story of God's relationship to humanity, sin, redemption, and eternal destiny. It was penned by about forty persons, most of whom were not acquainted with the others, over fifteen hundred years, and yet there is complete unity, harmony, and consistency. That fact indicates that a single non-human author, who had an overview of history, wrote the Bible. Since only God could have written the Bible, then God must exist.

Not everyone will accept these arguments as proof that God exists. When Jesus lived, many rejected him, not willing to believe that he was the Son of God, in spite of the many evidences that he presented. He therefore rebuked their unbelief (John 5:30-47). Each of us must ask ourselves whether the arguments and the evidences warrant belief in the existence of God. If so, then we should live consistent with that belief.