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Apologetics (Theology Proper: God Exists)

Apologetics can be understood as the philosophical, theological and historical demonstration of the *truthfulness* of Christian theological claims.

“Mankind gives its learners lessons first and tests afterward: God gives his children tests first and lessons afterward.” (21st century witticism)

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Challenges to the existence of God

- Agnosticism: Advocates contend it is not possible to *know* with any degree of certainty if a Supreme Being qua being exists.
- Atheism: Atheists overtly deny God, in any form, and contend that belief in God is irrational. God is merely a projection of human needs. **Nihilism** (life is absurd), **optimistic humanism** (humans create our own values and give life whatever meaning we choose to give it), **immanent purpose/transcendentalism** (while objective meaning outside human life is absent, life has objective meaning because objective values can be found within it) are examples of atheism (Moreland, 115-128).

Challenges to the traditional understanding of God

- Pluralism: “The idea that no one religion is exclusively true, to the exclusion of others, but that there is truth in *each* religion” [emphasis original] (Erickson, 31).
- Process thought: An extension of scientific naturalism. God desires outcomes and seeks to implement their actualization, but has no control over individual reactions to his persuasion. Reactions of individuals adverse to his persuasion simply means he chooses another instrument (E.g., If Mary had declined to bear Jesus, God would have asked another woman). God wants us to maximally enjoy life in such a way as not to prevent others’ enjoyment (Erickson, 59-60). God is in process.

- Free will theism (also posited as “openness theism”): “God is conceived . . . as a loving, caring parent, who experiences the world, interacts with his children and consequently feels emotions, and takes risks and responds to developments in the world by *changing his mind and his course of action* as necessary” [emphasis added] (Erickson, 71).

Arguments for the existence of God

Cosmological Argument [Greek *kosmos*]

- “This argument begins with the beginning of the world [or universe] or some part of it and seeks to establish the existence of a necessary Being who causes the existence of the world” (Moreland, 15-42).
- Thomist (Thomas Aquinas) version: Finite, contingent beings exist which could not cause their own existence, and therefore were dependent for their existence on something else.
- Finite infinite beings owe their existence to either infinite regress of other dependent beings (An infinite regress of dependent beings does not cause the existence of anything. Adding another dependent being to a chain of dependent beings does not ground the existence [or a causal beginning] of the chain.)
- or to a necessary Being, one which could not cease to exist if it does in fact have existence.