

Cornerstone Bible Church

Systematic Theology

Acknowledgment & Credits:

LECTURES ON INTRODUCTION TO
SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY TAUGHT BY
RAFAEL ALCANTARA IN 2009 DURING THE
SUNDAY SCHOOL AT IGLESIA BIBLICA DEL
SEÑOR JESUCRISTO

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This lesson has been added
and it does not appear in
the original material

General Contents:

1. The Existence of God
2. The Attributes of God
3. The Trinity
4. Creation
5. Providence

Note: Grudem includes Miracles, Prayer, and Angels and Demons in his arrangement of the Doctrine of God

Robert Raymond includes the Biblical View of Man and The Eternal Decree of God under this subject

The Existence of God

The Existence of God

1. Can God's Existence be proven?

A Brief and Superficial Overview of the Classical versus Clarkian Views of Presuppositionalism

2. Traditional “proofs” about the Existence of God

- a) Ontological Argument
- b) Cosmological Argument
- c) Teleological Argument
- d) Anthropological Argument

1. Can God's Existence be proven?

Classical versus Clarkian Presuppositionalism

Calvin, Warfield, Van-Til & Bansen / Gordon Haddon Clark
Today: R.C. Sproul / Robert Raymond

- Any epistemological approach parts from presuppositions
- Reason is able to presuppose the existence of God versus only through the Scriptures we can presuppose the existence of God
- Both sides are committed Calvinists
(They agree that faith comes by hearing and that God must open the eyes)
- They differ in their approach to apologetics

1. Can God's Existence be proven?

a) The Bible is clear regarding the fact that God revealed Himself to man Ps 19:1, Acts 14:16-17, Rom 1:18-26

b) The Justice of God is continually revealed in the Gospel
Rom 1:18

c) God's witness is internally manifested Rom 1:19
That which is known about God is evident within them,
for God made it evident to them"

^ φανερὸν ἐστὶν ἐν αὐτοῖς· ὁ θεὸς γὰρ αὐτοῖς ἐφάνερωσεν.
clearly seen in them For God made them clearly seen

1. Can God's Existence be proven?

- d) God Revealed Himself in the Son Jn 1:18, Heb 1:1-2
- e) God Revealed Himself in the Scriptures Ps 19:7-10, 2 Tim 3:16-17
- f) Paul seems to have taken this “presupposition of God” on Mars Hill Acts 17 and in Iconium & Lystra Acts 14:17

The arguments for God's existence can be approached from NATURAL THEISM and BIBLICAL THEISM

In this class, we will only consider “NATURAL THEISM” arguments, since the Bible does not prove the Existence of God but simply assumes it.

1. Can God's Existence be proven?

Natural Theism uses two ways for proving the Existence of God

- A PRIORI Arguments
 - The Ontological Argument
- A POSTERIORI Arguments
 - Cosmological
 - Teleological
 - Anthropological (or moral)

2. The **Ontological** Argument

“The ontological argument begins with the idea of God, which is defined as a being “greater than anything that *cannot* be imagined”. It then argues that the characteristic of existence must belong to such a being, since it is greater to exist than not to exist” – Grudem Syst. Theol pag 143

Anselm (1033-1109) was the proponent of this argument. His rationale is as follows: “God is a being that no greater than Him can be thought of...suppose such a being exists only in the understanding (or imagination) alone – the atheist argument – then it is easier to think that He really exists”

Descartes: we traffic in the finite realm, the idea of something infinite must come from something outside of ourselves

2. The **Ontological** Argument

- The “flat island“ illustration by **J Oliver Buswell Jr**

The ontological argument goes like this: people who live in a flat island and have never ever been anywhere else, but they have a word in their language for “snow capped mountain”. How can it be so, unless somebody taught them of its existence?

The **Ligonier’s apologists** defense of this argument:

“We have an idea of being and we cannot have an idea of nonbeing... that there should be nothing at all is utterly impossible... this eternal, infinite being must necessarily exist, because we cannot think of its not existing”

2. The problem with the **Ontological** Argument

The fickleness of this argument is that men can imagine things that do not really exist; therefore having consciousness of God, doesn't necessarily prove His existence

The gist of the ontological argument is: God exists, because we can conceive of a being who is greater than what we can imagine, and it is a lot easier for such a being to exist, than for Him to not exist

Clarkian presuppositionalism sees circular reasoning and faulty logic in this argumentation

Classical Presuppositionalism accuses Clarkians of circular reasoning too, but Clarkians do not seem to care as they part from the presuppositions of Scripture

3. The **Cosmological** Argument

a) This is the **cause-effect** argument

Newton's principle of Action & Reaction

$F_1 \longrightarrow$ is always met by an equally opposing $\longleftarrow F_2$

“The cosmological argument considers the fact that every known thing in the universe has a cause, therefore, it reasons, the universe itself must have a cause, and the cause of such a great universe can only be God” – Grudem – Systematic Theology page 143

“If something exists now, something must be eternal, unless that something proceeds out of nothing” J M Boice

3. The **Cosmological** Argument

“Each effect must have a corresponding and proportional cause. The universe is an effect, therefore it must have a cause outside of itself to explain its existence” - C. Hodge –

Hodge's argument

- Every cause is real
- The cause must be powerful and efficacious
- The power must be concomitant to the effect produced

The world is immense and orderly, its cause must have the necessary power to produce such an effect...who then generated the cause of this effect? That's God

3. The **Cosmological** Argument

Prof. Thomas Howe's argument

1. “Something” has existed from eternity, therefore...
2. This “something” has existed without a cause, therefore...
3. This “something” exists independently, therefore...
4. This “something” is necessary for existence, therefore...
5. This “something” is self-generating, therefore...
6. This “something” is the originator of all vitality and must be alive...

This is whom the Bible calls GOD

The weakness of this argument: it does not speak about God's attributes or personality, simply points to the need for the existence of an eternal, life-generating, self-existing cause

4. The **Teleological** Argument

“This is really a subcategory of the cosmological argument.”

“It focuses on the evidence of harmony, order and design in the universe, and argues that its design gives evidence of an intelligent purpose (the Greek “telos” means “end” or “goal” or “purpose”). Since the universe appears to be designed with a purpose, there must be an intelligent and purposeful God who created it to function this way” – Grudem – page 143 –

“A design presupposes a designer and the universe evidences in all aspects a design, consequently, the world points to an intelligent designer” – Ch Hodge -

The step ahead of this argument in relationship to the cosmological is attributing INTELLIGENCE to the creator

4. The **Teleological** Argument Archibald Hodge's Syllogism

a) Greater Premise:

- The composition of parts and the adaptation of means who work towards a goal or purpose, can only be explained by referring them to an intelligent and creative will

b) Minor Premise:

- The universe is filled with such adaptations in complex organisms formed by parts which work together towards a given purpose

c) Conclusion:

- Therefore the originating and first cause of the universe must be an intelligent mind and creative will

5. The **Anthropological** or **Moral** Argument

“It begins from man’s sense of right and wrong and of the need for justice to be done, and it argues that there is a God who is the source of right and wrong and who will some day mete out justice to all people” Grudem

“Mankind exists inherently independent from the habitat, education or culture, with a sense of right or wrong, morality, fairness and a sense of justice and judgment”

The sylogism of the moral argument is:

- This sense of right or wrong is innate
- It is independent from the understanding or the will
- The conscience moral voice is indelible and inescapable
- This moral awareness implies the existence of an outside, universal and independent ruling standard

CONCLUSION:

1. **The limitations of these arguments**

“All arguments for God’s existence, all expositions of the analogy of being or proportionality and of attribution, as means of intelligibly conceptualizing God and all attempts to show the naturalness of theism are logically loose. They state no more than possibilities and can be argued against indefinitely. They cannot be watertight, and if offered as such they can be shown not to be watertight by anyone who knows any logic. This will damage the credit of any theology that appears to be building and relying on these arguments”

J.I. Packer, quoted by Raymond – page 151 -

CONCLUSION:

2. **The usefulness of these arguments**

They bring Glory to God and strengthen our faith

“For those who are correctly evaluating the evidence, everything in Scripture and everything in nature proves clearly that God exists and that He is powerful and wise Creator that Scripture describes Him to be. Therefore when we believe that God exists, we are basing our belief not on some blind hope apart from any evidence, but on an overwhelming amount of reliable evidence from God’s words and God’s works. It is a characteristic of true faith, that it is a confidence based on reliable evidence.” Grudem Syst. Theol. Pg 43

CONCLUSION:

3. The Power of the Gospel is indispensable and irreplaceable

“Thus, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.” Rom 1:15-17

“But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels. 24 And the Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, 25 with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, 26 and they may come to their senses *and escape* from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.” 2 Ti 2:23-26

END