

## What is the 'Evidentialist Objection' to belief in God?

It is rooted in the requirement that our beliefs must have sufficient evidence to justify their acceptance - our holding that they are true - and concludes that belief in God does not have sufficient evidence to justify its acceptance.

As W.K. Clifford said: "It is always wrong, everywhere, for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence." (think: Is this always the case – for All our beliefs? And, did WKC have sufficient evidence to believe this statement?)

- Negatively, if a claim has insufficient evidence to support its truth / justify its acceptance, one should not accept it.
- Positively, if a claim has sufficient evidence to support its truth / justify its acceptance, it should be accepted.

### But some questions arise:

1. What constitutes 'evidence'? - Only that which modern science would accept as evidence? Religious experiences? What?
2. What constitutes 'sufficient' evidence? - How much evidence / how many reasons must an individual have in order for a belief to be justified for them?

### There are four major responses to the 'Evidentialist Objection' to belief in God:

1. Accept that there is insufficient evidence and do not believe = 'skeptical non-theism' or 'positive atheism.'
2. Accept that there is insufficient evidence, but believe anyway = 'fideism.'
  - One *might* class Alvin Plantinga's claim that belief in God is a 'properly basic belief' as a type of fideism. Read about his views in chapter 7, "Knowing God Without Arguments," pp. 128-134.
3. Claim that there is sufficient evidence to justify belief in God. = Christian apologists like Gary Habermas, Lee Strobel, Josh McDowell, etc.
4. Argue that one may be justified in choosing to believe, as a matter of 'practical justification,' even though there is insufficient evidence to (theoretically) justify belief. – Blaise Pascal and 'Pascal's Wager'; William James and "the Will to Believe"
  - James' essay was assigned and is found in the reader, pp. 110-117.

\*Be sure to **know the conditions** that James held must accompany "willed belief." (See handout)

\*Be sure to **know what a properly 'basic belief' is**. (It is a belief that serves as a "starting point" for one's thinking. It is foundational, even though it is not logically or evidentially certain or self-evident. One thinks and argues "from it" but not "to it." - All acts of thinking rest on assumptions that cannot be proved to the committed skeptic, including scientific thinking and all philosophical thinking. Why should God-thinking be any different / a special case?)