

Is God arrogant and Narcissistic?

The base source of information for this Bible study is from the book "Is God a Moral Monster?" By Dr. Paul Copan.

Christopher Hitchens said the following about the Bible: "The Bible may, indeed does, contain a warrant for trafficking in humans, for ethnic cleansing, for slavery, for bride-price, and for indiscriminate massacre, but we are not bound by any of it because it was put together by crude, uncultured human mammals."

Sam Harris said the following about God's laws, "We read the Golden Rule and judge it to be a brilliant distillation of many of our ethical impulses. And then we come across another of God's teachings on morality: if a man discovers on his wedding night that his bride is not a virgin, he must stone her to death on her father's doorstep (Deuteronomy 22:13-21)."

Richard Dawkins said the following about the Old Testament, "The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully."

Bill Maher said the following: "If I ever had to swear an oath, why would I want to put my hand on the King James Bible? I think I could find more morality in the Rick James Bible."

Comments like the ones above are embraced and encouraged by audiences who want to dismiss Christianity and the existence of God. What stands out is the arrogance of the speakers who believe they are in a position to be able stand in judgement over a book that teaches what millions of people have dedicated their lives to believing. What also stand out is their ignorance regarding the Bible's content.

The question before us is the following: Is the God of the Bible arrogant and narcissistic? Before we answer that question let us consider why people would say that He is. Facts: a) God demands sole allegiance to Him by His followers (Exodus 20:1-6). b) God insists that there is no god like Him (Isaiah 45:5). c) God insists that He be worshipped. (Exodus 34:14; Deuteronomy 12:31 and Psalm 95:6). Can you think of another?

To say God is arrogant or prideful is to say that He has an unwarranted view of Himself and that for whatever good things He can do He believes He is the only one who deserves credit for those good things. If we define God as the Bible does which is the creator of all matter with no beginning or end and one of whom no sole name can be attached to Him or we define Him in the classical manner of being that by which nothing greater can be conceived, it is easier to understand the facts listed. Arrogance can only be attached to God if there was something like Him that can be compared to Him. There isn't so He cannot be said to be arrogant. Is there anything wrong with that argument? A: Yes, it is circular but remember, circular arguments are not necessarily invalid. They simply cannot be the only argument.

Let's deal with the facts one at a time. Fact a) God demands sole allegiance to Him by His followers. The cited Scripture is from the giving of the Ten Commandments. The first two commandments are listed. God's people are not to have any other God around them or any other god that fits into the same category as the God who delivered them from Egypt. The second commandment is directly connected to the first because if you have a god near the God of Israel you are going to worship it, hence there are instructions on how not to worship false gods. What is inherently implied about the human condition within the first two commandments? A: Human beings necessarily worship. What biblical evidence is there that

human beings necessarily worship? A: The answer is in the creation story. The simple reality that there is a creator (God) and creature (man) and by definition that creature (man) owes everything he is or ever will be to the creator (God) necessitates a relationship where the creature (man) pays tribute to the creator (God) not just for being created but also for being sustained (Acts 17:28). As creatures we are worshippers of what is greater than ourselves. According to God's created order there is nothing greater than man but God (Genesis 1:26-28). This is why it is a great abomination for man to turn to anything else but God and worship it. So, God demands sole allegiance to Him not for His sake but for ours. It is to the benefit of our souls and our dignity within the created order to give sole allegiance to God.

Fact b) God insists that there is no other god like Him. The cited verse from Isaiah 45:5 makes this claim as the prophet uses the same wording as the first commandment. If we take either the biblical definition of God or the classical definition of God it means that there cannot be another God like Him. Stating a simple fact is not being prideful or being absent of any good virtue. To think or believe there is another god besides the One, True God is to endanger us as the scenario above describes. The objection usually is in questions such as "How did God become God? Who created Him?" How should we answer that question? A: Dr. William Lane Craig advises that we start with the following premise: Everything that exists, exists either by the cause of an outside agent or by the necessity of its own nature. The universe and our world exists by means of an outside agent whereas God exists by the necessity of His own nature. His nature which has no beginning or end doesn't require an outside agent. God cannot be caused because He is the first mover (Thomist argument). Thus God insists that there is no God like Him because there isn't and He would be lying if He said differently and God does not lie.

Fact c) God insists that He be worshipped. It may look like we have already answered this objection while examining Facts a and b but let's take a closer look at the verses cited. From Exodus 34:14 we learn that God is a jealous God (which we will examine next week). The message is in the context of God prophesying how the people of Israel will enter a land filled with idol worship and will be tempted to worship those false gods. The instruction and warning is not a command to worship God but a re-command to not worship any other God but the true God.

The Deuteronomy 12:31 passage is in the context of another warning for God's people not to worship Him like the pagans around them worship their gods, especially burning their sons and daughters.

The Psalm 95:6 passage is a call by the Psalmist and not God to worship God. The Psalmist understands what mankind has been created to do and also just how pleasing it is to the human soul to properly fulfill its role as a bearer of God's image.

Here we may acknowledge that a questioner can stump a Christian apologist with the mere question, "why?" Q: Why did God make human's to be worshippers? A: Because by the very nature of us being creatures we naturally would worship our creator. Q: Why did God bother to make us at all? A: For His own pleasure. Q: But why does God want to receive pleasure from us? A: Because He loves us. Q: But why does He love us?...

Another criticism that supposedly shows God to be arrogant is to describe him as a doll maker who creates smaller images of Himself in order to play with them as He sees fit. But such a picture of God strikes against His desire for His image bearers to rule on the earth (see Genesis 1 again). It also ignores the desire of God for His children to live in a divine communion with the Father, Son and Holy Ghost (2 Peter 1:4). And finally, for this criticism, to describe God as merely a doll maker playing with toys tells more about the accuser than the one being accused.

The accuser desires a world to manipulate and so he transfers that desire to God insisting that if he has the desire then someone who could actually do it, would have it as well.

The irony of God being accused of being arrogant or prideful is how God is actually the opposite. Examples of God not being arrogant begin with Him creating man in His image. Consider that God created many things too numerous for us to count. It is estimated that there are over 8.7 million species created with many still being newly identified. That God would choose to create man after His image allowing us to be partakers of His divine nature is astounding in many ways.

Another example, the most astounding one, is found in Psalm 8 where it is asked, "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" That Psalm is used in Hebrews 2 to refer to Jesus becoming man. That God would consider humanity and then do something to save us from our sinfulness and from the judgement upon us which was eternal death is remarkable and the greatest proof of God's humility which is best described in Philippians chapter 2:7-8.

So let us try to answer the question again. Is God arrogant and narcissistic? A: Quite the opposite. The one who is arrogant and narcissistic is the one who would seriously ask such a question.