

The Omnipotence of God: Could He Make a Stone So Heavy He Couldn't Move It?

By Dr. Norman Geisler

Some critics have alleged that the theistic view of God is incoherent, since it claims God is omnipotent or all-powerful. They argue:

1. An all-powerful Being can do anything.
2. An all-powerful Being can make a stone so heavy that he cannot move it.
3. Hence, an all-powerful Being cannot do everything.
4. But premises 1 and 3 are contradictory
5. Hence, it is contradictory to hold that God is all-powerful.

No sophisticated theist really believes premise 1 in an unqualified way. What informed theists believe is that:

- 1a. God can do anything that is possible.
- 2a. It is not possible to make a stone so heavy that it cannot be moved.
- 3a. Therefore, it is not possible for God to make a stone so heavy that he cannot move it.

God cannot literally do any task we can imagine. He cannot contradict his own nature. Hebrews 6:18 declares, "It is impossible for God to lie." Neither can God do what is logically impossible; for example, make a square circle. He cannot make two mountains without a valley between. And he cannot deny the law of noncontradiction.

Further, God cannot do what is actually impossible. For example, he cannot will not to create a world he has willed to create. Of course, he could have willed not to create. But once he willed to create it was impossible for him to will not to create. Neither can God force free creatures to believe things against their will. Forcing someone to freely do something is a contradiction in terms. For if it is free, it is not forced. And if it is forced, then it is not free.

It is actually impossible to make a stone so heavy it cannot be moved. What an omnipotent Being can make, he can move. A finite creature cannot be more powerful in its resistance than the infinite Creator is in his power not to be resisted. If God brought it into existence, he can take it out of existence. Then he could recreate it somewhere else. Therefore, there is no contradiction in believing that God is omnipotent and that he can do anything that is possible to do. The critic has set up a straw-man argument and has not shown any incoherence in God's attribute of omnipotence.

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