

Apologetics Defending the Faith

I. Introduction

- A. Apologetics: The branch of theology which seeks to provide a rational justification for the truth claims of the Christian faith and present Christian doctrine clearly and convincingly.
- B. Apologetics is the systematic defense of the Christian faith. It seeks to define, establish, defend, and vindicate the presuppositions of Christian theology in the areas of metaphysics, epistemology, and axiology. It also seeks to defend and vindicate the Christian system of truth in every area of thought or investigation.
 1. *Apologetics* comes from the Greek word *apologia*, meaning “answer,” “defense” or “account.”¹
 2. The purpose of Christian apologetics is to remove intellectual barriers that prevent a person from accepting the gospel.
 3. Good apologetics focuses not so much on giving answers to questions, but providing rational ideas to stimulate thinking.
 - a) There is no obligation to answer every question.
 - b) One of our tasks is to be “prepared to give an answer.”
 4. The apologist’s goal is not to win debates, but to reason with others to help them come to the conclusion that Christianity is correct.
- C. There are three good reasons to engage in apologetics.²
 1. The Scriptures command it (1 Pet 3:15, 16).
 2. You are provided with the opportunity to engage in the overall purpose of apologetics, which is to remove intellectual and emotional barriers from someone coming to faith.
 3. It strengthens your faith.
 - a) Confidence in your beliefs leads to confidence in your Christian walk.
 - b) Looking deeply into these issues should give you a greater love for and appreciation for the Lord. Looking at a starry sky to some people is like looking at a

¹ J. P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd ed. (United Bible Societies, 1999).

² J. P. Moreland, *Scaling the Secular City: A Defense of Christianity* (Baker Academic, 1987), Introduction.



bunch of lights, but to others it is an exciting adventure—why? One has knowledge and the other does not. Do you enjoy listening to an orchestra play? Those who have trained their ears for it enjoy it to a much greater extent. It is the same with paintings and other art forms. In the same way, when we come to know the philosophical depths of God's world, we appreciate the Creator even more. Rationality is an art form, and God's reason is beautiful. My hope is that in this class you will recognize patterns of God's working in the world you have never recognized before. In doing so, you will appreciate Him more.

II. Apologetics and Philosophy

A. Definition:

1. The word *philosophy* comes from the two Greek words *phileo* (love) and *sophia* (wisdom); thus it means "the love of wisdom."
2. Philosophy is the study of life and the world as a whole; it examines and criticizes assumptions and ideas, and seeks to construct a unified view of the world and our experience.

B. There are three primary areas of study in philosophy:

1. Metaphysics, the study of reality and existence
 - a) Primary questions:
 - (1) What is the nature of being? (ontology)
 - (2) What is the nature of the universe? (cosmology)
 - (3) What is the nature of man, in terms of human personality or consciousness? (psychology)
 - (4) What is the nature of God if such a being exists? (theology)
 - b) Secondary questions:
 - (1) Can the existence of God be proved?
 - (2) What is the value of the theistic proofs?
 - (3) Can the created nature of the universe be proved?
 - (4) How is the created universe related to God?
 - (5) What is natural law? Can miracles be defended?
 - (6) What is sin? How does it relate to man's will and God's will?
 - (7) How can both God and evil exist?
2. Epistemology, the study of knowledge and how it is obtained
 - a) What is knowledge?
 - (1) How do our ideas refer to reality?
 - (2) What is the source of knowledge?



- (3) Are our sense perceptions and mental operations trustworthy?
 - (4) Is it possible to obtain knowledge?
 - (a) What is the source of knowledge?
 - (b) What is the instrument of receiving knowledge?
 - (c) What are the limits of knowledge?
 - b) What is truth?
 - (1) Can truth be tested?
 - (2) How can one proceed from one truth to another?
 - (a) What kind of certainty is arrived at by deduction?
 - (b) What kind of certainty is arrived at by induction?
 - (3) Are there such things as innate truths? Can they be proved?
 - c) Is epistemology prior to all other philosophical questions?
 - d) An important part of epistemology is logic, the study of validity and invalidity and of truth and falsity and the relation of ideas to each other
 - e) Can ultimate reality be known? If so, how?
 - f) What is faith? What is faith's relation to reason?
 - (1) What is the effect of sin on man's ability to know?
 - (2) Is there common ground between believer and unbeliever?
 - (3) What methods can or should a believer use when dealing with an unbeliever?
 - (4) Can Christianity, either in whole or in part, be proved to be rational?
 - (5) Can Christianity, either in whole or in part, be proved to be the most, or only, rational world view?
- C. Axiology, the study of values
- a) An important part of axiology is ethics, the study of human obligation: morals, right and wrong, good and evil.
 - (1) What are values?
 - (a) Are values rooted in objective reality or only in the mind of the observer?
 - (b) What are the criteria by which value is judged?
 - (c) What are the important values which are to be desired in life?
 - (d) How can the important values be realized in our experience?



- (2) Is there an absolute standard or criterion of value?
 - (a) Are there any legitimate relative values?
 - (b) Is there an ethical hierarchy?
- (3) Is sin ever not avoidable in a given situation?
- (4) What is man's *summum bonum*?
- (5) Can cultural norms be morally neutral?
- b) This is primarily the field of Ethics, and that is another class.

D. Kinds of Knowledge

1. Knowledge

- a) Ultimately knowledge is that which is known to be true for legitimate reasons and is indeed true.
- b) Christians believe that the only absolute knowledge is that which is revealed by God.
- c) Knowledge also includes those truths that can be logically deduced from revealed truth.

2. Opinion

- a) What some people commonly call knowledge can more properly be called opinion.
- b) Opinion represents the beliefs people have based on their experience or observation.
- c) Opinion consists of conclusions reached after examining individual examples. These conclusions are not absolute, since it is impossible to observe all possible relevant examples, and since no observation is perfectly precise.
- d) Conclusions formed from inductive observations are necessarily tentative.
 - (1) They might be changed when more evidence becomes available.
 - (2) For example, since science is basically inductive, its conclusions are properly stated as scientific opinion, not scientific knowledge. The scientific method, involving hypothesis, experiment, observation, and theory, produces many practical benefits and useful ways of organizing our thinking about the world. However, it should be remembered that what has been called scientific knowledge has radically changed over the history of science.
- e) There is a distinction between knowledge and opinion, even when the opinion is true. It is possible to come to a true conclusion by fallible means. It certainly is



common that people believe something that is true for the wrong reasons.

- f) The idea of probability is difficult to apply to knowledge.
 - (1) Many say that, while scientific knowledge is not absolute, it at least is probably true.
 - (2) However, probability is hard to determine when the absolute truth is unknown.
 - (3) We must live in the practical world, and we order our daily lives and make innumerable decisions on the basis of our understanding of probabilities.

3. Belief

- a) Belief is a flexible term, which can include both knowledge and opinion.
- b) The Bible speaks of belief or faith as the firm conviction of the truth of God and his Word.
- c) On the other hand belief may be based on observation or induction, which may or may not be true, or it may be simply based on fancy or wishful thinking.

E. Fields of Apologetics

1. Science
 - a) Evolution
 - b) Intelligent Design Movement
2. History
 - a) Historical accuracy of the Scriptures
 - b) Historical reality of the Son of God, reality of the resurrection, reality of the Jewish people
 - c) Archaeological evidence
3. Philosophy
 - a) Who made God?
 - b) How does the infinite relate to the finite?
 - c) How does an eternal Being relate to time?
 - d) Can God create a rock so big that he cannot lift it?
4. Theology
 - a) How can God be three in one?
 - b) How can Christ be fully God, yet fully man?
 - c) How can God be unchanging, yet say that He changes His mind?
5. The vastness of the discipline
 - a) Apologetics is a vast discipline that covers *every fact* in the world.
 - b) We need believers in every realm of life who make apologetics their passion. We cannot afford to only have apologists who sit in ivory towers, but we must



- have apologists who are engaged in every realm of life—science, history, philosophy, etc.
- c) The “professional” apologist should be generally familiar with each of these fields, but he must depend on others to dig deeply into these issues. These believers will provide the primary work, which the apologist will seek to popularize to Christianity as a whole.

III. Importance of Apologetics

A. Common Excuses

1. Philosophy is not for me.
2. The Bible can defend itself.
3. Apologists don’t agree with each other.
4. I don’t know enough.
5. People aren’t interested in these arguments.

B. The Biblical command – 1 Pet 3:15-16

1. Christ occupies your heart first.
2. You have the hope (resurrection, kingdom).
3. People know you have this hope.
4. You have a reason for this hope which you can verbalize.
5. You must be ready to give this reason to non-believers.
6. Sanctify—Set the Lord apart as holy
7. Be ready—Presumes that Christians should be actively engaged in learning how to respond
8. Reason for the hope that lies in you
 - a) Why does Paul not use “faith” here?³
 - b) In the context, believers are being persecuted for their faith. Thus, their lifestyles of faithfulness in the midst of persecution provided opportunity for people to ask why they had hope.
9. You must answer with “gentleness and respect” (NIV and ESV); NASB has “reverence”; NKJV has “meekness and fear.”
 - a) Respect for God, not pride
 - b) Respect for person
 - (1) This person is in God’s image.
 - (2) This person may become a Christian some day.
 - (3) You were once unconverted.
 - c) Respect even if you are mistreated

³ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, New American Commentary 37 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003).



10. You must have clear conscience (a life backs up our words).

C. Titus 1:9-11

1. Enemies of Christianity have base motives and false doctrines, and cause much damage to the church.
2. Enemies of Christianity must be refuted and silenced.
3. Church leaders must have sufficient knowledge and steadfastness to do two things:
 - a) Encourage the church through sound doctrine
 - b) Refute those who oppose sound doctrine

D. Relation to other disciplines in Christianity

1. Relation to theology
 - a) Theology is the setting forth of biblical doctrines in a systematic core.
 - b) Apologetics is the defense of the doctrines expressed in theology
 - c) Thus, apologetics is dependent on theology. That is, apologetics looks to Christian theology for the doctrines which must be expressed and defended.
2. Relation to philosophy
 - a) Philosophy is the investigation of truth claims through use of reason.
 - b) Apologetics is the expression of Christian theism in a rationally persuasive manner.
 - c) Because of the similarity in the end goal, some apologists would like to call the discipline *Philosophy of Religion*.
 - d) However, there are significant differences between professional philosophers and Christian apologists.
 - (1) Source of authority
 - (2) Bounds of possibility
 - (3) Goal of the work
3. Relation to evangelism
 - a) Evangelism is the clear presentation of the gospel to sinners.
 - b) Apologetics, then, has been called pre-evangelism.
 - (1) There is danger in this terminology, because apologetics is a necessary part of evangelization.
 - (2) Nevertheless, apologetics is often used as the means to eliminate the rational blockades preventing one from coming to faith in Christ.
 - c) Is apologetics necessary for evangelism?
 - d) In conclusion, apologetics is a useful but *sometimes* unnecessary aid to evangelism.



4. Relation to counseling
 - a) Counseling is the application of the Scriptures to human problems.
 - b) Often, there is an intellectual component to counseling issues. That is, many of the core issues of counseling deal with an unbelieving heart. Sometimes apologetics can help here, because unbelief often presents itself as intellectual difficulties.⁴

IV. Apologetics and the Bible

A. Biblical approaches

1. Gen 1:1 – The Old Testament writers simply assumed the existence of God; they made no attempt to prove His existence (see also Ps 19:1-6).
2. In the New Testament era, Christians had to defend the faith:
 - a) Judaism rejected the deity of Christ.
 - b) Proto-Gnosticism denied the human nature of Christ.
 - c) Gentiles had to be convinced that there is only one God.
 - d) Young Christians faced overwhelming persecution.
 - e) The Roman government linked Christianity to Judaism.
3. Matt 7:6 – a warning not to cast pearls before swine
4. Mark 12:30 – Christians are to love the Lord with the *mind*.
 - a) In one's love for God, the mind plays a crucial role.
 - b) Commitment to God is not merely an emotional response, nor is it merely rituals and duties; one must also think and think well.
 - c) Apologetics (along with disciplined Bible study) is one way to “love the Lord with all your mind.”
5. Luke 12:11; 21:14 – Jesus' disciples were going to have to defend themselves.
6. Acts 19:33, 22:1; 24:10, 25:8, 16; 26:1-2, 26:24; 2 Tim 4:16 – Paul made a defense of himself and his role in propagating the Gospel.
7. 1 Cor 9:3 – Paul defended himself
8. 2 Cor 10:5
 - a) This verse is used in arguments against the use of apologetics.
 - b) However, this verse mentions “casting down” (demolishing) arguments and taking thoughts “captive,”

⁴ This is a very difficult topic, since unbelief is more than intellectual—it is also moral. When someone does not believe, it very often is due to the will not to believe. This is especially the case in counseling issues.



which indicates that even though the Christian's weapons are not the weapons of this world (2 Cor. 10:4), they are to challenge the presuppositions and arguments in order to lead people to faith in Christ, when necessary.

9. 2 Cor 12:19 – The Corinthians mistakenly thought that Paul was defending himself.
10. Phil 1:7, 17 – Paul defended and confirmed the Gospel.
11. 1 Thes 5:21 – “Test everything. Hold on to the good.”
 - a) This verse exhorts the Christian to a life of “testing” for truth.
 - b) Prove, in this context, means “to try to learn the genuineness of something by examination and testing, often through actual use—to test, to examine, to try to determine the genuineness of, testing.”⁵
 - c) Testing seems to include the idea of testing with intellectual rigor the prophecies placed before the church. If a prophecy does not meet the standard of Scripture or reason (as informed by Scripture), it must be discarded.
 - d) Both Paul and John are telling Christians to use their heads as well as their hearts.
 - e) There are many con artists, frauds and phonies in the world.
12. 2 Timothy 2:14-15 – do not quarrel, but correctly handle the Word of truth
13. 2 Timothy 3:16 – think biblically, because apologetics must integrate with Scripture, not vice versa.
14. 1 Peter 3:15 – “. . . be ready always to *give* an answer [apologia] to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you. . . .”
15. 1 John 4:1 – “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God. . . .”
16. Jude 3 – “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”
 - a) “Earnestly contend” means to “exert intense effort on behalf of something—to struggle for.”⁶
 - b) This specifically expresses the task of defensive apologetics.

⁵ Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*.

⁶ Ibid.



- c) The word “faith” in this text refers to the body of essential Christian doctrine.
- d) Jude is calling believers to uphold and maintain sound doctrine in the face of those who seek to “turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and deny the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 4).

B. An examination of alleged anti-apologetics texts

1. Luke 12:11-12

- a) Jesus is not telling us to never prepare or study.
- b) In this passage, Jesus is speaking directly to his disciples. His words are stated directly to them for a specific time, not to us.
- c) We can learn a valuable lesson here, however: The Holy Spirit who is with us will guide us, help us, and teach us.
- d) But we still have the responsibility of being good students of the Word (2 Tim.2:15).

2. 1 Cor 1:17-25

- a) Paul is not teaching anti-intellectualism.
- b) Paul himself was an intellectual.
- c) The knowledge of the perishing will not bring them to Christ.
- d) The work of the cross baffled the conventional wisdom of the Jews and the Greeks.
- e) God’s understanding and wisdom far exceed the understanding and wisdom of man.
- f) There is no condemnation of intellectualism (or apologetics) here.

3. 2 Cor 10:3-5

- a) The question is, what “spiritual weapons” do we have?
- b) Truth is a weapon.
- c) The fact that we do not “wage war as the world does” does not imply that we do not reason.
- d) Critics of apologetics will argue that logic is a “weapon of the world,” but there is little rational or biblical evidence to support this.

4. Col 2:8

- a) This verse is not a condemnation of philosophy per se, but rather a warning against any thoughts or ideas that are “hollow and deceptive.”
- b) One purpose of apologetics is to combat false ideologies.

C. Apologetic key words in Scripture

1. “Therefore”



- a) The Bible assumes the validity of logic, and like any other document, it depends on the *organon* of logic for intelligible discourse.
 - b) The word “therefore” occurs often (1237 times in the KJV), indicating a conclusion which follows logically from the premises.
2. “Reason”
- a) On numerous occasions, the apostle Paul engaged in rational dialogue with non-Christians. Paul “reasoned with them out of the scriptures, opening and alleging” (Acts 17:2-3).
 - b) “Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him” (Acts 17:17).
 - c) “And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks” (Acts 18:4).
 - d) This is apologetics at work.
- D. Various apologetic methods in use in Scripture
1. Genesis
- a) Genesis presumes the existence of God without trying to justify the position rationally.
 - b) The first chapter is a bold monotheistic declaration set against the polytheistic beliefs of Israel’s neighbors.
 - c) Genesis 1 declares resolutely that there is one God, and this one God is above all, including (and especially) those entities worshipped by the polytheists (the sun, the moon, the stars, et al.).
2. Ecclesiastes
- a) The book of Ecclesiastes reads like a work of philosophic existentialism, and in fact employs an existential apologetic.
 - b) The writer does not defend the truth of theism on the basis of rational argumentation, but rather on the meaninglessness of life.
 - c) Ecclesiastes contains honest confessions of doubts, struggles with faith and disillusionment. In the book we are forced to wrestle with suffering, evil, injustice, and ultimately, death. Is there any meaning in all this?
 - d) The writer of Ecclesiastes argues for spiritual significance in a life that is otherwise meaningless (Ecclesiastes. 12:8, 13).
3. Luke-Acts (Evidentialist Arguments)



- a) Doctor Luke's two-volume work (the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts) is "*an apologetic treatise par excellence for the Christian faith.*"⁷
- b) Luke-Acts presents the claims of Christ against a background of hostility, contention, and persecution, which accounts for the large place given to juridical terminology and ideas drawn from the law court. The operative question for Luke is: On what grounds or evidence can people have faith?⁸
- c) Luke used the historical material for the Book of Acts according to the standards of his time as they are expressed by such ancient historians as Herodotus, Polybius, Thucydides and Josephus, and certainly intends to offer evidence that will stand the test of the closest scrutiny.⁹
- d) Luke shares with his readers the real fruits of careful research.
 - (1) Luke worked as a detective and a journalist, piecing together the data to support the conclusion that Christianity is true.
 - (2) Luke explains that he carefully investigated everything from the beginning, to offer certainty that the Christian teaching is true (Luke 1:3-4).
 - (3) Luke explains that Jesus gave many convincing proofs that he was alive (Acts 1:3).
 - (a) According to Luke, Jesus himself was somewhat of an evidentialist apologist.
 - (b) Luke's use of the word "proofs" matches with Aristotelian logic.
 - (c) Luke meant that, to those to whom Jesus appeared, the resurrection of Christ was undeniable.

4. John

- a) Like Luke, John focuses on the evidences for Christ's resurrection.
- b) John also wrote about the many miraculous deeds of Christ; his Gospel centers on seven miraculous signs.
- c) The apologetic method used in John's Gospel resembles evidential apologetics.

⁷ William Lane Craig, "Classical Apologetics," in *Five Views on Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 43.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Allison Trites, *The New Testament Concept of Witness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 135; cf. 128, 138.



- d) John's purpose in writing is clear: "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:31).
- 5. Romans (Classical or Presuppositional Arguments)
 - a) Chapter 1 of the book of Romans has been used as biblical support for the doctrine of general revelation – and indeed it should be used as such.
 - (1) This has led many to use Romans 1 as a "proof text" for natural theology, since natural theology is derived from general revelation.
 - (2) Thus, for many apologists, Paul's explanation that what may be known about God is plain to men, because God has made it plain to them. God's invisible qualities have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made (Romans 1:19-20). In other words, people understand God by drawing inferences from his creation.
 - (a) This points to the need for a "first cause" and the apparent design in the universe, which, the apologist argues, requires a designer.
 - (b) Paul uses both the Teleological argument and the Cosmological Argument
 - (3) Such an understanding of Romans 1 makes Paul appear to be a classical apologist
 - (a) However, while Romans 1 may support the classical arguments for God's existence, the concept of becoming aware of God through his creation may also give credence to the *sensus divinitatis* taught by the reformed epistemologists.
 - (b) Noted reformed epistemologists Kelly James Clark and Alvin Plantinga have made a connection between creation and the innate sense of the divine.
 - b) In chapter 2 of Romans, Paul explains that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts (Romans 2:14-16).
 - (1) Paul argues that all people are aware of a transcendent moral code.
 - (2) "These, then, are the two points I want to make. First, that human beings, all over the earth, have this curious idea that they ought to behave in a certain way, and cannot really get rid of it.



Secondly, that they do not in fact behave in that way. They know the Law of Nature; they break it. These two facts are the foundation of all clear thinking about ourselves and the universe we live in.”¹⁰

- (3) Paul points to the existence of the conscience points as an indication of the centrality of morality to mankind.
 - (4) While Paul does not explicitly make the moral argument for God’s existence, he does suggest that the conscience points to the existence of a sovereign and authoritative Creator. Unbelievers, because of their moral contact with God in the conscience, will be judged by the moral standard they inherently know they are accountable to.
- c) Paul in Acts 17
- (1) 17:1-2
 - (a) This text suggests that Paul’s apologetic strategy consisted of reasoning with the Jews out of the Scriptures.
 - (b) *Alleging* in this text means “to prove.”¹¹ Paul was not merely expressing doctrine, but he was seeking to persuade his hearers of the truth.
 - (2) 17:22-31—In Athens
 - (a) Paul accepts that the Athenians have some knowledge (i.e., that there is a unknown God), but that their knowledge is faulty.
 - (b) He reasons with them by arguing for the true attributes of God, which they already know (Romans 1).
 - (c) He points out that their poets knew some of the truth, but they did not apply the knowledge correctly.
 - (d) Presuppositionalists will say that Paul is speaking to their suppressed knowledge, while Evidentialists will say Paul is simply arguing that their conception of God is irrational.

¹⁰ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 7.

¹¹ Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*.



6. Other Texts

- a) John 20:30-31 – The signs Jesus performed were written down for the express purpose of giving people reasons to believe
- b) 1 Corinthians 15:3-7 – Paul seems to be arguing that the resurrection is an established fact. If someone doubts its occurrence, they need only ask the hundreds of people who saw Jesus alive after His crucifixion.
- c) Acts 1:3 – Luke seems to suggest that part of Jesus' purpose in remaining forty days was to firmly establish the reality of his resurrection. This suggests that the disciples of Jesus were to use His resurrection as an apologetic tool for evangelism.
- d) Does the evidential centrality of the resurrection mean the biblical writers were rational apologists (in the broad sense that includes classical, evidential, and cumulative case apologists)?
 - (1) At the very least, there is Scriptural warrant for employing the use of evidences.
 - (2) But remember that their audience already held a particular set of presuppositions—theism being among them. Further, it seems that their contention is to establish that Jesus was the One predicted from the OT.
 - (3) Working from a theistic presupposition, the writers, with evidence for the resurrection of Christ, built the case for Christian theism.
 - (4) So there is ample room for presuppositionalists as well.

7. The Role of Reason in Biblical Faith

- a) There are those who think that having faith and utilizing evidences are not compatible.
 - (1) The idea that matters of faith (religious belief) are not (or should not be) supported by reason and argument is a form of *fideism*.
 - (a) The idea is that evidences do not apply to belief in God.
 - (b) Proponents of this concept included Søren Kierkegaard and Karl Barth.
 - (2) Some presuppositionalists are classed as fideists, though many use some form of argument to support their belief in God.



- (3) It is true that the Bible begins with the assumption of God, without going through a detailed argument for His existence.
 - (4) However, throughout Scripture, one can find where reasoned arguments are used in support of God, especially in opposition to idols (e.g., Isaiah 44).
 - (a) God is often compared to idols to show the distinctions between them.
 - (b) The “evidence” was reasonable, and it pointed to Yahweh as the true and living God.
 - (5) When it comes to the New Testament, none were expected to believe in Jesus based only upon the claims that he made.
 - (a) The signs he performed were written down for the express purpose of giving people reason to believe (John 20:30-31).
 - (b) Later, when the apostles preached Christ, they would regularly argue the resurrection of Jesus.
 - (c) Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15, made it a point to say that Jesus had appeared to many as proof of the resurrection. This was an all out plea to examine the evidence.
8. Conclusion: Is there one biblical apologetic?
- a) John Frame, a student of Van Til, represents a balanced approach that can helpfully be emulated.¹²
 - (1) He suggests that rational based apologists need to further understand
 - (a) The depravity of the mind and its effect on apologetic encounters
 - (b) The absolute authority of God and how that regulates how we should confront believers
 - (c) The role of presuppositions in man’s reasoning process
 - (d) The central role of Scripture in any apologetic engagement
 - (2) He suggests that presuppositionalists need to understand
 - (a) The traditional arguments can be based on Scripture

¹² John M. Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God: An Introduction* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1994).



- (b) The traditional arguments can be expressed in such a way that God is honored as the only possibility.
 - (3) If his balanced approach is correct, there is a place for the historic arguments for God's existence. These, when framed in such a way that they honor the authority of God, stand as monuments declaring the guilt of man in not accepting the existence of his Creator.
- b) *The resurrection is central*
 - (1) The resurrection is at the heart of Christianity, and that Christ gave compelling evidence of his resurrection is at the heart of the writers' defense of Christianity.
 - (2) This is evident in Luke's description of "many convincing proofs" Christ gave for his resurrection and Paul's account of those who witnessed the resurrected Christ (1 Cor 15:6).
 - (3) Does this mean the biblical writers were evidentialists (in the broad sense that includes classical, evidential, and cumulative case apologists)?
 - (a) At the very least, there is Scriptural warrant for employing the use of evidences.
 - (b) But remember that their audience already held a particular set of presuppositions—theism being among them.
 - (c) Working from a theistic presupposition, the writers, with evidence for the resurrection of Christ, built the case for Christian theism.
 - (d) So there is room for presuppositionalism as well.
- c) *The role of the Holy Spirit is crucial*
 - (1) Whichever apologetic method one adopts, Scripture is clear that the Holy Spirit's role in apologetics is indispensable.
 - (2) The apologist must allow for the work of the Holy Spirit.
 - (3) The Spirit's job is to "convince the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment" (John 16:7-11).
- d) *Apologetics and epistemology*
 - (1) The Bible does not necessarily advocate a particular epistemology; thus, the Bible does not



necessarily advocate a particular apologetic method either.

- (2) Apologetics and epistemology go hand-in-hand; what can be shown depends on what can be known.
- e) While each method has its own strengths and weaknesses, the Bible allows for a variety of apologetic methods. Regardless of which method an apologist employs, a biblical apologetic will eventually defend the historicity of the resurrection of Christ and the reasonability of having faith.

V. Types of Apologetics

A. Positive (offensive)

1. This makes the case that Christianity is true.
2. It provides reasons to believe.
3. Offensive apologetics does not seek to offend (though it often does – 1 Cor 1), but rather it **attacks** unbelieving ideas and systems of thought.
4. Sometimes apologetics is called the 'Defense of the Faith.'¹³ This is accurate to an extent, but God has called us to something more than mere defense.
 - a) In 2 Cor 10:5, Paul says, "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."
 - (1) Casting down has the idea of "**tearing down**" and "**destroying**" a house or physical structure.¹⁴
 - (2) "High things" refers to prideful, **baseless** opinions. In other words, Paul says that we must destroy groundless assertions that are defended as though they are obviously correct.¹⁵
 - (3) The goal of offensive apologetics is to bring every thought **captive** into the **obedience** to Christ.¹⁶
 - b) We must recognize that we live in God's world. As such, we must live by God's rules. When we fail to do

¹³ See Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2008); Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God*, 2.

¹⁴ Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10th ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977).

¹⁵ Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*.

¹⁶ "Bringing into captivity" is a powerful phrase used in war terminology. This text is describing our intellectual discussions with the world as a battle in which we must take every thought over by force and wrestle it into subjectivity to Christ. Ibid.



so, we should expect that things do not make logical sense. Further, we should expect that this can be shown to be true. Offensive apologetics recognizes this fact and takes confidence in the fact that only Christian theism provides an avenue for living fruitfully in this world. All other attempts will be foolish (1 Cor 1-2), and we can show them to be so.

5. If offensive apologetics succeeds—by eliminating all competitors to the Christian faith—Christianity is established.
6. Examples:
 - a) Arguments for God's existence
 - b) Historical evidence for the resurrection of Christ
- B. Negative (defensive)
 1. This makes the case that Christianity is not false.
 2. Paul describes his own ministry as the work of **defense** and **confirmation** of the gospel (Phil 1:7).
 3. It defends Christianity from criticism and opposing arguments.
 4. If defensive apologetics succeeds—by eliminating all objections to the Christian faith—Christianity is established.
 5. Examples
 - a) Responding to the problem of evil
 - b) Dealing with claims of biblical contradictions
- C. Proving
 1. When most people hear the word apologetics they think of apologetics as proof. That is, apologetics as putting forth a **rational case** for the Christian theistic position.
 2. Apologetics as *proof* in Scripture Let me first ask—where in Scripture do you think we find apologetics as proof?
 - a) 1 Cor 15:1-8
 - b) John 20:24-31
 - c) John 14:11
 3. Obviously, if apologetics as proof succeeds—by establishing the truth statements of Scripture—Christianity is established.
- D. Relation of the three disciplines of apologetics (offensive, defensive, and proving)
 1. These three are related as perspectives on one another. That is, each necessarily includes elements of the others.¹⁷

¹⁷ Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God*, 3.



2. In other words, when seeking to defend the gospel (defensive), one must give both a positive construction of the Christian truth (proving) and attack the philosophy underlying the assertion (offensive).
3. Likewise, when one is attacking unbelief (offensive), he is also defending the validity of the Christian faith (defensive) and providing a basis on which the antagonist can rebuild his life (proving).
4. The relationship between these perspectives provides the reason why success in one field automatically means success in the other.
5. Because of this relation, it is usually helpful to ask yourself whether your argument for the faith (proving) is also taking into account the unbelievers worldview in such a way that you are attacking their belief structure (offensive) and anticipating their questions beforehand (defensive) at the same time. Many arguments can be strengthened by running them through all of the categories of apologetics.
6. For this reason, our organization of the course is somewhat artificial. One cannot divide apologetics, as each time we interact with unbelief we should be engaged in all three. Nevertheless, there are different phases in which we defend the gospel. Therefore, these categories help us organize our thoughts and apologetic actions.

E. Areas of Apologetics

1. Scientific Apologetics
 - a) Scientific apologetics is concerned primarily with issues of science.
 - b) It deals with general revelation, natural theology and the components of the natural world in which the general revelation of God can be found.
 - c) This includes the argument from design and cosmology, as well as discussions concerning evolution.
2. Historical Apologetics
 - a) This focuses on historical evidences, the use of archeology and manuscript evidence.
 - b) It includes the defense of the historicity of the resurrection of Christ and the trustworthiness of Scripture.
3. Philosophical Apologetics
 - a) Philosophical questions and concerns are addressed by philosophical apologetics.



- b) This deals with the problem of evil, the possibility of miracles, questions of theology (such as, “How can a good God send people to hell for eternity?”) and other abstract questions (such as, “Can God create a rock so heavy he can’t lift it?”) are area of focus for philosophical apologetics.
- 4. Theological Apologetics
 - a) This focuses on answering questions and criticism concerning Christian doctrine
 - b) It develops doctrine positions that are both logically consistent and biblically accurate.
 - c) This refers to questions concerning the nature of Scripture’s inspiration, bloodshed in the Old Testament, whether a good God would send someone to hell, the Trinity.
- 5. Cultural Apologetics
 - a) The focus in Cultural apologetics concerns Christianity or the church in society. It is the study of our current culture for the sake of evangelism.
 - b) Cultural apologetics seeks to understand the direction of the world as expressed through various philosophies and art forms. While it is not evident on the surface, these two are intricately connected.
 - (1) Has apologetics changed focus since the dawn of Christianity? If so, why?
 - (2) Modern cultural apologetics is currently dealing with both modernism and postmodernism.
 - (3) This seeks to answers questions like, “Why are there so many hypocrites in the Church?” “Isn’t Christianity a crutch for the weak-minded?” and “Is Christianity intolerant?”
 - c) This area of apologetics also deals with issues pertaining to church and state, abortion, euthanasia, etc.
- 6. Personal Apologetics
 - a) This area of focus involves showing how faith in Christ has benefited the believer.
 - b) Personal apologetics is literally to give “a reason of the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15).

VI. Methods of Apologetics

- A. Methodology in apologetics is based on the relationship between faith and reason
 - 1. Kierkegaardian Fideism is on one extreme.



2. Deistic Rationalism is on the other.
- B. Classical Apologetics
 1. Introduction
 - a) This school is called “classical” because this method was used by the leading apologists of earlier centuries.
 - b) Proponents of this school include:
 - (1) R.C. Sproul, *Classical Apologetics*
 - (2) Norman Geisler, *When Skeptics Ask*
 - (3) Stephen T. Davis, *God, Reason, and Theistic Proofs*
 - (4) William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith*
 - (5) This was also the approach of Thomas Aquinas and Hugo Grotius (the father of modern apologetics)
 2. Classical apologetics is a “two-step” method.
 3. The first step is to demonstrate that God exists.
 - a) Before one can discuss historical evidences for a God, one should establish that there is even a God at all.
 - (1) The first step of the classical method is an appeal to natural theology and the traditional arguments for God’s existence.
 - (2) Norman Geisler refers to this process as “Reasoning to Christianity from Ground Zero.”¹⁸
 - b) The Ontological Argument
 - (1) This was initially argued by Anselm.
 - (2) God must be conceived as “a being that which nothing greater can be conceived.”
 - (3) Since necessary existence is greater than possible existence, this idea must include the idea of absolute existence.
 - (4) The non-existence of God would create a contradiction in thought.
 - (5) Aquinas and others argued that the non-existence of God may be a logical contradiction, but that does not necessarily prove his non-existence in reality.
 - c) The Innate Knowledge Argument
 - (1) This was suggested by Augustine.
 - (2) This argues that everyone has a natural knowledge or understanding of God’s existence.

¹⁸ Norman Geisler and Ron Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1990), 291. “Ground Zero” begins with the realization that there are self-evident truths and that truth is knowable, which, through the traditional arguments, leads one to the truth of theism, and then ultimately to the truth of Christian theism.



- (3) Evidence is seen in the nearly universal belief in some sort of a god.
- d) The Teleological Argument
 - (1) This is also called the argument from design.
 - (a) *Telos* means “purpose” or “goal.”
 - (b) Random chance cannot account for the complexity of nature.
 - (c) The current Intelligent Design movement is based on this.
 - (2) This was promoted by Aquinas and is currently held by some creationists.¹⁹
 - (3) Example: If you found a watch outside the church some Sunday morning, would you:
 - (a) Assume someone had dropped it?
 - (b) Assume that it had evolved during the week?
 - (4) Syllogism:
 - (a) Design implies a designer.
 - (b) The universe gives evidence of design.
 - (c) Therefore, the universe was created.
 - (d) God is the designer.
- e) The Cosmological Argument
 - (1) This was argued by Augustine and is still argued by some modern creationists and Lane Craig, a modern apologist.
 - (2) Many arguments fall under this rubric, but the main version of the argument claims that the universe must have a beginning.
 - (a) Whatever begins to exist has a cause for its coming into being.
 - (b) The universe began to exist.
 - (c) Therefore, the universe has a cause for its coming into being.
 - (3) Finite events cannot go back into the past *ad infinitum*, so there must be an “uncaused cause” (or “first cause”) of the universe, to account for all the finite events that exist.
 - (a) The “big bang” requires that the universe, at least as we know it, is finite, thus having a beginning and presumably an end.

¹⁹ See Michael J. Behe, *Darwin's Black Box: The Biomedical Challenge to Evolution* (New York: Free Press, 1996) and *The Edge of Evolution* (New York: Free Press, 2007). Also see Fuzale Rana, *The Cell's Design: How Chemistry Reveals the Creator's Artistry* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008).



- (b) The unanswered question for evolutionists is what caused the “big bang.”²⁰
 - (4) If anything now exists, something must be eternal.
 - (5) This leaves three possibilities:
 - (a) What exists is eternal (matter is eternal).
 - (b) What exists created itself from nothing.
 - (c) What exists was created from something that already existed.
 - (6) This already existing, eternal being is God.
- f) The Moral Argument
 - (1) This has most recently been argued by C. S. Lewis.
 - (2) The categories of “right” and “wrong” are based on the existence of some moral standard outside ourselves.
 - (3) A variation is Pascal’s Wager: It is better to bet on Christianity, with its resulting goodness, holiness, happiness, and hope, than to bet against Christianity, with a resultant discord, meaninglessness, and death.
- 4. Step two moves to historical evidences to show the truth of Jesus.
 - a) Once “God’s existence is at least more probable than not,”²¹ the second step is to demonstrate that Christianity is the correct theistic system.
 - b) An appeal to historical evidences is employed, and specifically an appeal to evidences which focus on demonstrating that the resurrection of Christ is an actual historical event.²²
 - c) According to the classical method, historical evidences are impotent until the truth of theism has been accepted. Miracles cannot be utilized as evidence to prove God’s existence, because God is a necessary condition for any miracle to be possible.
- 5. Basic Tenets
 - a) The experience of the Holy Spirit is unmistakable, since He is capable of overwhelming contrary arguments and evidence.

²⁰ See R. C. Sproul, *Not a Chance: The Myth of Chance in Modern Science and Cosmology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994).

²¹ Craig, “Classical Apologetics,” 48.

²² This “second step” of the classical apologist is much like the “one step” approach of the evidentialist. More attention is given to the historical evidences for the resurrection in the Evidential Apologetics outline.



- b) A believer needs no external arguments or proofs to confirm his relationship with God or the truth of Christianity.
 - c) This implies the intellectual acceptance of the basic truths of Christianity.
 - d) There is “common ground” between believer and non-believer.
 - (1) Sproul, Gerstner and Lindsley offer three “common assumptions . . . held by theists and nontheists alike.”²³
 - (2) These three assumptions are “non-negotiable” because all denials of these assumptions are forced and temporary, and acceptance of these assumptions is necessary for knowledge and for life itself.²⁴
 - (3) The three basic, non-negotiable assumptions are:
 - (a) The validity of the law of noncontradiction
 - (i) Two contradicting statements cannot both be true.
 - (a) It is raining outside.
 - (b) It is not raining outside.
 - (ii) This is how one distinguishes truth from lies.
 - (b) The validity of the law of causality
 - (i) All finite things require a cause.
 - (ii) If God is infinite, then he is causeless.
 - (iii) If the universe is infinite, then it is causeless.
 - (c) The basic reliability of sense perception
 - e) This results in a subjective assurance of Christianity and an objective knowledge of that truth.
 - f) Arguments and evidence contrary to faith are overwhelmed by the witness of the Spirit (the Spirit is the Defeater of the defeaters).
6. Concerns with the Classical Method
- a) The classical method relies heavily on natural theology.
 - (1) The Classical Apologist believes that man is ignorant of God, but can come to know Him by way of natural revelation.

²³ R. C. Sproul, John Gerstner, and Arthur Lindsley, *Classical Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 71-72.

²⁴ Ibid., 72.



- (2) Romans 1:18ff, on the other hand, argues that mankind already and unavoidably knows God. Natural revelation is a perpetual reminder of the knowledge they already maintain.
 - b) The classical apologist still places a high value on reason and believes that, through reason, we can acquire information about God.
 - c) Paul said that non-believers “suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”
 - (1) This may mean that the believer and the non-believer do not have as much “common ground” as the classical apologist presumes.
 - (2) This also means that the role of the Holy Spirit includes more than this method allows.
 - d) Not all people are the same.
 - (1) Not everyone will respond to the same evidence or argumentation.
 - (2) To enforce this “two-step” method as the “best” way to defend Christian faith seems contrary to the biblical concept of “becoming all things to all people” (1 Cor 9:22).
 - (3) Some may respond favorably to an appeal to Scripture or to the historical evidences, seeing in them the existence of God and the truth of Christianity.
 - e) There is the danger of removing the element of God’s revelation to mankind.
 - (1) General revelation is but one means of communication God uses.
 - (2) The classical method presumes that special revelation is practically useless by itself.
 - f) The classical apologist presumes that the non-believer has the same (or similar) view of the natural world as a Christian.
 - (1) This is obviously false.
 - (a) A Hindu views creation as *maya*, or illusion.
 - (b) Thus, all the arguments of natural theology would be futile in discussion with a Hindu.
 - (2) In using an argument from creation, one may very well need an argument for the reality of creation itself.
7. A question with which classical apologists must wrestle is: *What, exactly, do the arguments of natural theology prove?*



- a) Kelly James Clark asks in reply to Craig's *kalam*²⁵ cosmological argument, "...if the *kalam* cosmological argument is sound, what exactly has been proved? That an omnipotent, omniscient, wholly good creator of the universe exists?"²⁶
- b) The question remains as to the definition of "God," as well as how much evidence we need to show that there is a being who fits this definition of "God."

C. Evidential Apologetics

1. Introduction

- a) Evidentialist apologists rely on a "one-step" method to demonstrate Christian theism as the correct worldview.
- b) The evidentialist employs historical evidences to demonstrate *both* the truth of theism and the truth of Christianity.
- c) The distinction between the Classical and Evidential apologists is one of emphasis. Classical apologists rely on the tools of philosophy primarily and history secondarily. Evidential apologists focus on historical evidences primarily and philosophical secondarily.

2. Proponents of this school include:

- a) Gary Habermas, *In Defense of Miracles*
- b) John W. Montgomery, *Evidence for Faith: Deciding the God Question*
- c) Clark Pinnock, *Reason Enough*
- d) J.P. Moreland, *Scaling the Secular City: A Defense of Christianity*
- e) On the popular level, Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* and *More Evidence That Demands a Verdict*; Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus*.

3. General Apologetic Strategy

- a) The evidentialist apologetic strategy relies heavily on historical evidences; in particular, the evidences supporting the resurrection of Christ.
- b) Others use science to demonstrate the existence of God and the validity of His Word.

²⁵ *Kalam* appeals to philosophy and science to show that (1) the universe began to exist (i.e. it is not eternally existent), (2) the beginning of the universe was caused, and (3) the cause of the universe was God.

²⁶ Kelly James Clark, "A Reformed Epistemologist's Response [to Craig]," *Five Views on Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 86.



- c) Another use of evidence is to demonstrate the trustworthiness of the Bible.
 - d) Evidentialists believe that the use of such evidence can make for a powerful argument supporting Christian faith.
 - e) Habermas describes the “minimal facts” approach,²⁷ which is utilizing data that have two characteristics:
 - (1) The data must be well documented.
 - (2) The data is admitted by critical scholars who research this particular area.
4. An Evidentialist Example
- a) *Jesus died.* Numerous ancient historical sources record Jesus’ death.²⁸ Very few scholars today doubt that Jesus died by crucifixion.
 - b) *There were reports of post-crucifixion appearances of Jesus.*
 “The most widely discussed New Testament text on the subject of the historical Jesus is 1 Corinthians 15:3-8. . . . Virtually all scholars, whatever their theological persuasion, agree that Paul here records a primitive Jewish tradition that is not his.”²⁹
 - c) *Jesus’ tomb was empty.* This in itself does not prove the resurrection, but the empty tomb does add credibility to the claim, especially in light of the fact that alternative explanations (e.g., “swoon theory,” “stolen body theory”) fail to account for all the facts of the case and thus are not satisfactory explanations for the empty tomb.
 - d) *Christianity began in the immediate location where Jesus Christ had been executed and buried.*
 - (1) Christ’s disciples, less than two months after the crucifixion, told the crowd on the day of Pentecost that Jesus was alive again.
 - (2) This was not done years later in some remote location; the resurrection was preached in the place where Christ died and was buried.
 - (3) Furthermore, the resurrection was preached very soon after Christ’s death.
 - e) *Christ’s disciples were willing to (and most did) die for their faith.*

²⁷ Gary R. Habermas, “Evidential Apologetics,” in *Five Views on Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 100.

²⁸ Ibid., 107.

²⁹ Ibid., 108.



- (1) Few people deny that Christ's disciples at least believed that Jesus had been raised from the dead.³⁰
 - (2) These men died for what they believed about Jesus.
 - (3) They believed sincerely that they had seen Jesus – alive and glorified.
- f) *The Minimal Facts*
 “In my opinion, the strongest case for the resurrection appearances of Jesus involves the use of those data that are both well grounded and that receive the support of the critical community. . . . The strength of this [minimal] core [of facts] is that these few facts are capable, in themselves, of both disproving the naturalistic hypotheses, as well as providing the best arguments for the resurrection.”³¹
5. The general rules and application of inference
- a) Evidentialists emphasize that the Holy Spirit may work through the use of evidences. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit may convict someone of the truth of Christian theism apart from the evidences.
 - b) Evidentialists have an eclectic attitude toward apologetics. Most evidentialists view their method as an effective option, but not necessary the only option.
 - c) Even though evidentialists already admit that evidentiary coercion is impossible, they, like their intellectual cousins the classical apologists, must confront and explain the Apostle Paul's explanation that non-believers “suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”
 - d) The evidentialist must confront the accusations of the classical apologists (and others) who claim that any appeal to the miraculous without first demonstrating the truth of theism is futile.
 - e) If the evidentialist justifies the possibility (or plausibility) of miracles by appealing to the existence of God, and then if the evidentialist appeals to the evidence of miracles to demonstrate the existence of God, there is the danger of circular reasoning. Does the existence of the miraculous justify the existence of God, or does God justify the miraculous?

³⁰ Ibid., 108.

³¹ Ibid., 115.



- f) One criticism of evidential apologetics is that it does not appear to be able to respond to the declaration, “*extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence.*”
 - g) “In our experience, when somebody claims to have observed a miracle (e.g., a green elephant flying two hundred feet above a seminary chapel building), we usually believe that the witness is deceived or deceiving, rather than that his report is true. . . . The attitude of many people today is that, whatever Habermas and other apologists may say, there must be some explanation of the data other than the traditional Christian explanation.”³²
6. Concerns with the Evidential Method
- a) Is all historical Evidence equal?
 - (1) One criticism of evidential apologetics is that it does not appear to be able to respond to the declaration, “*extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence.*”
 - (2) “In our experience, when somebody claims to have observed a miracle (e.g., a green elephant flying two hundred feet above a seminary chapel building), we usually believe that the witness is deceived or deceiving, rather than that his report is true. . . . The attitude of many people today is that, whatever Habermas and other apologists may say, there must be some explanation of the data other than the traditional Christian explanation.”³³
 - b) Is Historical Evidence Persuasive?
 - (1) Historical facts are always subject to the writer’s bias.
 - (2) Historical facts are subject to the transmitter’s bias.
 - (3) Finally, historical facts are often interpreted differently.
 - (4) Building an entire case for Christianity on historical evidences is not persuasive to a vast majority.
 - c) So what if you prove the resurrection?
 - (1) The unbeliever who is convinced by the evidence that Jesus rose from the dead does not have to embrace Christianity.

³² John M. Frame, “A Presuppositionalist’s Response [to Habermas],” in *Five Views on Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 136-137.

³³ *Ibid.*, 136–137.



- (2) Some people might be willing to admit that Jesus rose from the dead, but they might also say that all sorts of strange things have happened in the past.
- d) The Problem of Probability
 - (1) No matter how many historical documents are examined, the case for theism will remain a mere probability in Evidentialism.
 - (2) Edward Carnell stated, “[P]roof for the Christian faith, as proof for any world-view that is worth talking about, cannot rise above rational probability.... The first reason why Christianity cannot—and does not want to—rise to demonstration is that it is founded on historical facts, which by their very nature, cannot be demonstrated with geometric certainty.... If the scientist cannot rise above rational probability in his empirical investigation, why should the Christian claim more?”³⁴
- e) It is based on the primacy of historical evidences.
- f) It is based on the necessity of critical analysis.
 - (1) Historical facts are interpreted.
 - (2) Interpretation is affected by human factors.
 - (3) For this reason, critical analysis of historical data is necessary.
- g) Evidentialists engage freely in “negative” apologetics.
- h) The evidence for Christian theism is not coercive.
 - (1) The evidential method relies heavily on inductive reasoning and the “power of probability.”
 - (2) While the evidence may be convincing, no one will be “forced” to become a Christian after examining the evidence.
- i) The evidential apologist believes that there is some “common ground” between believer and non-believer.
 - (1) Habermas lists some areas of commonality between believer and non-believer.³⁵
 - (2) There is epistemological common ground in:
 - (a) Sensory data (perception)
 - (b) Scientific theories

³⁴ As quoted in Greg Bahnsen, *Presuppositional Apologetics Stated and Defended* (American Vision, 2010), 224.

³⁵ Ibid., 97.



D. Cumulative Case Apologetics (Inference to the Best Explanation)

1. Introduction

- a) The cumulative case apologist argues that the biblical view is the best explanation of all of the data taken together.
- b) The cumulative case method uses abductive reasoning primarily.³⁶
 - (1) He does not seek to rely upon one or two arguments, but instead takes all of the evidence as a whole unit, and says that biblical theism best explains it all.
 - (2) One may start with any element of the case, and depending on the response, appeal may be made to some other element to support or reinforce the claim that Christianity is true.³⁷
- c) The argument for Christian theism is an informal one, not a formal one.
- d) None of the arguments has any priority over any other.
- e) It is not merely a defense of God's existence or theism; it is an apologetic for Christianity.

2. Proponents

- a) G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*
- b) C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*
- c) Richard Swinburne, *Faith and Reason*

3. Basic characteristics

- a) The cumulative approach entails a pulling together of different pieces of evidence, with Christian theism being defended as "the most plausible explanation" of the data.³⁸
- b) No elements are more significant than any others.
- c) One may start with any element of the case, and depending on the response, appeal may be made to some other element to support or reinforce the claim that Christianity is true.³⁹
- d) The goal is not merely to establish theism but *Christian* theism.

³⁶ Abductive reasoning is neither inductive nor deductive. It uses arguments similar to a legal brief or a literary discussion.

³⁷ Ibid., 152.

³⁸ Paul Feinberg, "Cumulative Case Apologetics," in *Five Views on Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 166.

³⁹ Ibid., 152.



4. Methodology

- a) Claims for truth are handled by subjecting them to a series of “tests for truth.”
 - (1) Test of **consistency**, that is, a test to see if a system is internally consistent
 - (2) Test of **correspondence**, in which a belief is evaluated to see if it corresponds with known reality
 - (3) Test of **comprehensiveness**, where a theory is better able to explain the evidence than competing theories; and other tests as well.
 - (4) Test of **simplicity** (Ockham’s razor), which argues that if the explanation is both simple and adequate, it is to be preferred.
 - (5) Test of **livability**, which says that for a belief to be true, it must be livable.
 - (6) Test of **fruitfulness**, which asks which system results in the best results.
 - (7) Test of **conservation**, which says that when a problem arises in our worldview, the solution which requires the least radical revision is to be chosen.
 - b) It also depends greatly on the witness of the Spirit.
 - (1) Subjective (i.e., the work of the Spirit within individual persons)
 - (a) For the believer, the Holy Spirit produces illumination and assurance.
 - (b) For the unbeliever, the Holy Spirit produces conviction.
 - (2) Objective aspects (i.e., the work of the Spirit in convincing people of the elements external to them)
 - (a) This includes philosophical arguments (ontological, cosmological, and teleological).
 - (b) This also includes religious experiences, moral behavior, and knowledge of God’s revelation.
- #### 5. Considerations with Cumulative Case Apologetics
- a) Cumulative case apologetics has a sense of reasonableness to it. Such a view makes sense in a pluralistic society, a world in which people come from many different backgrounds and maintain various religious assumptions.
 - b) It is important to “recognize that the non-Christian may be using logic, empirical data, comprehensiveness,



and so on rather differently from the way we do.”⁴⁰ It would be helpful to consider the subject of non-Christian presuppositions and then formulate ways to communicate with those who hold them.

- c) Because many of these arguments, by themselves, are unconvincing, this theory is often accused of being *ten leaky buckets* (i.e., ten buckets that all leak water cannot in combination hold water)
- d) Since this is a form of evidentialism, many of the arguments against evidentialism could be leveled against this theory as well.

E. Presuppositional Apologetics

1. Introduction

- a) This defends Christianity by presupposing the truth of Christian theism and then arguing from that perspective to demonstrate the validity of the Christian position.
- b) Presuppositionalism is a direct challenge to the evidentialist apologetic methods.⁴¹
 - (1) According to evidential methods, the apologist should initially put to one side the existence of God, the identity of Christ, and the authority of the Bible and build a defense for Christianity upon the “common ground” of reason held by both Christian and non-Christian.⁴²
 - (2) The presuppositional position is that one should **not** set aside God, Christ and Scripture in a quest for common ground with the skeptic, nor should one grant the possibility of a world independent of God that can successfully function and be successfully understood in terms of the axioms of logic and science.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 198.

⁴¹ “Evidentialist apologetic methods” here includes not only the evidential apologetic method per se, but also the classical method and the cumulative case method, as all three rely on particular evidences and a common ground between believer and non-believer. This applies to all further references to “evidential methods” in this outline.

⁴² For the classical apologist, this “common ground” is the validity of the law of noncontradiction, the validity of the law of causality, and the basic reliability of sense perception. For the evidentialist apologist, the common ground consists of sensory data (perception), scientific theories, and the general rules and application of inference.



- (3) The evidential apologetic method is encapsulated in the declaration associated with Thomas Aquinas: *"I believe because I understand."*
 - (4) The fideistic apologetic is encapsulated in the declaration associated with Tertullian: *"I believe what is absurd."*
 - (5) The presuppositional apologetic is encapsulated in the declaration associated with St. Augustine: *"I believe; therefore, I understand."*
 - c) According to the presuppositionalist, the revelation in the Scriptures must be the framework through which all experience is interpreted and any truth is known.
 - d) "By demonstrating that unbelievers cannot argue, think, or live without presupposing God, presuppositionalists try to show unbelievers that their own worldview is inadequate to explain their experience of the world and to get unbelievers to see that Christianity alone can make sense of their experience."⁴³
2. Proponents of this school include:
- a) Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith*
 - b) John M. Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God*
 - c) Gordon Clark, *Clark Speaks from the Grave*
 - d) Greg Bahnsen, *Always Ready: Directions for Defending the Faith*
3. Explanation of the Presuppositional Method
- a) Presuppositionalists seek to be explicitly biblical. Therefore, to understand their method, we must know their theology (usually a Reformed theology).
- (1) Doctrine of God
- (a) His character—Exodus 3: 14
 - (i) God is independent of everything else in creation (aseity). He is not dependent on any other being.
 - (ii) God is above all other creation. Therefore, He has authority over all of creation. Where His voice is heard, He must be obeyed.
 - (b) His presence—Psalm 139
 - (i) There is no place where man can hide from God.

⁴³ Steven B. Cowan, "Introduction," in *Five Views on Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 19.



- (ii) Calvin began His institutes by saying that he does not know whether man knows himself or God first.⁴⁴

(2) Doctrine of Man's Knowledge

(a) Psalm 19

- (i) The language of the passage indicates that the knowledge given through creation is verbal. This indicates that it is more than an intuition—it is genuine knowledge.
- (ii) The Psalmists takes pains to express that there is no place where the knowledge of God is absent.
 - (a) This knowledge is translated into every language.
 - (b) Where the sun reaches, so the knowledge of God reaches.

(b) Romans 1

- (i) What can be known of God is manifest “in them.”
 - (a) Taken as a dative of local (ev) means that this knowledge is inherent to them.
 - (b) This indicates that the knowledge of God is not merely inferred from creation, but is given directly by God. Indeed, this is what the next line indicates: “for God has showed it to them.”
- (ii) The content of this knowledge is “His eternal power and Godhead.”
 - (a) Charles Hodge argues that this includes all of the divine attributes.
 - (b) This indicates that a true knowledge of God—not some mere general and vague idea of a transcendent being—is given to all of mankind.
- (iii) The clarity of the revelation
 - (a) No one can escape this knowledge because it is given by the infallible hand of God (v 19).
 - (b) The knowledge given is described as “being understood.”

(3) Doctrine of the Scripture

⁴⁴ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.1.



- (a) Genesis: Divine revelation was always necessary.
 - (i) Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden walked and talked with God. Without His instruction they would have been incapable of living in God's world.
 - (ii) Man today likewise needs God's verbal revelation in order to live in this world. The only change from the Garden to today is the way that God speaks to His creatures.
- (b) The Bible does not need to be defended, since it is the presence of God to man. In it, the voice of God—resident with His unique authority—is clearly perceived.
- (c) Only through the “spectacles of Scripture” can general revelation be helpful. Therefore, natural theology is useless.
- (4) Doctrine of man's sinful suppression
 - (a) Romans 1:21-32
 - (i) Because of man's fallen condition (which affects his intellect as well as his moral character), he continually suppresses the truth.
 - (ii) Suppression can be described as the futile attempt to keep the knowledge of God from surfacing. It is like attempting to keep a beach ball under the water.
 - (iii) Calvin argued that unbelievers who seek to “find God” without the guide of Scripture will be led into idolatry every time. This is because their depravity naturally leads them to twist the truth into a lie.
 - (iv) Argument with an unbeliever, then, will only lead to fruitlessness. They cannot believe without being confronted with divine revelation, which just is the presence of God (Rom 3; 1 Cor 1; Eph 2).
 - (b) Genesis 3:1-7
 - (i) The first sin of man was not eating the fruit, but rather it was seeking to think autonomously.
 - (ii) Eve sinned when she determined that she could determine her own truth.



- (iii) The continual (and foundational) sin of the world is the attempt to think and act autonomously from the commands and presence of God.
 - (iv) If our apologetic method does not demand unbelievers abandon their autonomous thinking, then it is not biblical.
 - b) In sum, presuppositionalists believe that God created the world in such a way that man is continually confronted with the presence and knowledge of God.
 - (1) Men, however, suppress this knowledge because of their sinfulness. For this reason, presenting rational arguments is fruitless.
 - (2) First, they will not hear them since they will suppress the truth.
 - (3) Second, the apologist is encouraging the unbeliever to remain in autonomy from God. Instead, Christians should challenge unbelievers to submit their reason to the authority of God. To do this they must present Scripture—which is the authoritative voice of God—and demand that the unbeliever abandon autonomy.
- 4. Characteristics of the Presuppositional Method
 - a) Presuppositionalism starts with the Christian worldview.
 - b) It focuses heavily on the noetic effects of sin.
 - (1) The presuppositionalist sees very little (if any) common ground between believer and non-believer.
 - (2) “Of course human reasoning in the present age is never completely free from the influence of sin. . . . Those who deny God do so, not because they lack evidence, but because their hearts are rebellious. . . . From unbelief, then, comes the ‘wisdom of the world’ that Paul contrasts so sharply with the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:18-2:16; 3:18-23; 8:1-3), the foolishness that the author of Proverbs sets over against true wisdom. The wisdom of the world tends to dominate human cultures as they unite in defiance of God. . . . To such ‘wise’ people, Christianity appears foolish and weak. But to God, the opposite is the case. It is the secular wisdom



that is foolish and weak, and the worldly wise will learn that in God's time."⁴⁵

- c) Generally, presuppositionalists are Calvinists, and presuppositionalism depends greatly on Reformed theology.
 - (1) To the presuppositionalist, no matter how strong the evidence or arguments, an unbeliever cannot come to the faith because his fallen nature will distort his perception of the truth. Only regeneration can save him.
 - (2) To this end, the presuppositionalist seeks to change a person's worldview so that it conforms with Scripture.
 - (3) Presuppositionalists believe one's argument should be *transcendental*; it should present the biblical God, not merely as the conclusion to an argument, but as the one who makes argument possible. We should present him as the source of all meaningful communication, since he is the author of all order, truth, beauty, goodness, logical validity, and empirical fact.⁴⁶
- 5. It uses the **transcendental method**, whereby it shows the unbeliever that the world only makes sense if you take Christian theism as a whole.
 - a) [*Step one*] In order to do this, one must, *for the sake of argument*, step into the unbeliever's worldview and show them how it is irrational. He can do this by showing that the unbeliever's worldview would destroy morality, logic, rationality, etc.
 - b) [*Step two*] Having done so, the apologist should encourage the unbeliever to step into the Christian worldview. At this point, the apologist can show that only in Christian theism is morality, logic, rationality, etc., **possible**.
 - c) The purpose is to have the unbeliever be confronted with the truth that is already resident in the unbelievers mind and heart.
 - d) Through this process, the apologist has not abandoned the objective truth of the Christian theism. Further, God has been presented not merely as the conclusion to an argument, but as the One who makes argument

⁴⁵ John M. Frame, "Presuppositional Apologetics," in *Five Views on Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 210-211.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 220.



possible. The apologist has presented Him as the source of all meaningful communication, since He is the author of all order, truth, beauty, goodness, logical validity, and empirical fact.⁴⁷

- e) It is for this reason that presuppositionalists argue that every fact in the universe is evidence for God. That is, the existence of any fact presupposes the existence of God who is the only possibility for that fact.
6. Benefits of the Presuppositional Method
- a) It shows clearly the role that worldviews have in apologetics.
 - (1) In order to speak to people we have to get behind mere facts and get to the philosophy behind the facts.
 - (2) In other words, we need to look beyond singular ideas to what makes people think the way they think. Until we get to that level, we will never be able to speak to them “in their language.”
 - (3) Further, because of man’s sinful nature we cannot simply assume that all men hold the same epistemology (view of knowledge) as Christians hold.
 - b) It takes Scripture seriously.
 - (1) Some apologetic methods do not take the noetic (knowledge) effects of sin seriously.
 - (2) Very few apologetic methods focus on what it means that men already have a knowledge of God (Rom 1).
 - (3) Presuppositionalists have developed their entire method from theological positions. Even if you disagree with their doctrinal positions, we should be thankful for believers who take Scripture seriously.
 - c) It emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in evangelism.
 - (1) Every orthodox apologetic method holds the necessity of the Holy Spirit in evangelism. Nevertheless, some methods merely assume He will work as they express rational proofs and historical evidences.
 - (2) Presuppositionalism gives a centrality to God’s Word as the mode in which the Spirit will convince unbelievers.

7. Concerns with the Presuppositional Method

⁴⁷ Ibid., 220.



- a) Does presuppositionalism allow for evangelism?
- (1) Van Til, who founded the Presuppositional school, learned the basic tenets of the system from Abraham Kuyper. Kuyper believed evangelism was useless, since the distance between unbelievers and believers was infinitely vast.
 - (2) Kuyper believed people could be saved, but not by any argument. Instead, they would be saved solely from the working of the Spirit of God.
 - (3) Modern day presuppositionalists believe that arguing for the Christian faith is appropriate as long as one remains faithful to biblical presuppositions (i.e., they never assume the non-existence of God and continually call unbelievers to abandon their autonomous thought). But if, as Calvin argued, man is totally depraved, will he not merely suppress that truth?
 - (4) The central struggle many reformed believers have to struggle with concerns the relationship of arguments and faith. If regeneration precedes faith, and if everyone is dead in their intellect before regeneration, then what point is there in argumentation? Should one not simply wait until the Spirit regenerates?⁴⁸
- b) The Apostle Paul in Acts 17 did not begin his message to the Greek philosophers by appealing first to a biblical worldview.
- (1) Had Paul been applying presuppositional methods, he would have simply assumed the truth of Christian theism and then challenged the non-Christian philosophers to consider the world in light of the Christian worldview.
 - (2) Instead, Paul chooses what appears to be a more “classical” approach, beginning with creation and then moving into major tenets of Christian theism.
- c) Scripture frequently encourages the use of evidences, and the New Testament especially employs evidences in support of the resurrection of Christ, upon which Christian faith rests. The New Testament writers appear to employ a more evidential approach to apologetics than a presuppositional approach.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ The answer would be as follows: God does the work but He uses means.

⁴⁹ The resurrection is at the heart of Christianity, and that Christ gave compelling evidence of his resurrection is at the heart of the writers’ defense of



- d) Presuppositionalism appears to beg the question. “As commonly understood, presuppositionalism is guilty of a logical howler: it commits the informal fallacy of *petitio principii*, or begging the question, for it advocates presupposing the truth of Christian theism in order to prove Christian theism. Frame himself says that we are forced to say, ‘God exists (presupposition), therefore God exists (conclusion),’ even though such reasoning is ‘clearly circular.’ It is difficult to imagine how anyone could with a straight face think to show theism to be true by reasoning, ‘God exists. Therefore, God exists.’”⁵⁰
8. Strengths of Presuppositionalism
- a) Just as various accumulations of arguments and evidence (both for and against Christian theism) are “indestructible,” so it seems are differing presuppositions. At least, the competing worldviews seem equal in logical weight.⁵¹
- b) Immanuel Kant concluded that we can have knowledge of the phenomenal world (the world perceived with the senses) through reason, but we can’t have knowledge of the noumenal world (i.e., the metaphysical world).
- (1) When we try to use reason to discover any truth about the noumenal world, we end up with *antinomies*.
- (2) In the “Antinomy of Pure Reason” Kant set out the “antinomies” as four pairs of propositions, each

Christianity. This is evident in Luke’s description of “many convincing proofs” Christ gave for his resurrection (Acts 1:3) John’s use of the evidences for Christ’s resurrection and miracles to lead people to faith in Christ (John 20:31), and Paul’s account of those who witnessed the resurrected Christ (1 Corinthians 15:6). Does this mean the biblical writers were evidentialists (in the broad sense that includes classical, evidential, and cumulative case apologists)? At the very least, there is Scriptural warrant for employing the use of evidences. But remember that their audience already held a particular set of presuppositions – theism being among them. Working from a theistic presupposition, the writers, with evidence for the resurrection of Christ, built the case for Christian theism. So while presuppositional apologetic methodology is not excluded, it is certainly not *exclusive*.

⁵⁰ William Lane Craig, “A Classical Apologist’s Response [to Frame],” in *Five Views on Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 232-233.

⁵¹ Presuppositionalists and cumulative case apologists have much in common in that both contend that Christian theism makes more sense than any competing worldview. The cumulative case apologist gathers as much evidence and argumentation as possible, and argues that Christianity is the best explanation for the data we have. The presuppositionalist simply begins with the assumption of the truth of Christianity and argues that viewing the world through Christian “worldview eyes” makes the most sense of the world around us.



consisting of a thesis, and its supposed contradictory, or antithesis.

- (a) The First Antinomy (of Space and Time)
 - (i) Thesis: The world has a beginning in time, and is also limited as regards space.
 - (ii) Anti-thesis: The world has no beginning, and no limits in space; it is infinite as regards both time and space.
- (b) The Second Antinomy (of Atomism)
 - (i) Thesis: Every composite substance in the world is made up of simple parts, and nothing anywhere exists save the simple or what is composed of the simple.
 - (ii) Anti-thesis: No composite thing in the world is made up of simple parts, and there nowhere exists in the world anything simple.
- (c) The Third Antinomy (of Freedom)
 - (i) Thesis: Causality in accordance with laws of nature is not the only causality from which the appearances of the world can one and all be derived. To explain these appearances it is necessary to assume that there is also another causality, that of freedom.
 - (ii) Anti-thesis: There is no freedom; everything in the world takes place solely in accordance with laws of nature.
- (d) The Fourth Antinomy (of God)
 - (i) Thesis: There belongs to the world, either as its part or as its cause, a being that is absolutely necessary.
 - (ii) Anti-thesis: An absolutely necessary being nowhere exists in the world, nor does it exist outside the world as its cause.
- (3) In each case there are, he thinks, compelling reasons for accepting both thesis and antithesis.
- (4) For example, it is equally logical to believe that God exists and that God doesn't exist. We can find reasons to believe either, because our reason cannot penetrate the noumenal world.⁵²

⁵² Paul Edwards, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 4: 316.



- (5) The presuppositionalist would argue that because reason cannot penetrate the noumenal world, we should not use reason as our starting point in reference to God. But the presuppositionalist is not immune to this critique.
- (6) A question remains for the presuppositionalist to answer: *How should one decide which presupposition is best?* By reason? If not by reason, then how does one choose?
- c) Presuppositionalism reminds us that everything is subject to one's interpretation (there is no such thing as "facts only"), and one's ability to interpret facts is not infallible.
- d) Furthermore, everyone comes from a certain context and has been influenced and conditioned to accept certain views of the world as true.
 - (1) What "rings true" to one person will not have that same ring to another.
 - (2) By presupposing the truth of Christianity, an apologist can help a non-believer see the world through his frame of reference, which can lead to an experience similar to St. Augustine's: belief leading to understanding.

F. Reformed Epistemology Apologetics

1. Introduction

- a) It is perfectly reasonable to believe many things without evidence.
 - (1) We believe in the existence of other minds without evidence.
 - (2) We believe in our memories without evidence.
 - (3) We believe that the world continues to exist even when we close our eyes. How do we know?
- b) Belief in God does not require the support of evidence or argument in order for it to be rational, because belief in God is "properly basic."
- c) God has given us an awareness of himself that can be awakened in many ways (*a sensus divinitatis*).
- d) This method does not exclude the use of arguments and evidence, but argues that one can believe in God rationally apart from them.
- e) Reformed epistemology is a direct challenge to evidentialism.



- (1) Reformed epistemologists argue that it is reasonable for a person to hold certain beliefs without evidence.
 - (2) Belief in God, because it is a *properly basic belief*, is one of those beliefs that does not require evidence or argument in order to be rational.
2. Proponents of this school include:
- a) Kelly James Clark, *Return to Reason*
 - b) Alvin Plantinga, *God and Other Minds: A Study of the Rational Justification of Belief in God*
 - c) George Mavrodes, *The Rationality of Belief in God*
 - d) William Alston, *A Realist Conception of Truth*
3. Tenets of the Reformed Epistemological Method
- a) This school is founded on Reformed theology, particularly Calvin's notion of a *sensus divinitatis*, an immediate or non-inferential knowledge of God that arises spontaneously in the human mind.
 - b) Such beliefs are formed in a **basic way**.
 - (1) Basic beliefs are those not derived from logical inference. Rather, basic beliefs are immediately evident.⁵³
 - (2) For instance, sensory perception (seeing red) is an immediate belief. One does not logically derive sense perception.
 - (3) In this way, theistic belief shares an important similarity to beliefs based on sensory perception, testimony, memory and a priori ideas.
 - (4) In sum, Reformed Epistemologists believe that some people know God by way of immediate knowledge through the Sense of Divinity as they interact with creation. For those who receive this knowledge, to doubt it would be akin to doubting that the objects in their immediate vision do not exist.
 - c) "If Calvin is right that human beings are born with an innate *sensus divinitatis* (sense of the divine), then

⁵³ Thomas Reid popularized a philosophy called Common Sense Philosophy. It claimed there were only two kinds of beliefs: foundational and non-foundational. Foundational beliefs were the bedrock beliefs that were certain, and non-foundational were the beliefs that built off those beliefs (imagine a pyramid). In this system, all justified beliefs must trace back to foundational beliefs. The criteria for foundational beliefs are incorrigibility (not able to be doubted [i.e., I exist]), self-evident [all bachelors are married], and evident to the senses [I see red]. Any piece of information meeting any of these three requirements is considered a basic belief. Plantinga challenges this whole structure by noting that memory, the existence of other minds, and other simple truths are not able to be defended on this model.



- people may rightly and rationally come to have a belief in God immediately without the aid of evidence.”⁵⁴
- d) Belief in God as properly basic does not commit one to the relativistic view that virtually any belief can be properly basic.
 - (1) Belief in God as properly basic is not a form of fideism.
 - (a) Reformed epistemologists argue that their position is not fideistic.
 - (i) Fideism is a leap in the dark without any conviction of truth
 - (ii) Reformed Epistemologists claim that those who experience the Sense of Divinity have true knowledge, but not the kind that can be defended with evidence.
 - (b) There are circumstances which make belief in God a properly basic belief.
 - (2) Reformed epistemology does not discount the use of evidence and argumentation to defend Christian theism.
 - (3) Reformed epistemology appears to be more of an apologetic for the belief than that which is believed. The primary focus seems to be placed on clearing the theist of all charges of irrationality rather than demonstrating that (Christian) theism is true.
 - e) Reformed epistemology forces us to consider the basis for beliefs we hold. Should we ever believe something without sufficient evidence? There are times when we must.
 - (1) “It is wrong always, everywhere, and for any one, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence.”
 - (a) At first, this quote seems reasonable. If one does not have sufficient evidence, then one should not believe.
 - (b) But this statement cannot satisfy its own standard.
 - (i) Do we really have sufficient evidence to believe that it is *always* wrong to believe **anything** upon insufficient evidence?
 - (ii) What is that evidence?
 - (iii) And what does “sufficient” mean?
 - (iv) What are the criteria for sufficiency?

⁵⁴ Cowan, “Introduction,” 20.



- (v) And is there sufficient evidence to support belief in those criteria?
- (2) Evidentialist epistemology is the view that beliefs are justified only if one has conclusive evidence for them.
 - (a) Any proposition or claim must have sufficient evidence before we can believe it.
 - (b) But any piece of evidence we use is, itself, a proposition or claim that we believe. And being such, we must have sufficient evidence before we can believe them. And, again, any piece of evidence we use is a proposition or claim that we believe. So, again, sufficient evidence is required for belief.
 - (c) In other words, to believe X, we need evidence. To believe that evidence, we need evidence for that evidence. To believe the evidence for the evidence for X, we need evidence. To believe the evidence for the evidence for the evidence of X, we need evidence. And so on and so on. Notice the regress. Where does it stop?
- (3) This does not mean *all* beliefs require no evidence. There are certainly many things that require evidence in order to be believed rationally. But that there are certain basic beliefs that we must accept apart from having “sufficient evidence” to support those beliefs seems intuitive. According to Reformed epistemology, theism is one of those beliefs.
- 4. Concerns with Reformed Epistemology
 - a) The entire system is built on foundationalism (i.e., the idea that there are some indubitable truths that are the foundation for other truths).
 - b) If the epistemological system falls, so will the entire edifice of Reformed Epistemology
 - c) The problem with foundationalism is that there is nothing supporting the foundational truths. What establishes the truth of foundational beliefs?
 - d) Is it True?
 - (1) It appears that we have been tasked with much more than merely defending people’s right to believe. Rather, we are called to make a defense of the objective validity of Christian theism.



- (2) As it stands, Reformed Epistemology is malleable to Islam and a number of other theistic faiths. Are we accomplishing God's task if we defend belief in Islam?

G. Postmodern Apologetics

1. Its adherents adopt certain aspects of a postmodernist paradigm and defend Christian theism from that epistemic foundation.
2. This method proposes a model of truth in which truth claims are inseparably bound up with human language and are, therefore, inextricably linked to matters of discernment and judgment, which means they are irreducibly social or communal affairs.
3. In this model, there is no room for talk about "objective" truth ("out there") or "subjective" truth ("for me").
4. Truth "becomes internal to a web of beliefs; there is no standard truth independent of a set of beliefs and practices."

H. Summary of the Key issues dividing the groups

1. Starting point for conversation
 - a) Do we appeal to their knowledge of God? (Presuppositionalism)
 - b) Do we appeal to their rational nature? (Reason based approaches)
2. Nature of God
 - a) Does God command absolute authority? (Presuppositionalism)
 - b) Does God expect that man must come to recognize His authority? (Reason based approaches)
3. Man's nature
 - a) Does the fall prevent man from understanding argumentation before regeneration? (Presuppositionalism)
 - b) Does the fall merely hinder clear thinking so that we must present persuasive argumentation? (Reason based approaches)
4. Role of presuppositions
 - a) Do we need to argue from the vantage point of worldview? (Presuppositionalism)
 - b) Do we need to change their worldview one fact at a time? (Reason based approaches)
5. Relationship between faith and reason
 - a) Do we have Faith to establish Reason? (Presuppositionalism)



- b) Do we Reason up to Faith? (Reason based approaches)
- 6. Epistemology
 - a) Classical apologists align with the **rationalist** tradition (Plato)
 - b) Evidentialist apologists align with the **empiricist** tradition (Aristotle)
 - c) Cumulative Case apologists align with attempts to **combine rationalism and empiricism** (Kant)
 - d) Presuppositionalists claim to have a distinct **biblically derived epistemology** (Calvin)

VII. Worldviews

A. Definition

1. A worldview is a general view of the universe and man's place in it which affects one's conduct.
2. It is one's system of beliefs, his ideology; it is how one sees the world.
3. Worldviews are the means by which one answers the most important questions of life
 - a) Who am I?
 - b) How did I get here?
 - c) What am I supposed to do?
 - d) Where am I going?
 - e) Why do I even care?
4. Everyone has a worldview, whether they can describe it or not – and even if they do not know they have one.
5. "Human beings have a deep-seated need to form some general picture of the total universe in which they live, in order to be able to relate their own fragmentary activities to the universe as a whole, in a way meaningful to them."⁵⁵
6. As Christians, we have a *Christian worldview*.

B. Worldviews and apologetics

1. In order to critique most worldviews one must show the inconsistencies inherent within the unbeliever's view of life.
2. Christianity is the only system that will logically cohere and rationally satisfy, because Christianity is the worldview that appropriately recognizes the Creator and His revelation.
3. Worldviews can be compared to eyeglasses. The right choice makes everything come into proper focus. The wrong ones, however, will distort *everything* that is viewed.

⁵⁵ William P. Alston, *Religious Belief and Philosophical Thought: Readings in the Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1963), 13.



4. Our task is partly to let people see with our glasses on. When you first wear glasses that are the right prescription, you recognize that this is how things are supposed to look. In the same way, we need to show the world what reality truly looks like. We can do this by expressing the Christian worldview.

C. Worldviews and Interpretation

1. One's Worldview significantly affects the way he understand the events of life.⁵⁶
2. Albert Wolters notes that "worldview functions as a *guide to our life*. A worldview, even when it is half unconscious and unarticulated, functions like a compass or a road map. It orients us in the world at large, gives us a sense of what is up and what is down, what is right and what is wrong in the confusion of events and phenomena that confronts us. Our worldview shapes, to a significant degree, the way we assess the events, issues, and structures of our civilization and our times."⁵⁷
 - a) Notice how worldview functions in the following significant events:
 - (1) The Exodus from Egypt
 - (a) To a Christian, this event is a clear evidence of God's powerful love in interacting with His creation.
 - (b) To a naturalist, this event is one of the strange anomalies of history.
 - (2) The Resurrection of Christ
 - (a) To the Christian, this is the center point of human history.
 - (b) To the naturalist, this is the greatest hoax ever pulled on mankind. Despite the massive amounts of evidence for its historical veracity, the naturalist cannot allow for the miraculous.
 - (3) Gay Marriage
 - (a) To the Christian, homosexual unions are unnatural and contrary to all of creation.
 - (b) To the naturalist, those against homosexual unions are simply repressing the free actions of rational creatures.

D. Worldview and Practice

⁵⁶ Norman L. Geisler and William D. Watkins, *Worlds Apart: A Handbook on World Views; Second Edition* (Nashville: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 12.

⁵⁷ Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 5.



1. Often people fail to live up to their worldview.
 - a) This is often because their worldview has internal conflicts that prevent them from living consistently.
 - b) This is also seen when people are living out their suppressed knowledge. That is, most people live better than their worldview. This is because they are God's creatures living in God's world with God's knowledge. Often one cannot live consistently with knowledge that rubs against their inherent knowledge of God.
2. Christians also fail to live up to their worldview.
 - a) This is usually not out of ignorance.
 - b) This is clearly expressed in Romans 7 as the remnants of our sin nature.
 - c) Because salvation includes the substitution of an entire worldview (from autonomy to creaturely dependence), sin is a betrayal of the unity of God's creation.
 - d) Christian sin provides an argument against the Christian position. The Christian, by engaging in sin, is testifying to the world that there is something lacking in the Christian worldview.⁵⁸

	Theism	Naturalism		Pantheism
	Christianity	Modernism	Postmodernism	New Age
God	Personal	Non-existent	Non-existent	Impersonal
World	Creation	Physical	Physical	Spiritual
Human Nature	Like God	Like Animals	Like Animals	Is God
Body/Soul	Unity	Body Only	Body Only	Soul Only
Immortality	Resurrection	Annihilation	Annihilation	

⁵⁸ Remember the Christian worldview is a comprehensive system. It is the means by which we answer every question posed to us. It is the means by which we interpret every fact exposed to us. God has provided an entire worldview in which the believer ought to live. Sin can be defined, therefore, as the unwillingness to submit in mind and action to the Christian worldview.



Destiny	Glorification	Extinction	Extinction	Absorption
Source of Authority	Divine Revelation	Human Reason	Culture	Spiritual
Truth	Absolute	Relative	Culturally Based	Personal
Jesus Christ	Son of God	Good Man	A Product of His Culture	Enlightenment
Salvation	Redemption	Education	Whatever is Effective	Meditation
Evil	Rebellion	Ignorance	Culturally Defined	Illusion
Ethics	God-centered	Man-centered	Culturally Centered	World - centered
History	Linear	Chaotic	Culturally Defined	Cyclical
Culture	God ordained/ Man's stewardship	Man-centered	Language-Centered	World-centered

3. Naturalism – The World is Eternal

a) Three types of Western naturalists

- (1) Skepticism—No one can ever know there is a God.⁵⁹
- (2) Agnosticism—I am not sure whether there is a God.⁶⁰
- (3) Atheism—There is no God.⁶¹

b) Major worldview positions

(1) Metaphysics

- (a) Naturalism assumes that God does not exist.
- (b) The world is eternal and self-generating.
- (c) Chance + Time = Universe.
- (d) Man is equal in value to an ant or a rock.

⁵⁹ Skepticism as an entire philosophy of life is self-defeating. That is, one who says that we cannot come to knowledge is assuming the validity of knowledge as he denies knowledge. Most who call themselves skeptics today are actually agnostics.

⁶⁰ Most agnostics are really atheists in that they would argue there is no God. They couch their terms in agnosticism so that they are not responsible for proving that there is no God. For instance, Dawkins recently said that on a scale of 1-7, he is 6.9 sure that God does not exist.

⁶¹ As Scripture indicates, there are no true atheists (Rom 1). No doubt they psychologically believe they are atheists, but they constantly assume and live in light of the existence of God.



- (e) Everything that happens is a product of natural forces.
 - (i) Man is only a physical being—there is no spiritual nature.
 - (ii) Because everything in nature can be understood in relation to natural forces, mankind has no freedom.
 - (iii) Miracles—defined as events that transcend the natural laws—are impossible.
- (2) Epistemology
 - (a) Knowledge is possible, because we have knowledge.
 - (b) Knowledge is a product of evolutionary development. It is a development that provided a means of survival for our ancestors.
 - (c) Rational laws are merely human inventions.
 - (d) Probability is the best knowledge man can ever hope to gain.
- (3) Ethics
 - (a) Ethics are social customs and sin is merely disobeying social expectations.
 - (b) We care about life, because we are a product of evolution. In other words, we care for our ultimate survival, because it is what nature has wrought in us.
- c) Worldview critique
 - (1) In naturalism knowledge is impossible.
 - (a) There is no foundation for knowledge. For instance, only one who knows everything could establish scientific laws (inductive knowledge), but no one knows everything.
 - (b) There is no absolute reason to believe human reason will lead to truth.
 - (2) In naturalism ethics is impossible.
 - (a) Humans know a natural ethic (Rom. 2), and naturalism cannot explain its origin.
 - (b) Based on the metaphysic of naturalism, human ethics should be orientated solely to survival.
 - (c) In naturalistic ethics, no one is accountable for their own actions, since there is no freedom of the will.
 - (3) Naturalism cannot explain metaphysics.



- (a) Why there is something rather than nothing?
- (b) Naturalism, entropy, and the 2nd law of thermodynamics
 - (i) Evolutionists claim that entropy is a law and disorder is happening. Nevertheless, they claim that the world is in constant supply of energy from the sun. Thus, the world is not a closed system.
 - (ii) However, if we were to broaden the system to the universe, we have no indication that entropy does not work in the exact same way on macro-scale.
 - (iii) In the end, scientists have to ascribe infinity and omnipotence to the universe in order to get beyond this problem.
 - (iv) Notice how naturalists are being forced to ascribe theistic characteristics to their “god,” creation. This should not be surprising since they are seeking to make their position rational.
 - (v) Truly, the Eternal One is infinite, omnipotent, and eternal.
- (c) How can the personal arise from the impersonal?
- d) Naturalism and Worldview Tests
 - (1) Test of Reason – Self-defeating in that naturalism denies the validity of truth
 - (2) Test of Experience – Does not account for the universality of ethics
 - (3) Test of Practice – Naturalists deny their own system when they act in the interest of others; they deny their own system when they prefer humans over animals and plants.
 - (4) In sum, naturalism is against reason, experience, and the history of human activity. Nevertheless, it continues to be a dominant force in much of the world because people do not think of it as a comprehensive worldview.
 - (a) They do not recognize that one’s belief in God determines their belief in ethics.
 - (b) They also do not recognize that eliminating God from the equation is equal to eliminating the possibility of truth itself.



- (c) We would do well to allow people to see the logical result of their belief system.
- 4. Monistic Religions – God, who is the world, is Eternal
 - a) Panentheism
 - (1) God is *in* the world (universe) the way a soul or mind is in a body.
 - (a) Panentheism is also known as:
 - (i) Process theology, because it views God as a changing being.
 - (ii) Bi-polar theism, because it believes God has two poles, the actual and the potential.
 - (iii) Organicism, because it views all that is as a gigantic organism.
 - (b) God has two poles, the actual and potential.
 - (i) The world is God's body, which is one pole, known as his actual pole, which is finite, temporal and changing.
 - (ii) Beyond the world is God's mind, which is his other pole, known as his potential pole, which is eternal and unchanging.
 - (iii) God is not identical with the world nor is He actually distinct from it.
 - (c) Creation is *ex hulas* (out of existing material).
 - (i) Matter and mind are eternal.
 - (ii) Matter is eternally directed by God.
 - (d) God and the world are interdependent.
 - (i) God is continually growing in perfections.
 - (ii) Human efforts can and do increase God's value and perfection.
 - (e) Evil will not ultimately be defeated and destroyed. Since God is finite, only evil that can be defeated with our cooperation will be defeated.
 - (2) Criticisms
 - (a) This system is based on pure speculation. Why assume the world is like this?
 - (b) Potentialities cannot actualize themselves. This is the most serious problem with Panentheism.
 - (c) Change makes no sense unless there is an unchanging basis by which change is measured. Everything cannot be relative; there must be a standard to which things relate.



- (d) The Panentheist conception of evil
 - (i) God includes evil as a necessity.
 - (ii) Panentheists further claim that humans must help God overcome evil—which just is part of God!
 - (iii) What guarantee is there that this God can finally overcome evil? Why use humans in the process?
 - (iv) In other words, there are serious concerns with the moral nature and character of God.
- b) Pantheism
 - (1) Defined
 - (a) Pantheism is the belief that *all* of creation is God (i.e., the book on the table, the table itself, and even the person looking at the book on the table is God).
 - (b) Many Eastern religions hold to this worldview, but it is becoming more intellectually acceptable in the West
 - (c) Pantheistic language often utilizes the analogy that every person is simply a drop of water in the vast ocean of reality.
 - (2) Central tenets of pantheism
 - (a) It depends on mystical intuition for an understanding of God and transcends the law of non-contradiction.
 - (b) God transcends being and rational knowing and, therefore, cannot be expressed in positive terms, but only in terms of what he is not.
 - (c) God is absolute oneness or unity and absolute transcendence.
 - (d) “Creation” is *ex deo* (out of God), not *ex nihilo*.
 - (e) Both good and evil flow necessarily from God.
 - (f) Creation is a necessity.
 - (g) God is not a “he,” but an “it.” Personality is an attribute of a lower level.
 - (h) Unity is the ultimate reality of the universe. Multiplicity flows from it.
 - (3) Criticisms of pantheism
 - (a) Pantheism is unaffirmable, because ultimately, it reduces to “God is, but I am not.”
 - (b) If God is all, and, therefore, I am God, fellowship and worship are impossible.



- (c) If evil is part of God, then God is both good and evil. Thus, if God is both good and evil, then they cannot be distinguished.
 - (d) God is incomplete without creation.
 - (i) There is essentially no difference between pantheism and atheism.
 - (ii) The pantheist and atheist both attribute ultimate significance to the universe.
 - (e) Creation *ex deo* is self-contradictory. How can something be both infinite and finite?
5. Theism – God is Eternal
- a) Deism
 - (1) Deism may appropriately be called the half-way house between theism and naturalism.
 - (a) It is theistic because it claims there is a God.
 - (b) It is naturalistic, because it claims that God is no longer involved in His creation.
 - (c) If naturalism is a closed box with nothing outside, deism is a closed box with a God outside who made the box and never opens the box.
 - (d) In sum, they claim God created the world with its natural laws and stepped away from it, allowing it to run without His assistance.
 - (2) Historical significance
 - (a) Deism arose in the 17th century, flourished in the 18th, and died out in the 19th.
 - (b) Deism arose because of the scientific revolution. The world was awakening from the mysterious to the known. That is, most of what had been explained as the direct intervention of God (i.e., making it rain, etc.) was now being explained as the natural order. This—to many people—made the personal interaction of God with nature unnecessary.
 - (c) Deism flourished because the sin nature of man (Rom 1) will latch onto any concept that will drive them away from the sovereign God of Scripture.
 - (d) Deism killed itself. When deism claimed that God was unnecessary to explain the *continuation* of the natural order, it was only a matter of time before someone (i.e., Darwin) would show that the concept of God was



altogether unnecessary to explain the *existence* and *continuation* of the world.

- (e) Some of American founders were deists—Thomas Jefferson, Ben Franklin, and Thomas Paine.

(3) Tenets of deism

- (a) There is a Creator.
- (b) Only God is eternal.
- (c) The supernatural is impossible, since creation is a closed box.
- (d) Any “revelation” from Scripture—Trinity, incarnation, salvation, etc.—is actually the creation of man.

(4) Critique

- (a) What is the basis for morality without God’s personality?
- (b) Is God personal?
 - (i) If so, why does God treat creation impersonally by abandoning it?
 - (ii) If not, what distinguishes God from creation itself (pantheism)?
- (c) Using only the tools of reason without divine revelation, mankind has no foundation for knowledge.

b) Open Theism

(1) Introduction

- (a) Open Theists claim that God does not know the future and is not immutable.
- (b) Open Theism is an openly accepted belief within the Evangelical Theological Society.⁶²
 - (i) There was a rather large debate concerning the evangelical status of open theists.
 - (ii) Some information was not taken into consideration in the determination of the orthodoxy of the main proponent, Clark Pinnock.

⁶² See some of the historical notes in Geisler’s account here: Norman Geisler, “Why I Resigned from the Evangelical Theological Society,” *NormanGeisler.net*, 2003, <http://www.normangeisler.net/etsresign.htm> (accessed January 23, 2012).



- (iii) Norman Geisler, who was once the president of the organization, resigned citing the loss of doctrinal integrity.
- (iv) By a vote of 388 to 231 Pinnock, and by implication Open Theism, was allowed to remain in the ETS.

(2) Tenets

- (a) God does not know the future.
 - (i) This does not mean He is not omniscient—He is, but the future is simply unknowable.
 - (ii) He cannot know the future, since the future does not yet exist.
 - (iii) He does not know the future, because that would eliminate the freedom of the will.
 - (iv) He does not know the future, for that would make Him impersonal.
- (b) God repents, reforms, and changes as He interacts with creation.
- (c) God can make predictions quite accurately, since He is all wise. Boyd compares God to the ultimate chess player: One who knows all possibilities and is prepared for all variables.
- (d) Scripture shows that God changes, which indicates that He is unaware of some aspects of the future.
 - (i) God repents decisions and their consequences (Gen 6:6; I Samuel 15:11, 29, 35).
 - (ii) God gets frustrated (Exodus 4:10-15; Ezekiel 22:30, 31).
 - (iii) God is surprised (Jeremiah 3:19-20; 19:5).
 - (iv) God asks question (Gen 3:9; 18:20, 21).

(3) Critique

- (a) Open Theism is a totally restructured belief in God.
 - (i) C. S. Lewis once said, “Everyone who believes in God at all believes that He knows what you and I are going to do tomorrow.”⁶³
 - (ii) Once omniscience is denied, the other attributes begin to fall quickly.

⁶³ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 170.



- (b) Impossibility of predictive prophecy
 - (i) “The Old Testament predicted that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, He would be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver, His body would be pierced, but His bones would not be broken. *Virtually all of the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament would have to be discounted if human freedom made it impossible for God to know the future.*”⁶⁴
 - (ii) How could God accurately predict the future in light of His free creatures? It appears He would have to eliminate their freedom in order to accomplish this goal. Think of how many decisions He would have to force in order to ensure His desired result. In the end, is there any freedom left if there are predictive prophecies?
- (c) In the Scripture, God is distinguished from the gods by His ability to accurately predict the future (Isaiah 41:21-22a).
- (d) Open Theism does not answer the problem of evil.
 - (i) Though this is touted as one of the most significant elements of the position, in the end, the answer to evil remains as problematic as before.
 - (ii) Now, instead of recognizing God’s sovereignty over evil, Open Theists say that God had a pretty good idea what might happen. However, God cannot be Ruler over all.
 - (iii) Man has no confidence to face tomorrow. If God does not know what will happen to you tomorrow, how do you face the world?
 - (iv) Further, coming to God in light of your problems may be a bad idea. As one of the main proponents of Open Theism

⁶⁴ Charles T. Grant, “Our Heavenly Father,” *Emmaus Journal* 11 (Winter 2002): 242.



acknowledges, God could give bad advice.⁶⁵

- (e) Open Theism destroys the authority of Scripture.
 - (i) “One could not [while holding to open theism] make the affirmation that Scripture is inerrant since there would be no way to know until the eschaton whether God and the biblical authors just happened to get it right.”⁶⁶
 - (ii) In other words, if God does not operate with sovereignty based on His knowledge, it appears there may be circumstances where things do not work out the way planned.

6. Islam

a) History

- (1) Muhammad began Islam in 570 AD.
 - (a) He heard some voices when meditating in a cave.
 - (b) His wife informed him that the voice was not a demon, though he initially was concerned that it might be.
 - (c) Muhammad probably had access to both the Old Testament and New Testament Scriptures, because of his travelling as a merchant. For this reason, much of his doctrine of God sounds biblical (monotheistic, omniscient, sovereign, etc.)
- (2) Muhammad and Christianity
 - (a) Muhammad considered himself in the line of prophets from Abraham through Jesus.
 - (b) Islam claims that the Bible speaks of Muhammad’s coming (Deut 18:15-18; Psalm 45:3-5; Hab 3:3).
 - (c) Muhammad claimed that both Christianity and Judaism were corrupted versions of Islam.

b) Tenets

- (1) Revelation
 - (a) Quran

⁶⁵ Gregory A. Boyd, *God of the Possible: A Biblical Introduction to the Open View of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 103–106.

⁶⁶ Stephen Wellum, “Divine Sovereignty –Omniscience, Inerrancy, and Open Theism: An Evaluation,” *Journal of the Evangelical Society* 45 (June 2002): 277.



- (i) The Quran is not a book, but a recitation, which is only authoritative in Arabic.
- (ii) Only one edition is available since the rest were destroyed.
- (b) Hadith
 - (i) The Hadith are stories of the life and sayings of Muhammad.
 - (ii) These are considered to be divine revelation, but in a secondary manner to the Quran.
 - (iii) These are often contradictory and are highly subject to critical evaluation.
 - (iv) In order to be “acceptable” a Hadith must have a direct line of descent from one of the people who personally knew Muhammad
- (c) Prophets
 - (i) Jesus
 - (a) He was born of virgin –but this does not mean from God. Instead, He was born just like Adam.
 - (b) He did not die on the cross. Instead He was whisked away to heaven— Judas was crucified.
 - (c) He will probably return at the end of days and live out the rest of His life.
 - (ii) Other prophets
 - (a) There is a prophet for every people group.
 - (b) There are special prophets that have a revelation for mankind (i.e., Moses, Jesus, etc.).
 - (c) Abraham is said to be the direct forerunner to Muhammad.
 - (d) Both were from the same geographical area.
 - (e) Both were called to reformulate corrupted worship.
- (d) Trinity
 - (i) There is no Trinity, since Allah is *tawhid* (one).
 - (a) “They do blaspheme who say: God is one of three in a Trinity: for there is no god except One God. If they desist not



from their word (of blasphemy), verily a grievous penalty will befall the blasphemers among them.”⁶⁷

- (b) “Say: He is God, the One and Only; God, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; And there is none like unto Him.”⁶⁸

- (ii) The Holy Spirit is actually Gabriel who was sent to give revelation to Muhammad.

(e) Salvation

- (i) Salvation is based on works.

- (a) Upon dying, two angels will come and ask you about Muhammad.

- (b) “There is not one among you who shall not pass through hell; such is the absolute decree of your Lord. We will deliver those who fear Us, and leave the wrongdoers there, on their knees.”⁶⁹

- (c) “To those who believe and do deeds of righteousness hath Allah promised forgiveness and a great reward.”⁷⁰

- (d) As to those who believe and work righteousness, verily We shall not suffer to perish the reward of any who do a (single) righteous deed.”⁷¹

(f) Sin

- (i) There is no such thing as original sin.

- (ii) All men sin because they deceive themselves or are deceived by Satan.

- (iii) By nature all men know God. In fact they know the first part of the *shahadah* (“The Testimony of Faith”). The *shahadah* is the first of the five pillars of Islam and is the profession of faith – “There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His Prophet.”

(2) Critique

(a) Scripture

⁶⁷ “The Noble Quran,” 5:73. <http://www.thenoblequran.com/sps/nbq/>

⁶⁸ “The Noble Quran,” 112:1-4.

⁶⁹ Sura 19:71-72.

⁷⁰ Sura 5:9.

⁷¹ Sura 18:30.



- (i) Muslims argue that the Scripture cannot be corrupted, yet they claim the Old and New Testament have been corrupted.
- (ii) “Satanic Verses” are statements that Muhammad originally made, but later recanted, saying they were inspired by Satan.
- (b) Concept of God
 - (i) Their monistic concept of God does not account for the existence of unity and diversity.
 - (ii) Their monistic concept of God eliminates the Trinitarian relationship, which provides the means for understanding God’s relation to creation.
 - (iii) Their scripture teaches that God is holy and just, yet is simply willing to overlook sin.
- (c) Historical – The accumulated historical evidence for the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ counts against Islam.
- 7. Christian Theism – The Trinity is Eternal
 - a) Christian Theism finds itself alone in the realm of worldviews. Every other system fails one of the worldview tests (proof by elimination). Further, only Christianity can explain the entirety of data given in creation (proof by positive evaluation).
 - b) Francis Schaeffer, a twentieth century apologist, recognized this point well. In fact, he made it the center of his extremely successful ministry in France.⁷² “Only the presuppositions of historic Christianity both adequately explain and correspond with the two environments in which every man must live: the external world with its form and complexity; and the internal world of the man’s own characteristics as a human being ... such qualities as a desire for significance, love, and meaning, and fear of nonbeing, among others.”⁷³

E. Means of Examining World Views

⁷² Schaeffer is a historic figure in apologetics. He opened his home to seekers of the Christian faith. Throughout the year, people would live with him discussing their own views and being challenged by Schaeffer’s views.

⁷³ Thomas V. Morris, *Francis Schaeffer’s Apologetics: A Critique* (Chicago: Moody, 1976), 21.



1. Rationalism

a) Characteristics

- (1) Rationalism exalts human reason.
- (2) It stresses the innate a priori ability of the mind to know truth.
- (3) Rationalism emphasizes the mind (with its innate ideas or principles), while empiricism emphasizes the senses (the mind is *tabula rasa* or a blank slate).

b) Rene Descartes (1596-1650)

- (1) He wanted to bring certainty to philosophy.
- (2) He is best known for his declaration, “dubito to cogito to sum”: “I doubt, therefore I think, therefore I am.”
- (3) He offered two rationalistic proofs for God.
 - (a) The *a posteriori* argument
 - (i) I doubt, therefore I am imperfect. If I know what is imperfect, I have knowledge of the perfect. Knowledge of the perfect cannot come from an imperfect mind. Therefore, there is a perfect Mind (God).
 - (b) The *a priori* ontological argument
 - (i) Whatever is necessary to the essence of a thing cannot be absent from that thing. The idea of an absolutely perfect Being cannot be devoid of any perfection. Existence is a necessary element. Hence, an absolutely perfect Being exists.
 - (c) Note: These two arguments depend totally on the mind.
- (4) Benedict Spinoza (1632-1677)
 - (a) Descartes began with an indubitable idea. Spinoza began with “the absolutely perfect idea of an absolutely perfect Being.
 - (b) He identified four causes of error.
 - (i) Partial Nature of our minds
 - (ii) Imagination
 - (iii) Our reasoning
 - (iv) The failure to begin with the perfect Idea of God
 - (c) His rationalism ended in pantheism: the world must be viewed as a whole, and the whole is both good and God.



- (5) Gottfried Leibnitz (1646-1716)
 - (a) Leibnitz based his thinking about God around the sufficient idea or reason.
 - (b) His ontological argument – If a perfect being can exist, it (He) must exist. By definition, an absolutely perfect being cannot lack anything, including existence.
 - (c) His cosmological argument – There must be a sufficient first cause/reason of the world which is its own sufficient reason for existing.
 - (d) Thus, God is self-caused, not un-caused.
- c) Christian rationalists
 - (1) Stuart Hackett – Empirical rationalism or rational empiricism
 - (a) Hackett maintained a correspondence between the categories of the mind and reality.
 - (b) Empiricism bases knowledge on experience. He claims rational certainty for God's existence from sense experience.
 - (c) His approach:
 - (i) You cannot deny the existence of everything.
 - (ii) What exists is either an effect or it is not an effect.
 - (iii) If not an effect, then we have arrived at an absolutely perfect Being.
 - (iv) If it is an effect, then it is caused by something antecedent. But an infinite number of causes and effects is rationally inconceivable. There must be a first cause.
 - (2) Gordon Clark – Revelational rationalism
 - (a) There are no rationally inescapable arguments.
 - (b) He maintained that:
 - (i) Philosophy is not possible without some sort of presupposition (*a priori* thought).
 - (ii) Secular philosophy picked the wrong presuppositions. They do not furnish a consistent set of universal principles (theory) and they cannot give guidance in everyday living (practical).
 - (iii) Revelation is our only acceptable axiom.
 - (iv) All non-Christian world views ultimately are self-contradictory.



- (c) He placed a heavy emphasis on logic.
- d) Analysis of rationalism
 - (1) Positively:
 - (a) It recognizes and utilizes the basic laws of thought.
 - (b) It recognizes that there is an a priori dimension to knowledge.
 - (c) It maintains that reality is knowable.
 - (2) Negatively:
 - (a) It seems to invariably move from the possible to the actual, from thought to reality. This is invalid; just because we can think of something does not make it real (Star Trek).
 - (b) The rationally inescapable is not the same as the real. It merely assumes it to be real.
 - (c) Undeniability is not the same as logical necessity. A triangle must have three sides, but a triangle does not have to exist.
 - (d) The principle of sufficient reason is not a universal. Some things may not need a reason to exist, such as God.
 - (e) There is no rational way of establishing rationalism.
 - (f) Logic is only a negative test of truth.
 - (g) There are no rationally inescapable arguments for the existence of God.
- 2. Fideism or Faith in Faith
 - a) Whereas rationalism urges us to trust in reason, fideism urges us to trust in faith.
 - b) Proponents and their beliefs
 - (1) Blaise Pascal.
 - (a) He desired to destroy faith in reason.
 - (b) He maintained that truth is tested in the heart, not the mind.
 - (c) The Great Wager – “You can wager for God or against Him. If you wager for Him and lose, you lose nothing. If you wager for Him and win, you win everything.”
 - (d) Soren Kierkegaard
 - (i) He divided life into three stages:
 - (a) The aesthetic
 - (b) The ethical
 - (c) The religious



- (ii) These are separated by despair and spanned by a leap of faith.
- (iii) Truth is subjectivity.
 - (a) "Objectively Christianity has absolutely no existence."
 - (b) Faith is an act of the will exercised without reason or objective guides.
 - (c) Truths of human reason are rational, while those of Divine revelation are paradoxical (contradictory, opposed to common sense) or supra-rational.
 - (d) Faith is not irrational, but "anti-rational."
 - (i) God cannot be known intellectually by reason, but only existentially by faith.
 - (ii) Existentialism--the most meaningful point of reference for anyone is his own immediate consciousness.
 - (e) There are no objective, historical or rational tests for religious truth.

(2) Karl Barth

- (a) The Bible is God's Word in the sense that He speaks through it.
- (b) God's image in man was completely destroyed by sin.
- (c) Man encounters God subjectively.

(3) Cornelius Van Til

- (a) Presuppositions cannot be avoided.
- (b) Unless the truth of Christianity is presupposed, nothing is capable of proof.
- (c) Apart from a Christian world-view, nothing makes sense.
- (d) Unbelievers not only ought to know there is a God, they do know – they cannot deny the revelational activity of God.
- (e) The problem with Van Til, according to Geisler, is that he assumes the truth of the Bible to prove the Bible.

c) Conclusion

(1) Positive contributions

- (a) Ultimately, God does transcend our reason.



- (b) Faith in God is based on Who He is, not in evidence about Him.
 - (c) Evidence/reason does not produce a religious response.
 - (d) Faith involves the will, not just the intellect.
 - (e) Truth is personal, not just propositional.
 - (f) Ultimately, outside of Christian theism, all beliefs are contradictory.
 - (g) Man's sinful nature affects his response to God.
- (2) In general, fideism fails to distinguish between:
- (a) Epistemology (the order of knowing) and ontology (the order of being).
 - (b) The fideist may be right about the fact that there is a God, but he cannot know how he knows.
 - (i) Belief *in* God and belief *that* God.
 - (ii) The basis of belief in God and the support (warrant) for that belief.
 - (iii) The fact that presuppositions are unavoidable and that they are justifiable. (We may have these presuppositions, but are they the right ones?)
- (3) Finally, fideism is self-defeating.
- (a) If it is a claim to truth, then it must have a truth test, which it rejects.
 - (b) If it is not a claim to truth, then it is merely a psychological exercise.
3. Experientialism
- In Experientialism, there is an explicit appeal to experience.
- a) Plotinian Mysticism
- (1) God is the One beyond all knowing and being. He has neither knowledge, being or personality. He is only absolute unity.
 - (2) He developed a hierarchy of being, with unity at the peak and non-unity at the bottom. Mind has greater unity; matter has the least unity. The more unity, the more good; the less unity, the more evil.
 - (3) God cannot be known; he can only be felt. You must become one with the One to experience the One, but this experience is unknowable and inexpressible. One has had it or one has not. The



- experience is not demonstrable by reason or evidence. The emphasis is mystical union.
- (4) This view is pantheistic and holds that matter is in some way evil.
- b) Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834)
- (1) He began with an emphasis on the total dependency of man on God for his existence.
 - (2) Religious experience is the “stuff” of religion; religious language and ritual is only the “structure” of religion.
 - (3) He distinguished between science, ethics and religion.
 - (4) Science deals with the intellectual (knowing).
 - (5) Ethics deals with the practical (acting).
 - (6) Religion deals with the intuitional (being).
 - (7) The basic religious experience is the same for all men. All religions are good and true.
 - (8) There is no true or false in religion.
 - (9) The only possible proof is found in one’s own consciousness.
- c) Rudolf Otto (1869-1937)
- (1) Otto continued in Schleiermacher’s basic philosophy.
 - (2) He emphasized the *Holy* in religious experience.
 - (3) He gave these characteristics for a religious experience.
 - (a) The Tremendum – the wrath of God
 - (b) Awefulness – a sense of awe or dread
 - (c) Overpoweringness – the unapproachable majesty of God
 - (d) Urgency – emotion or force
 - (e) The mysterium – grace of God
 - (f) Consciousness of the Wholly Other – the one beyond intelligibility and causes blank wonder
 - (g) Fascination – “the attraction of man to the Holy”
 - (4) Rationalism is ruled out because religion springs from the experience of the nonrational.
- d) Characteristic tenets of experientialism
- (1) Experience is the final court of appeals for religious truth.
 - (2) Religious experience is self-verifying.
 - (3) God is actually indescribable, inexpressible.
 - (4) God can be felt, but not really thought.



- e) Postive features of experientialism.
 - (1) Experience is important in religion.
 - (2) Experience is, in the broad sense, the final court of appeal for man.
 - f) Criticism of experientialism
 - (1) An experience is not true or false. Statements and expressions about it are.
 - (2) An experience cannot support or prove its own truth. You cannot claim truth or validity for an experience merely because you had it.
 - (3) No experience is self-interpreting (John 12:28, 29).
 - (4) Experiences are capable of different interpretations. Therefore, different systems/worldviews have conflicting truth claims (when based on experience) and no way (apart from experience) to judge between them.
 - (5) An experience is meaningful only in light of its interpretation or meaning, but its interpretation or meaning is not based on experience. Consequently, there must be a more basic test of truth.
 - g) Conclusion
 - (1) Experientialism is meaningless. There are conflicting claims of truth built on experience, but no experiential way to decide between them.
 - (2) It is self-defeating. No one can describe the indescribable or even recognize it unless it is describable. Some justification is necessary for why the experience was interpreted one way and not another.
 - (3) It begs the issue. The experience is the verification of the truth of the experience.
4. Evidentialism
- Evidentialism is the appeal to evidence as the test of Christianity.
- a) There are two main forms of evidentialism:
 - (1) One appeals to the evidence of history.
 - (2) One appeals to the evidence of nature.
 - b) Appeal to the evidence of history
 - (1) History consists of:
 - (a) Fact
 - (b) Interpretation
 - (2) History has been divided into:
 - (a) Sacred



- (i) Teleological – history has one universal divine purpose
 - (ii) Begins with God
 - (b) Secular
 - (i) Empirical
 - (ii) Still on-going
- (3) Historical evidence (especially the crucifixion and resurrection) is the basis and test of the truth of one's worldview.
 - (a) Early Christian apologists especially appealed to the historical evidence of the miraculous events of the first century.
 - (b) These historical events provide the crucial test for Christian truth.
- c) Appeal to the evidence of nature
 - (1) The most common appeal is some form of the teleological argument.
 - (2) William Paley's "Watchmaker"
 - (a) This argument assumes a similarity between effect and its cause.
 - (b) A. E. Taylor modified this proof by stating that nature revealed anticipated design that chance cannot account for.
 - (3) F. R. Tennant has argued effectively against the idea of chance producing order. Instead, nature is adapted to man.
 - (4) Bishop Butler argued for probability as the very guide of life. The existence of God is provable by analogy with nature. Creatures live in different states of perfection. By analogy there is no reason to believe that man does not continue on after death.
- d) Appeal to the Evidence of the Future
 - (1) John Hick and Eschatological Verification
 - (2) It is meaningful to believe in God since this can be verified upon death, if one has an experience of meeting God.
- e) Characteristic tenets of evidentialism
 - (1) Truth is based in facts or events that are empirical (experientially based).
 - (2) Evidentialism distinguishes between fact and interpretation of fact.
 - (3) The interpretation of facts is not an arbitrary thing, but grows out of the facts themselves.



- (4) There is usually an appeal to some specific or unique fact(s) for determining truth.
- (5) A strong emphasis is placed on the objective and public nature of facts.
- f) Positive Contributions of Evidentialism
 - (1) True evidence is objective and public.
 - (2) Truth is based on facts and theories grow from facts.
 - (3) Facts, when viewed in their context, cannot be arbitrarily interpreted.
- g) Criticisms of evidentialism
 - (1) The meaning of facts is determined to large extent by one's worldview.
 - (2) Meaning is not inherent in facts. (Cf. the voice of God in John 12.)
 - (3) Evidentialism does not solve the problem of how to determine which facts have special significance.
 - (4) An even more significant issue is the need for justifying the interpretation of facts theistically.
 - (5) In Evidentialism the order and design of nature are read into it, not out of it.
- 5. Pragmatism

Pragmatism says something is true if it works out in every day experience.

 - a) Pragmatism is an "all American" philosophy.
 - b) Proponents
 - (1) C. S. Peirce offered a pragmatic ("scientific" as he termed it) theory of meaning. According to Peirce, the meaning of some activity or thought is found in its practical results. The evidence for this is four-fold.
 - (a) The method produces no doubt; no one really doubts reality.
 - (b) Everyone uses the scientific method for something.
 - (c) This method alone presents a distinction between right and wrong.
 - (d) What we believe or think is truth if it will or would, when acted on, cause or help us to accomplish our goal(s).
 - (2) William James was an extremely influential proponent of pragmatic philosophy.
 - (a) He believed in two kinds of conversion—gradual (natural) and sudden (supernatural).



- (b) Religious experience is both subjective (our feeling) and objective (intellectual).
- (c) Religion is hither and thither.
 - (i) Hither is the subconscious self.
 - (ii) Thither is the over-belief (God).
- (d) He maintained that ideas are not inherently true or false, but that truth happens to an idea.
- (e) The true is only the expedient in the way of our thinking, just as the “right” is only the expedient in the way of our behaving.
- (3) Francis Schaeffer
 - (a) He claimed no one can live a chance philosophy of pure materialism.
 - (b) Only the Christian view is consistent and livable. Experience confirms this.
- c) Common characteristics of pragmatism
 - (1) Experience is the test of truth.
 - (2) Ultimately, truth is decided on the basis of general, continual long-run experience.
 - (3) All conclusions about truth are in the final analysis tentative, or at best, probable.
- d) Evaluation
 - (1) Positively
 - (a) Truth is or ought to be practical, i.e. it has practical application.
 - (b) Truth is confirmed in our personal experience.
 - (c) We are reminded that much of our knowledge is tentative or probable. We are, after all, finite.
 - (d) Do we have a pragmatic approach to life and truth? Is it wrong to be pragmatic about everything? What was the meaning of Jesus’ statement: “By their fruits ye shall know them”?
 - (2) Negatively
 - (a) Things that work are not necessarily *true/right*, and things that fail are not necessarily *false/wrong*.
 - (b) Truth works, at least in the long run, but what works is not necessarily true.
 - (c) Long-term consequences are not known or predictable.
 - (d) Truth may be unrelated to results. The results could be accidental.
 - (e) Truth is more than the useful—it is moral.



- (f) On a purely pragmatic basis, opposing or contradictory worldviews may work equally well.
 - (g) Truth is not determined by personal experience. A thing is not true just because it is “true for you.”
 - (h) Truth is more than the expedient.
 - (i) On a purely pragmatic basis, opposing or contradictory world views may work equally well.
 - (j) Truth is not determined by personal experience. A thing is not true just because it is “true for you.”
 - (k) A significant problem with the pragmatic theory is that a falsehood can be useful or practical at a specific time and place, but that does not make it true. If you do not believe that, just ask yourself, men, how you’ve answered this question when asked by your wife or mother or girlfriend: *“Does this dress make me look fat?”*
6. Combinationalism
- Combinationalism is the combining of several tests of truth in the attempt to establish the truth of a world view.
- a) E. J. Carnell (Systematic Consistency)
 - (1) Carnell utilized three basic tests for truth.
 - (a) Consistency – i.e., no facts or truths within a belief system can contradict each other.
 - (b) Coherence – i.e., the ability of the belief system to account for all the facts of history and human experience.
 - (c) Existential (personal) relevance – i.e., the truths of the belief system must be livable or practical.
 - (2) Christianity cannot rise above probability because:
 - (a) It is founded on historical facts which cannot be totally confirmed.
 - (b) It is based on moral values.
 - (3) His system starts with internal effable experiences – universal and necessary principles which are independent of sense perception.
 - (a) Carnell further maintained that it was necessary to presuppose God (in the same way we presuppose logic) and that this is the



- only way we can make sense out of our experience.
- (b) He also defended both the fact and necessity of special revelation.
 - b) Central tenets of combinationalism
 - (1) No one test of truth is adequate by itself.
 - (a) Some starting point is usually presupposed.
 - (b) Since experience is not self-interpreting, an interpretive framework (=presupposition) is necessary for meaning.
 - (2) Truth is modeled after a scientific hypothesis. The proposed hypothesis must be tested by consistency and its ability to fit the facts.
 - c) Evaluation of combinationalism
 - (1) Positively
 - (a) An interpretive framework, i.e., a pre-supposed world view is necessary. Bare facts apart from the framework are meaningless.
 - (b) Combinationalists move toward a world view that is comprehensive.
 - (c) Within a given world view, combinationalism (systematic consistency) serves as an adequate test of truth, but the world view itself must be adopted on other bases.
 - (2) Negatively
 - (a) There is the problem of presupposing the world view you seek to test. It involves circular reasoning. The issue/problem is, why presuppose that world view instead of some other.
 - (b) There is the problem of the “leaky bucket.” Several leaky buckets combined will still not hold water.
 - (c) There is the problem of “empirical fit.” If within several given world views (i.e., pre-supposed interpretive frameworks) all the facts can be made to “fit”, then how do you judge between them?
 - (d) Combinationalism then, like rationalism, is at its best a test for the falsity of a world view. It is able to show those that are not consistent and adequate.

F. What is the Christian worldview?



1. Nietzsche, who was no friend of Christianity, noted something some Christians never realize: “Christianity is a system, a whole view of things thought out together. By breaking one main concept out of it, the faith in God, one breaks the whole.”⁷⁴
2. Metaphysics (Ontology)
 - a) Who is God?
 - (1) God is the Sovereign Creator of all that exists (Gen 1).
 - (2) God is the holy standard and goal of all His creation.
 - (3) God is personal and desires to relate with mankind.
 - (4) God is a Trinity.
 - (5) God is immanent and transcendent.
 - b) Who is man?
 - (1) Man is a creation of God.
 - (2) Man is the image of God.
 - (3) Man is called to live as God would on the earth.
 - (4) Man was created perfect, but is now totally depraved.
 - c) What is the world?
 - (1) The world is a creation of God and is not an extension of His being.
 - (2) The world was created in six 24-hour days.
 - (3) The world is created for the benefit and use of man.
3. Epistemology
 - a) Can we know?
 - (1) We have access to knowledge because all men know God.
 - (2) We can know because we are made in the image of God.
 - b) How do we gain knowledge?
 - (1) We gain knowledge by coming to know God’s thoughts.
 - (2) The world is a creation of God’s thought, which means that truth is a reflection of what God knows.
 - (3) God has given man access to His knowledge (while not exhaustive or even equivalent) through revelation—both natural (through senses and mind) and special (through Scripture).
4. Ethics (Axiology)

⁷⁴ As quoted in Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 77.



- a) What is our purpose (i.e., Why am I here?)?
 - (1) A comprehensive, Christian view of history⁷⁵
 - (a) Creation—the way things were supposed to be
 - (b) Fall—the way things have become
 - (c) Redemption—the way God is redeeming things back to His purpose
 - (2) Example: Image of God
 - (a) Creation—Man is created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27)
 - (b) Fall—Man is fallen from the perfection of the image (Ps. 51:5)
 - (c) Redemption—God, through Christ, is restoring the image to regenerate mankind (Col. 3:9, 10)
 - (3) The overarching plan of God provides the *telos* (purpose) for mankind's existence.
 - b) Why do we care?
 - (1) We care because God made us as moral creatures.
 - (2) We care because God created us to be satisfied in Him alone (John 15:11).
 - (3) As Augustine said, "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you." (Ecclesiastes 3:11)
 - c) Ultimate presupposition
 - (1) An ultimate presupposition is the guiding principle by which all reality (every fact, thought, etc.) is interpreted.
 - (2) The guiding presupposition in Christian theism is the following: "Human beings and the universe in which they reside are the creation of God who has revealed himself in Scripture."⁷⁶
5. Harmony between the three major propositions (Metaphysics, Epistemology, Ethics)
- a) One cannot extract any one concept of the Christian system. If he does, the entire edifice crumbles, and the *fact* they extracted becomes untenable.
 - b) Each of the various concepts—when examined in full—leads to the other concepts.

⁷⁵ For an excellent treatment of worldview from a Christian historical perspective see, Wolters, *Creation Regained*.

⁷⁶ Nash is quoting from William Halverson. See Ronald H. Nash, *Worldviews in Conflict: Choosing Christianity in the World of Ideas* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 52.



- (1) The existence of God leads to ethics, for the One who made us has a purpose.
- (2) The fact that we can know pushes us back to ask why we know—a question that can only be answered by the existence of God.

G. Worldview Comparison

1. Creationism

- a) The biblical account of creation – Gen 1:1, 11, 20, 24, 26, 2:2
- b) Biogenesis – The principle that a living organism can only arise from other living organisms similar to itself. God created the first organisms and biogenesis proceeded (before the fall OEC, after the fall YEC.)
- c) What is old-earth creationism (OEC) and young-earth creationism (YEC)?
 - (1) Old Earth Creationism
 - (a) The universe (heavens and earth) are billions of years old in line with current scientific views and big bang cosmology.
 - (b) The Genesis account of “days” is not to be taken as “24 hour” days.
 - (c) Another approach is that there are vast time gaps between each of the six day events when God supernaturally created.
 - (d) This view requires a less literal view to be taken of the Genesis account.
 - (2) Young Earth Creationism
 - (a) A literal interpretation of the Genesis account where “days” are contiguous and refer to 24 hour periods and that the Earth is about 6000 years old.
 - (b) The “Flood” is responsible for the appearance of long geological histories (e.g. fossils, sedimentary layers, etc.).
 - (c) Dating methods and big bang cosmology are viewed as currently wrong or inaccurate.

2. (Biological) Naturalism

- a) A worldview combining materialism, neo-Darwinism and abiogenesis⁷⁷
- b) Naturalism

⁷⁷ Abiogenesis is the development of living organisms from non-living matter. When combined with a nontheistic worldview, the process implies that chance + time + natural processes are the sufficient cause of the first life on Earth rising from non-living matter.



- (1) Everything is natural, i.e. that everything there is belongs to the world of nature.
- (2) In metaphysics it is akin to materialism (everything is matter).
- (3) What it insists on is that the world of nature should form a single sphere without incursions from the outside by souls or spirits, divine or human, and without having to accommodate strange entities like non-natural values or substantive abstract universals.

c) Neo-Darwinism

- (1) The theory of evolution was initially formulated in 1920. Modern evolutionary thought updates classical Darwinism by including modern information about genes and chromosomes that was unavailable to Darwin.
- (2) This has enabled the source of genetic variation upon which natural selection works to be explained in great detail.
- (3) Implication of neo-Darwinism: If the neo-Darwinian claim is true and all creatures great and small are here on earth as a result of a long chain of improbable accidents, then we have little reason to believe that God exists or that life has any meaning whatever.

d) Panspermia

- (1) The word literally means “widespread seeding.”
- (2) The Earth was (or is being) seeded by cosmic spores, bacteria or other bio-components.
- (3) These bio-components are delivered by cosmic debris, meteors, solar winds and even alien spacecraft.
- (4) Life can only descend from ancestors that were at least as highly evolved as itself.

e) Directed Evolution

- (1) The initial conditions at the big bang were so *finely tuned* as to allow for the development of the universe complete with human life through solely naturalistic mechanisms (i.e. no supernatural interference).
- (2) This is very much in line with the concept of *theistic evolution* (but replacing God with some sort of unknown super-designer).

3. Intelligent Design (or Design Argument)



- a) Intelligent design argues that nature shows tangible signs of having been designed by a preexisting intelligence.
- b) This view has been around, in one form or another, since the time of ancient Greece.

H. Meta-worldviews

1. Introduction

- a) While normal worldview studies seek to find the expressions of individuals or specific groups, meta-worldview study seeks to have a comprehensive grasp of the general direction societies' worldview beliefs are heading.
- b) Not everyone is influenced to the same degree by the overall meta-narrative functioning within a society. Nevertheless, each individual or group is influenced by these shifts.
 - (1) The Amish—perhaps the clearest example of individuals seeking to remain uninfluenced by cultural shifts—are still influenced. This can be seen from the steady defection of individuals from their ranks. In the end, there is no impregnable fortress from the general philosophical shifts of society at large.
 - (2) For this reason, it is vastly important that Christians be aware of the shifts. Often, like a swimmer who has unconsciously drifted from the shore, we can be pulled away from the center of the Christian worldview. Knowing the general trends inherent to our generation allows us to be vigilant to weed out every thought that is not subject to the Lordship of Christ.
 - (3) Knowing the worldview shifts also allows for better apologetic engagement. Being aware of the general worldview prepares us for the unique obstacles our present world presents.
- c) The following is the meta-worldview study of **Western civilization** from the advent of Christendom to today.

2. Pre-modernism

- a) What is pre-modern man?
 - (1) A few years ago a pilot believed he had found a tribe of people who appeared to have no contact with the outside world. They were living in the twenty-first century, but they were pre-modern



people. This is because pre-modernism is not based on chronology, but on various other factors.

(2) Characteristics of pre-moderns⁷⁸

- (a) No or very little cultural and religious diversity
- (b) Primitive scientific knowledge
- (c) Prescribed social roles
- (d) Little experience that challenges their social, cultural, or religious values
- (e) Walter Anderson describes pre-moderns as those who are “relatively free from the ‘culture shock’ experiences of coming into contact with people with entirely different values and beliefs—the kind of experience in contemporary urban life, you’re likely to have a couple of times before lunch.”⁷⁹

b) The Christian West from the period of Constantinian Christianity until the reformation was a model of pre-modernity.

(1) Pre-modernism was clearly expressed in the governmental systems of the period.

- (a) The most common form of government was the monarchy. People believed there should be one person in complete authority. This authoritarian figure could (and should) legislate morality to the general populace.
- (b) While the monarchs held much power, they were never separated from the power of the church. Even the monarch was limited in his work by the church, because the church represented an even higher Monarch.

(2) Though there were orthodox Jews, Muslims, and some unbelieving philosophies at the time, the period was overall one of pervasive Christian assumptions.⁸⁰

- (a) Even unbelievers were theistic unbelievers.
- (b) The possibility that God did not exist was not an option.

c) The downfall of pre-modernism

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ As quoted in Ibid.

⁸⁰ It should be noted that much that passed as the name of Christianity was in fact not Christianity. This expresses the indubitable truth that man will suppress the truth in whatever environment he is in—even when the Scripture is—at least in name—upheld as the cultural standard.



- (1) The Renaissance was the first seismic shift that broke the unity of pre-modernism.
 - (a) The renaissance was not a direct attack on Christianity. Rather, it was a movement that sought to get back to the historic documents of humanity—particularly the documents from the ancient Greeks.
 - (b) As the West exposed itself to Greek culture through the ancient writings, the ideas contained in the documents brought challenges to its own pre-modern assumptions.
 - (c) As a result, the scholars of the era (scholars tend to lead societies cultural shifts) began to embrace pre-Christian thought. The most important element, however, was that they began to be exposed to thinking that did not use the Scripture (Higher Authority) as the starting point of all rational thought.
 - (2) The Reformation brought the second seismic shift that finally unsettled the pre-modern foundation.
 - (a) The Reformation can be said to be a product of the renaissance.⁸¹ The Renaissance broke the soil that allowed the seed of the reformation to be planted.
 - (b) The authority of the Roman Catholic Church was unquestioned for over a thousand years. The Renaissance, which challenged the basic structures of pre-modern thought, did not leave this monolith alone. Had Martin Luther attempted to produce a reformation a hundred years before, he would have been crushed by the power of the authoritarian church.
 - (c) The Reformation further divided the once unified people.
3. Modernism
- a) The rise of modernism
 - (1) The Renaissance (challenge to cultural beliefs) and Reformation (challenge to religious beliefs) joined together to make a whole new world.
 - (2) The Renaissance had provided the Western world with a deep focus on philosophy and the life of the

⁸¹ Certainly the Lord was the primary factor. Nevertheless, God uses secondary means to accomplish His goals.



mind, which had previously passed away with Greek civilization.

- (3) The Reformation provided the general populace with the critical reasoning necessary to discard the role the Roman Catholic Church had played in their lives. Unfortunately, the tidal wave could not be stopped. Having eliminated the need for the Catholic Church, modern man then asked whether there was any need for a church at all.
 - (4) Modern man fell to the error of overcorrection. He rightly threw off the authoritarian role of Catholicism, but he also threw off all authority in the process. The biblical position would have been the median position; namely, recognize the priesthood of the believer (thereby throwing off Catholicism) and yet stand under the authority of God.
- b) The Enlightenment
- (1) “To enlighten” means “to give knowledge to.”
 - (2) This period is aptly named the Enlightenment, since mankind gave itself to rational inquiry into every matter—especially the things which had been taken for granted in previous generations.
 - (3) The expanse of science
 - (a) In premodernism, scientific events were often described as direct theistic intervention. For instance, the volcanic eruptions was due to God’s anger and judgment. While they may have been slightly aware of the natural causes, premoderns rarely looked beyond theistic explanations for events.
 - (b) Modernism reversed this trend. Rather than positing God as the primary cause and nature as the secondary cause, modernism argued that nature is the primary cause and God—if He exists at all—was a mere spectator to the events He had long ago set in motion (i.e., deism).
 - (c) Darwin, in his *Origin of the Species*, merely put words to the idea that had slowly taken root in the Western world. Science was sufficient to explain the existence of all things. If science cannot explain everything now, it will be able to do so at some point. Stephen Hawking, one



of the foremost atheists, still holds firmly to this position.

- (4) The dramatic shift in Philosophy
 - (a) Alongside science, philosophy was being revolutionized. In pre-modernism (and the beginning of modernism), philosophy was based on theology. In fully blossomed modernism theism was ejected from philosophy altogether.
 - (b) *Logical positivists* are the most lucid example of this shift
 - (i) They held to the *Verification principle*, which argues that only scientifically verifiable statements are meaningful.
 - (a) One could verify by means of the five senses
 - (b) One could verify by means of an analytic or tautological truth (truths that were self-evident). [i.e., “*all bachelor’s are unmarried*” is tautological. That is because the idea of unmarried is contained in the idea bachelor.]
 - (c) Anything not verifiable by the sense or by analytical truth was literally meaningless.
 - (ii) Statements concerning God were neither verifiable by the sense or by tautological truth. Therefore, they had no meaning at all. According to their philosophy, to speak of God was to utter “blah, blah, blah.” No one could understand what you were saying.
 - (iii) Logical Positivists were attempting to make an entire philosophy without reference to anything outside of the world.
 - (iv) Positivists were incredibly popular and influential in the United States and Europe until 1950. The Achilles’ Heel that eventually dismantled the Logical Positivists was that the verification principle was self-destructive. That is, the verification principle could not be proved by sense perception or by tautology.



Therefore, the verification principle—on its own standard—was meaningless!

- (5) The Apologetic Response to Modernism
 - (a) Previous to modernism few outwardly questioned the central elements of the Christian faith. The monolithic culture produced a situation where people did not doubt the tenets of theism. After the cultural shift, it was necessary to develop an answer to the many philosophical issues being raised.⁸²
 - (b) Modern man demands answers to every question—even while he ignores the most central problems of his own philosophy and science. Therefore, we must show him that his own philosophy is erroneous. He is in many ways blind to his own blindness. The Christian must show that the unbelieving modernist is irrational at many levels.
 - (c) Further, we must ask the unbelieving modernist to think biblically. That is, challenge him to think with Christian presuppositions. Having done so, he will see that Christianity makes the most sense and is indeed the most rational explanation in life.

4. Postmodernism

a) Characteristics of Postmodernism

- (1) Truth is not fixed and objective, but variable and relative
 - (a) Personal—something can be true for one but not for another
 - (b) Societal—truth is determined by society, not by individuals Rorty says, “Truth is what your contemporaries let you get away with.”⁸³
- (2) It is a reaction against pure rationalism; it is an attempt to express the artistic side of humanity.
- (3) Morality is not objective, but simply conventional for the sake of the society.
- (4) It includes a suspicion that anyone claiming objective truth is striving for power.

⁸² I would argue that the situation returned to the way it was pre-Constantine. That is, there is nothing new under the sun (Ecclesiastes). Therefore, we should recognize that what we are facing today has already been dealt with in history, and, if the Lord tarries, will come around again.

⁸³ Simon Blackburn, *Truth: A Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 31.



- (5) It rejects any meta-narrative (big story) that seeks to explain all of reality.
- (6) It substitutes factual history with dramatic imitation.⁸⁴
- b) Relation to modernism
 - (1) Some elements are reactions against modernism
 - (a) Reaction against undue scientific optimism
 - (b) Reaction against trying to objectify all of reality
 - (c) Reaction against individualism for a community approach
 - (d) Reaction against the failed attempt to bring equality through individual achievement. Now equality should be achieved through social reform
 - (e) Reaction against the spoken and written word towards images and media⁸⁵
 - (2) Some scholars do not believe postmodernism should be separated from modernism. Rather, they would say that postmodernism is ultramodernism, supermodernism, or modernism come to its own.
 - (3) In all reality, some elements of the Western culture have retained modernism and other elements have embraced postmodernism⁸⁶
 - (a) In religion, ethics, and art culture has become postmodern
 - (b) In science, economics, and related fields, Western culture is as modern as it ever has been.
 - (4) Postmodernism in religion and ethics is intricately tied to modernism's deicide.
 - (a) Friedrich Nietzsche famously said, "God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him."⁸⁷
 - (b) He recognized that no one actually killed God, but he was expressing the idea that for the culture at large the idea of God had died.

⁸⁴ Veith develops this point fully. Gene Edward Veith Jr and Marvin Olasky, *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1994), 121–142.

⁸⁵ Groothuis, *Truth Decay*, 54.

⁸⁶ William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith (3rd Edition): Christian Truth and Apologetics*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008).

⁸⁷ As quoted in R. J. Hollingdale, *Nietzsche: The Man and His Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 139.



- (c) “Nietzsche hails this ‘deicide’ as the greatest of all deeds, but he knew—before many of his time—what the philosophical consequences would be. All sense of objective orientation, of fixed meaning, of divine illumination, of providential destiny would be irretrievably lost.”⁸⁸
 - (d) In other words, Nietzsche saw that society was merely holding on to outdated customs such as objective truth,⁸⁹ ethical values, and personal value. Indeed, these things cannot exist without God.
 - (e) “The idea that one species of organisms is, unlike all the others, orientated not just towards its own increased prosperity but Truth, is as un-Darwinian as the idea that every human being has a built-in moral compass—a conscience that swings free of both social history and individual luck.”
 - (f) Postmodernism, then, in rejecting these things is merely finishing the task modernism began.
 - (g) Further, modernism made man a physical being only. Eliminating the spiritual realm allowed every thought and belief to be understood from causal effects. That is, every belief and thought we develop is determined by society, culture, and brain waves. There is no objectivity. Rather, everything can be explained in naturalistic terms.
- c) The major societal motivation towards postmodernism is cultural diversity.
- (1) Only in melting pot civilizations do we find postmodern elements
 - (a) Isolated areas of the world believe postmodernism is entirely irrational (as it indeed is!).
 - (b) Europe and America are the centers of postmodernism.
 - (2) Without the conception of objective truth (because there is no God for postmoderns), one cannot pass judgment on another’s belief system. Rather, we

⁸⁸ Groothuis, *Truth Decay*, 37.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 43.



must embrace their belief system as equal to our own.

- d) The apologetic response to Postmodernism
 - (1) Weed out the unbiblical elements of postmodern in ourselves.
 - (a) It is sometimes hard to recognize, but we cannot escape being influenced by culture.
 - (b) According to a 2009 Barna poll only 46% of evangelical, born again Christians believe there is absolute truth.⁹⁰
 - (c) This is anecdotal, but if you ask almost any older Christian they will see the trend towards postmodern acceptance in Christian youth.
 - (2) The Scripture and early church history is a guide here.
 - (a) Imperial Rome was a melting pot of various civilizations. As such, it was as postmodern as our society today.
 - (b) The persecution of Christians was done primarily because Christians claimed to have exclusive truth.⁹¹ Had Christianity opened up to other religions, it would not have been persecuted. In many ways, the Western world is heading back to this Roman ideal.
 - (c) The encouragement we can derive from a return to Rome's worldview is that Christianity exploded in a postmodern culture. As such, there is much hope and trust that the Lord will do the same today.
 - (3) Veith offers a few helpful tips in speaking to postmoderns.⁹²
 - (a) As much as possible, avoid difficult concepts and focus on narratives when expressing the gospel. Keeping attention is crucial to being heard, but it is not easy in this generation.

⁹⁰ George Barna, "Changes in Worldview Among Christians over the Past 13 Years," *The Barna Group*, 2009, <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/21-transformation/252-barna-survey-examines-changes-in-worldview-among-christians-over-the-past-13-years> (accessed January 18, 2012). Note: "born again Christians" were defined as people who said they had made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that was still important in their life today and who also indicated they believed that when they die they will go to Heaven because they had confessed their sins and had accepted Jesus Christ as their savior."

⁹¹ Jr and Olasky, *Postmodern Times*, 229–230.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 225–234.



- (b) Focus on community. Bible study groups can be helpful in expressing the communal aspect of Christianity.
- (4) Be a true neighbor to a postmodern
 - (a) As he sees you live in opposition to the direction of the world, you give him the opportunity to ask you the hope that lies within you (1 Peter 3:15).
 - (b) Postmoderns are often willing to listen to your story if you are willing to listen to theirs. Since they are open to other people's positions, they will most likely let you share your faith with them. What they are unaware of is the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish His will through His Word (Isa. 55:10).

VIII. What is Truth?

- A. A thinker should have a passion for truth. With this said, the question that demands an answer is, "**What is truth?**" A critical thinker wants to know the truth about the truth.
- B. There are three criteria for defining truth:
 1. Truth is defined in terms of language.
 2. Truth is defined in terms of sentences, not of individual words.
 3. Truth is defined in terms of that which corresponds with reality.
 4. Concerning the first criterion for defining truth, understand that the words "true" and "false" describe statements and propositions.
 - a) For example, saying "*This rock on the ground is true*" makes no sense. A rock on the ground can be real or fake, or it can exist or not exist, but it cannot be true or false.
 - b) The claim, "*There is a rock on the ground,*" can either be true or false.
 5. Concerning the second criterion for defining truth, understand that only phrases that express a complete idea are true or false.
 - a) Shouting "**God!**" from a mountaintop tells us nothing about God.
 - b) A word may have a certain meaning, but only when something is said of that word (e.g., "*There is a God*" or "*God is all-powerful*") can one determine whether what is said (i.e., the proposition) is true or false.



6. Concerning the third criterion for defining truth, “true” is the name of a relation between the sentence and the world.
 - a) This ties “truth” to observable “reality.”
 - b) The statement “*There is an armadillo on my head*” is true if and only if there is an armadillo on my head.
- C. There are three basic theories of truth:
 1. Coherence Theory
 - a) A statement is true if it “coheres” with other statements.
 - b) According to the coherence theory of truth, a statement is true if it satisfies two conditions.
 - (1) First, the statements must be logically consistent with other beliefs that are held to be true.
 - (a) A belief is false if it runs contrary to other beliefs that are held to be true.
 - (b) For example, according to the coherence theory, people should not believe in solipsism⁹³ because it is contrary to so many of our other accepted beliefs.
 - (2) Second, the statements must be mutually supporting, so that the whole system fails when some statements turn out to be false or are missing.
 - c) There are problems with the coherence theory:
 - (1) How many beliefs must a statement be consistent with before we should consider it true?
 - (2) How do we know these other accepted beliefs are true? With what other beliefs do they cohere?
 - (3) If the claims of the coherence theory are true, then they must be true if and only if they cohere with other accepted beliefs.
 - (a) But what if the accepted beliefs of the people are contrary to the claims of the coherence theory?
 - (b) In such a situation, if the claims of the coherence theory are true, then they must be false. This is a contradiction.
 2. Correspondence Theory
 - a) A sentence (or proposition) is true if and only if that which the sentence expresses corresponds to the facts or to reality.

⁹³ The belief that all the self is all that can be known to exist.



- b) The idea is that truth consists in a relation between language and reality (“words and the world”).
 - c) The word “true” is the name of a relation between a linguistic expression and its referent (i.e., the sentence and the world).
 - d) Problems with this theory
 - (1) Some ask, “What degree of correspondence must be held in order for a statement to be true?”
 - (2) A main issue is defining correspondence. What is meant by “correspondence”? The term is vague.
 - (3) Furthermore, how is correspondence to be determined?
 - e) The correspondence theory is the “default” theory of truth.
 - (1) It is the one people think is most obvious.
 - (2) Most scientists and philosophers adhere to some version of the correspondence theory
 - (3) Truth is a property of language, and language is used to describe reality. “*The grass is green*” if and only if the grass is in reality green.
3. Pragmatic Theory
- a) Truth is to be understood in terms of *practice*.
 - b) A proposition is true when acting upon it yields pleasing practical results.
 - c) Simply stated, a true statement “works.”
 - (1) “Working” is a *test* of correspondence.
 - (2) The pragmatic theory says there should be correspondence between a statement and its results when put into practice in reality.
4. Principles to be learned from these theories
- a) From the coherence theory one can be reminded of the importance of having logical consistency in his beliefs. Wherever there is an inconsistency or contradiction, some part of a person’s belief system is incorrect.
 - b) From the pragmatic theory one can be reminded that the livableness of a claim, while not a litmus test for truth, can be a helpful guide to lead us closer to truth (or at least further away from falsity).

D. Is truth relative or absolute?

- 1. Some truth is relative.
 - a) There is truth that is relative to time (e.g., “*Ronald Reagan is the President of the United States*” was true in 1981 but not in the 21st century).



- b) There is truth that is relative to location (e.g., “*The weather is lovely today*” may be true in Palm Springs but not in Detroit).
 - c) There is truth that is relative to personal preference (e.g., “*Driving in rain is much easier than driving in snow*” may be true for one person but not true for another).
 - d) There is also truth relative to one’s linguistic constructions of reality (e.g., when I say “I am a pilot,” that is not sufficient information for the pilot of a 747).
2. There are absolute truths.
- a) In fact, the claim “*There is relative truth*” is a claim of absolute truth. Either there is relative truth or there is not.
 - b) Many (if not most) statements must be either true or false.
 - (1) For example, the statement “*God exists*” is either true or not true.
 - (2) Either there is a God or there is not a God.
 - (3) Either “*God exists*” is true and “*God does not exist*” is false, or vice versa. Both cannot be true at the same time and in the same way.
 - (4) The truth value of these statements does not depend on what a person believes or desires.
 - (5) Saying that the existence of God is “true for you but not necessarily true for me” is nonsense.
3. If truth corresponds to reality in some way (and I think it does), then the only thing truth is really “relative” to is reality.
- a) When someone argues for “absolute truth,” what is usually implied is the idea that reality is not “one way for this person” and “another way for another person.”
 - b) Reality is what it is, regardless of what we believe or want.
 - c) Think of the story of the blind men and the elephant.
 - (1) The first blind man touches the elephant’s leg and thinks that an elephant must look like a tree.
 - (2) The next person touches the trunk and thinks that the elephant must look like a snake.

- (3) The third feels the elephant’s side and says an



elephant is like a wall.

(4) This is sometimes used to defend relative truth – what the elephant looked like depended on the relative position of the “observer.”

(5) The reality is that there is an elephant. It remained an elephant regardless of what each blind man believed it to be.

4. Relativism does have one redeeming quality

a) It teaches us tolerance, which is a quality every thinker should desire.

(1) By *tolerance* we do not mean “accepting all views as equally true.”

(2) *Tolerance* as the word ought to be used (and as it once was used in society) means that, while a person may not agree with the beliefs of others, he respects those people.

(3) This is a good thing. All of us should respect other persons, even (and especially) when we disagree with them.

b) Any interpretation of reality a person formulates can be inaccurate or false.

(1) No one can reason perfectly, and no one has “*all the answers.*”

(2) In the search for truth, one must continue to create and re-create his paradigm, but with the understanding that all of us are (ideally) trying to understand our world better.

(3) A thinker should understand that there is no perfect interpretation of things (Perhaps there is, but how would we know it if we saw it? Our interpretation of this perfect interpretation would have to be perfect as well!), so that he will be more tolerant of others.

(4) A thinker is a truthseeker – a pilgrim on a journey towards truth.

E. Determining What is True

The systems or tests that have been discussed thus far are inadequate. No one of them establishes itself while eliminating the others.

1. An adequate test of truth or means of formulating a world view will include two levels:

a) A basis for testing the truth of an over-all world view

b) The means for testing the truth of competing views within a world view



2. Problems with views studied thus far
 - a) Skepticism – I know I cannot know.
 - b) Agnosticism – I cannot know about God. But I stated something I know about God.
 - c) Rationalism fails since there is no way of rationally demonstrating its own first principle.
 - d) Fideism fails since it is not a test of truth, but merely a claim to truth without support or basis.
 - e) Experientialism fails since it is not self-justifying or self-interpreting. It is private, not public.
 - f) Evidentialism fails since facts are not self-interpreting, but have meaning only in a given context and worldview.
 - g) Pragmatism fails since it wrongly identifies workability with truth.
 - h) Combinationalism fails since several inadequate tests do not add up to one adequate test.
 - i) If no adequate test for truth exists, then we are in trouble.
3. An adequate test of truth
 - a) Test of Reason
 - (1) Comprehensiveness
 - (a) Does it answer all the questions that should be answered?
 - (b) Does it rely on paradox or mystery in explanation?
 - (2) Coherence
 - (a) Does it adhere to the Law of Non-Contradiction?
 - (i) Law stated: A cannot be both B and not B at same time in same way.
 - (ii) Fido (A) cannot be a dog (B) and not be a dog (B).
 - (iii) This is an essential element of all thought, for if the law of non-contradiction is false, then we cannot distinguish any object in reality from any other object.
 - (iv) “If contradictory statements are true of the same subject at the same time, evidently all things will be the same thing. Socrates will be a ship, a house, as well as a man. But if precisely the same attributes attach to Crito that attach to Socrates it follows that Socrates is Crito. Not only so, but the



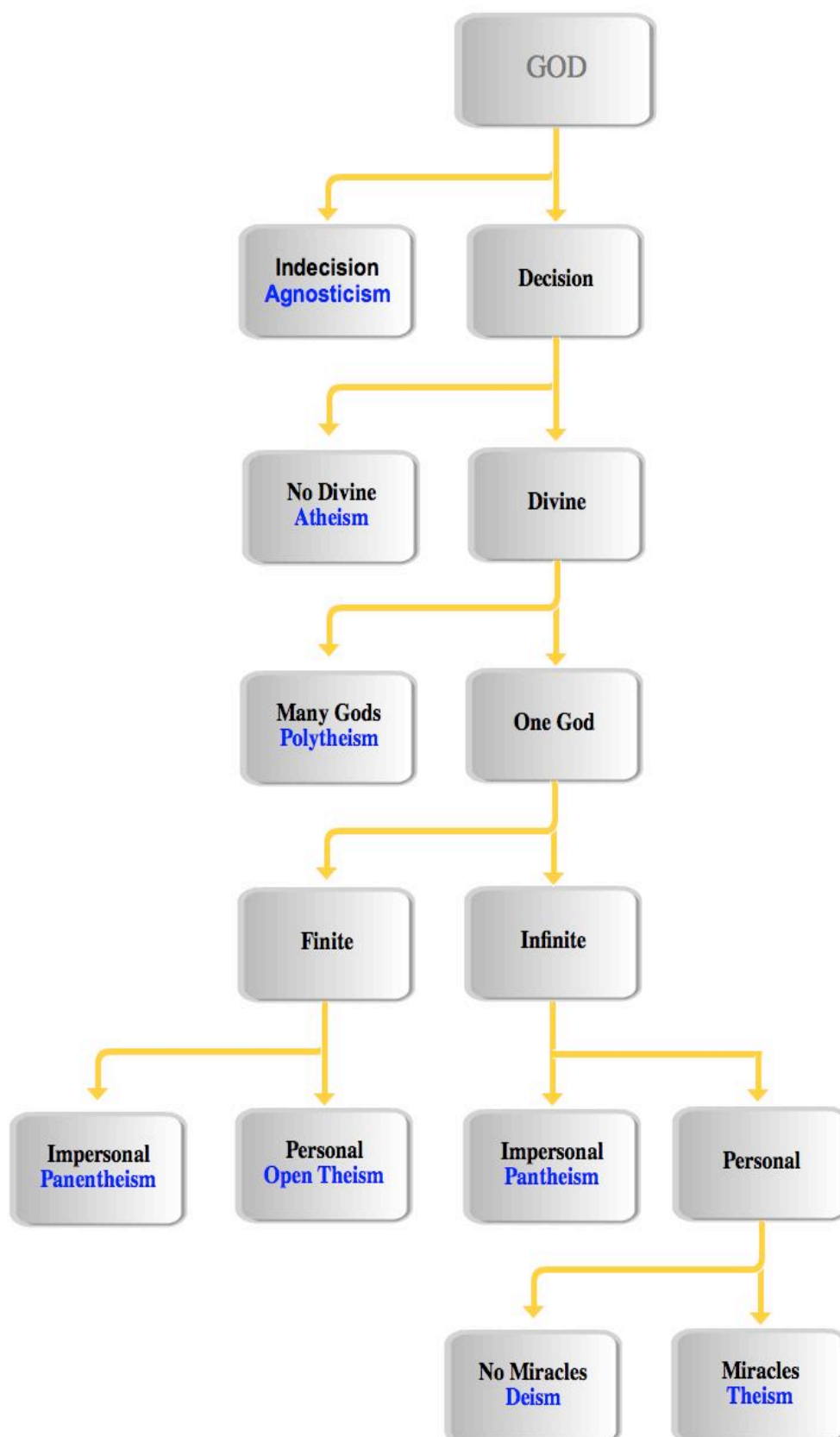
ship in the harbor, since it has the same list of attributes too, will be identified with this Socrates-Crito person. In fact, everything will be the same thing. All differences among things will vanish and all will be one.”⁹⁴

- (v) It is impossible to deny the law of non-contradiction. Saying, “I believe the law of non-contradiction is false” assumes (1) that the one who hears you is a different person than you, (2) that there is a difference between truth and falsity, and (3) that one can have intelligent conversation. All three of these assumptions depend on the law of non-contradiction for their existence.
- (vi) Worldviews break the law of non-contradiction when they hold one position which contradicts another element of the established worldview.
- (b) In other words, do parts of the system contradict other parts?
- b) Test of Experience
 - (1) External (does it conform to knowledge I have about the world?)
 - (a) Science
 - (b) History
 - (2) Internal (does it conform to the knowledge I have about myself?)
 - (a) Does it account for the source of human desire?
 - (b) Does it account for morality?
- c) Test of Practice
 - (1) Livability—Can one who holds this position live it without hypocrisy?
 - (2) Fruitfulness—Does living this worldview lead to cultural and intellectual productivity?⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Gordon Haddon Clark, *Thales to Dewey: A History of Philosophy* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1957), 103.

⁹⁵ Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 56–57.





F. The Landscape of Ideas

1. How do we come to know things? – a Christian perspective:

a) Why does it matter?

(1) Because it's a “noisy” world out there and we need to know how to tune into the Truth and tune out the rest.

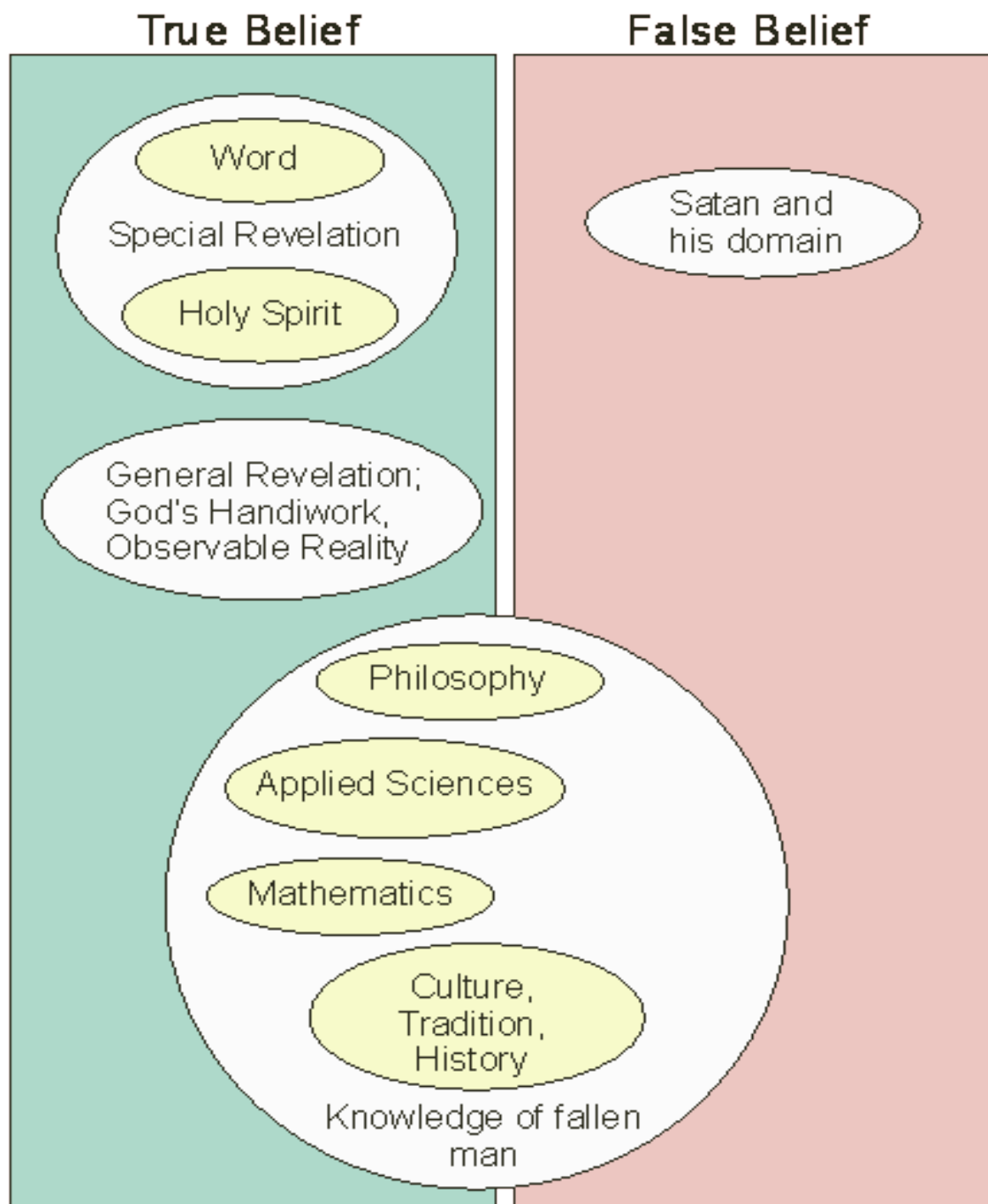
(2) It is helpful to know what sources and channels of belief are influencing our worldview.

b) What are the sources and channels of propositions⁹⁶ from which we form beliefs and how reliable are those sources?

⁹⁶ A proposition is *something offered for consideration*.



What are the sources of belief?



Note: The Reality God created, "General Revelation," is a "reliable source." Reality is objective and as Christians, we are "realists." God is not in the business of playing tricks on us – reality is not like a house of mirrors. Now whether or not we can reliably tune in to His creation to form true belief is another matter.



- c) What are noumena and phenomena?
 - (1) Noumena – things that are thought
 - (2) Phenomena – things that appear
 - d) How are the arts a source of belief?

“I said I knew a very wise man so much of Sir Chr—s sentiment, that he believed **if a man were permitted to make all the Ballads he need not care who should make the laws of a Nation.** And we find that most of the ancient legislators thought that they could not well reform the manners of any City without the help of a Lyric, and sometimes of a Dramatic Poet. But in this City the Dramatic Poet no less than the Ballad-maker has been almost wholly employed to corrupt the People, in which they have had most unspeakable and deplorable success.”⁹⁷
 - e) How does the Christian “filter” the channels?
 - (1) How do we tune in correctly?
 - (2) “Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor 10:3-5)
 - f) What is faith and how does it relate to cognitive function?
 - (1) “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1).
 - (2) If the Word made flesh is the cornerstone of our foundational beliefs, then our entire perspective on the world will be shaped very differently than if He is not.
2. What is logic?
- a) Overview
 - (1) Logic attempts to distinguish between correct and incorrect arguments.
 - (2) Some aspects of logic are widely accepted, sound and useful for discernment.
 - (3) Other aspects are not universally accepted and are of questionable value to Christian apologetics.
 - b) Why is logic useful?
 - (1) In some circumstances logic can be used to reliably reach a true belief that you were uncertain of

⁹⁷ Andrew Fletcher (18th Century Scottish political thinker), *An Account of a Conversation Concerning a right Regulation of Governments for the Common Good of Mankind. In a Letter to the Marquiss of Montrose, the Earls of Rothes, Roxburg and Haddington, From London the 1st of December, 1703* (Edinburgh: 1704), 10. Available on Google Books.



- (2) Logic can also reject a false belief that you might have previously accepted.
- c) God is rational!
 - (1) Logic is not something man invented as much as discovered.
 - (2) As God's image bearers, we are rational beings as well, and we are called to be reasonable:
 - (a) Isaiah 1:18 – Come now, let us *reason* together, says the Lord.
 - (b) Acts 17:17 – Therefore disputed he [Paul] in the synagogue . . . and in the market daily.
- d) What principles or methods of logic are most relevant to apologetics?
 - (1) First Principles:
 - (a) Law of Identity: A is A.
 - (i) Dr. Oats is the Dean of the Seminary.
 - (ii) This also means that the Dean of the Seminary is Dr. Oats
 - (a) Non-Contradiction: A cannot be B and not B.
 - (i) Dr. Oats cannot be the Dean of the Seminary and not be the Dean of the Seminary at the same time.
 - (ii) Dr. Oats cannot be Mr. Washer and not be Mr. Washer at the same time.
 - (b) Excluded Middle: Either A is true or not A is true.
 - (i) Either Dr. Oats is the Dean of the Seminary or he is not.
 - (ii) Either Dr. Oats is Mr. Washer or he is not.
 - (2) Deductive reasoning (syllogistic logic)
 - (3) Fallacies – formal, informal and inductive – invalid argument forms

IX. Is it Reasonable to be a Christian?

- A. Has Science rendered Christianity outmoded and outdated?
 - 1. What is Science?
 - a) It is knowledge differentiated from ignorance; the correction of errors from common sense.
 - b) Scientific knowledge is obtained by “scientific methods.”
 - c) Science is in the game of “what works” and discovering the “hows” of our world – it does not pursue absolutes or the deep truths of life.



- d) Science never “arrives” at the truth, it claims to progress towards it.
 - e) There is no precise and widely accepted definition of science.
 - f) Scientific methodologies have yet to effectively tackle the deep questions of life: ultimate origins; meaning and purpose; morality and destiny.
2. Science first flourished under a Christian worldview.
 - a) It may be considered to have started to flourish in western culture during the era of Sir Isaac Newton who was a devout Christian.
 - b) Under the influence of the Christian worldview people began to understand that the forces of nature are not the whims and caprices of spirits or demons. They are the orderly decrees of the creator and as such they can be understood by men made in His image.
 3. Where is Science today?
 - a) Modern man is like a child who sees and knows everything in his new world, everything except himself.
 - b) We have grown tremendously technologically, but have made no progress in understanding the deep truths of life outside of what the Bible teaches.
 4. Are Science and Christianity incompatible?
 - a) From a Christian perspective, science reveals a true proposition when it correlates correctly to God’s creation.
 - b) As Christians we should welcome the advancement of scientific knowledge as it will point more and more to the Creator.
 - c) Where science can shed some light it often gels nicely with the Christian worldview.
 5. Should we base our faith on Science?
 - a) We should not rely on the current body of scientific knowledge to ground our faith because science is a moving target.
 - b) Today’s working theories may be overridden by new discoveries tomorrow.
 - c) More importantly, our faith is grounded in the Word which oftentimes is out of the reach of scientific inquiry.
 6. Do extraordinary claims demand extraordinary evidence?
 - a) You might hear that claims from faith demand extraordinary evidence (citing “Occam’s Razor” or the



principle of parsimony⁹⁸) and that scientific methods shun such intellectual sloppiness. How can we respond?

- b) Scientific methods cannot deal with non-science – ultimate origins, morality, purpose and meaning, and ultimate destiny are areas outside the boundaries of science.
 - c) Faith is rationally justifiable – it is warranted.
- B. Are there compelling arguments for the theistic position?
1. Why is there something rather than nothing? – a profound question posed by the great mathematician and Christian philosopher G. W. Leibniz
 2. *Principle of Sufficient Reason* – “there can be found no fact that is true or existent, or any true proposition, without there being a sufficient reason for its being so and not otherwise, although we cannot know these reasons in most cases.” (Leibniz). In short, the principle is that nothing is without a reason for its being.
 - a) *Contingent Being* – the reason for its existence lies outside of itself and it may to cease to exist (e.g. the Earth)
 - b) *Necessary Being* – there is no reason for its existence that lies outside of itself and it cannot cease to exist (e.g. God)
 3. *The universe either exists contingently or necessarily:* People must choose a necessary being, the *First Cause*: it is either God or the Universe. There are no other reasonable choices.
 - a) “I should say the universe is just there, and that’s all” (atheist Bertrand Russell).
 - b) “The Cosmos is all there is, ever was or ever will be” (atheist Carl Sagan).
 - c) “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1).
 4. What is the argument from causation? (Cosmological)
 - a) Things that begin to exist have a cause.
 - b) The universe began to exist.
 - c) Therefore the universe has a cause.

⁹⁸ Occam’s razor (or Ockham’s razor) is named after William of Ockham. The Latin term is *lex parsimoniae*. It is a principle of succinctness used in logic and problem-solving. It argues that among competing positions, the hypothesis with the fewest assumptions should be selected.



- d) The cause of the universe must transcend the universe (exist outside of time and space), and have immense creative power. This rules out Pantheism.
 - e) The cause must be a personal agent who chooses to create or there must exist a “hyper-universe” a universe outside of our universe spawning new universes eternally (but why believe in this hypothetical entity that cannot be scientifically verified over a belief in God who created the universe?).
5. What is the argument from design? (Teleological)
- a) Things that are designed have a designer.
 - b) The universe was designed.
 - c) Therefore the universe has a designer.
 - d) The universe is “fine-tuned” and this may be taken as evidence of design or not. If it is not, then what explanations can be offered for the fine-tuning that is recognized by both theist and nontheist alike?
- X. The Top Five Questions (what students ask about Christianity, taken from the Veritas forum in 1997 with Ravi Zacharias and William Lane Craig on the campus of the University of Iowa)
- A. What is the meaning of life?
- 1. “Man is not the center. God does not exist for the sake of man. Man does not exist for his own sake. ‘Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.’ [Rev. 4:11] We were made not primarily that we may love God (although we were made for that too) but that God may love us, that we may become objects in which the divine love may rest ‘well pleased.’”⁹⁹
 - 2. We have a mission:
 - a) “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” (Matthew 6:33)
 - b) Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Matthew 22:37-39)
 - c) The Great Commission – Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19)

⁹⁹ C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Macmillan, 1944).



- d) Westminster Catechism's first question, "What is the chief purpose of man?" Answer: "To glorify God and to serve him forever."
- 3. Wonder; truth; love and a sense of belonging; security – the four stages of life.¹⁰⁰ Only God can satisfy our hungers; our sense of wonder; our desire for truth; and our need for love and security. "Our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee."¹⁰¹
- 4. Purpose, Immortality and Destiny – without objective purpose in life now and beyond the grave, life has no meaning. Even if life is eternal, without God it would lack objective purpose.
- B. How do I know God exists?
 - 1. Origin of the universe – The Cosmological argument
 - 2. Complex order, design and fine-tuning of the universe – The Teleological argument
 - 3. Argument from objective moral values
 - a) Objective moral values require an object moral law giver (i.e. God.)
 - (1) Objective moral values exist.
 - (2) Therefore God exists.
 - b) What is objective moral value or moral law? – Objective values are "recognized and discovered, not invented by humans."¹⁰²
 - (1) "Objective moral law" in this context has the attribute of *absoluteness* or unconditional existence; not relative or dependant.
 - (2) It is independent of human consciousness, consequence or interpretation.
 - (3) It also includes the notion of *obligation*, or a duty to comply.
 - (4) It is *universal* in that it is not subject to a particular localization of space and time.
- C. How can I believe in God when there is the problem of evil?
 - 1. The Problem of Evil
 - a) Definition
 - (1) Evil is a term that is nearly impossible to define, yet everyone knows what it is.

¹⁰⁰ Ravi Zacharias, *Can Man live without God?* (Nashville: W Publishing Group), 1994.

¹⁰¹ Augustine, *Confessions* 1.

¹⁰² Paul Copan, *True For You But not for Me* (Grand Rapids: Bethany House, 1998).



- (2) In some ways evil can be defined as, “Things the way they were not designed to be.”
- (3) The previous definition tips the scale in favor of theism. On a naturalistic basis, what is evil?
- (4) One of Merriam Webster’s definitions is “To cause harm.”¹⁰³
- b) Two types of evil
 - (1) Natural Evil
 - (a) Natural evil is harm done by the operation of the physical world.
 - (b) Tsunamis, earthquakes, floods, diseases, and other “natural” processes are included in this category.
 - (2) Moral Evil
 - (a) Moral evil is harm produced by moral agents. Therefore, all evil that result from human acts or failure to act is moral evil.
 - (b) Later, we will see that some do not make a marked distinction between moral and natural evil. Nevertheless, as we will see in discussing the solutions below, there is a slight distinction, which helps us see the issue more clearly.
- c) Historical Expressions of the Problem
 - (1) Epicurus (341 BC—270 BC)
 - (a) “God either wishes to take away evil, and is unable; or He is able and unwilling; or He is neither willing nor able, or He is both willing and able.”
 - (b) He clearly expresses the issues as he develops his argument:
 - (i) If God is unwilling and is unable, He is feeble, which is not in accordance with the character of God.
 - (ii) If He is able and unwilling, He is evil, which is equally at variance with God.
 - (iii) If He is neither willing nor able He is both evil and feeble, and therefore not God.
 - (iv) If He is both willing and able, which alone is suitable to God, from what source then

¹⁰³ “Evil,” *Merriam-Webster*, n.d., <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/evil>, (accessed February 25, 2012).



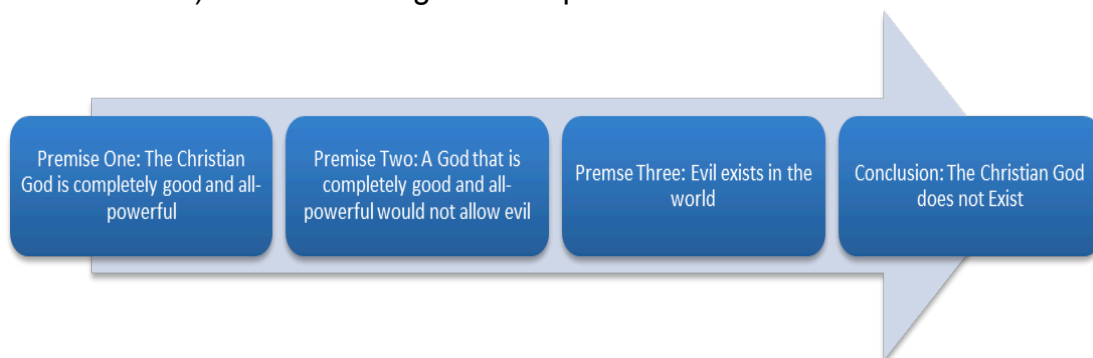
are evils or why does He not remove them?¹⁰⁴

(2) Modern

- (a) Ronald Nash, "Every philosopher I know believes that the most serious challenge to theism was, is, and will continue to be the problem of evil."¹⁰⁵
- (b) Walter Kaufmann, who had lost his family in the holocaust, said that evil is a "complete refutation of popular theism."¹⁰⁶

2. Deductive (Logical)

- a) The deductive approach seeks to prove that the existence of the biblical God is incompatible with the existence of evil. Therefore, God does not exist.
- b) Deductive argument expressed:



- c) J. L. Mackie stated the problem this way: "In its simplest form the problem is this: God is omnipotent; God is wholly good; and yet evil exists. There seems to be some contradiction between these three propositions, so that if any two of them were true the third would be false. But at the same time all three are essential parts of most theological positions: the theologian, it seems, at once *must* adhere and *cannot consistently* adhere to all three."¹⁰⁷

3. Inductive (Evidential)

- a) This approach seeks to prove that the existence of the biblical God is entirely improbable because of the widespread existence of evil.
- b) Inductive argument expressed:

¹⁰⁴ As quoted from, Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2011), 616.

¹⁰⁵ Ronald H. Nash, *Faith and Reason* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 177.

¹⁰⁶ Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God*, 150.

¹⁰⁷ J. L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," *Mind* 64 (1955): 200–212.



Premise One: The Christian God is completely good and all-powerful

Premise Two: The amount and types of evil in the world seem incompatible with the Christian conception of God

Conclusion: It is reasonable that the Christian God does not exist

4. Existential (Personal)

- a) This seeks to prove that the existence of the biblical God cannot be believed because of a personal experience of evil.
- b) This argument is not a rational argument against belief in God. For this reason, I have refrained from placing it in a logical way. This argument is much more emotionally charged than the others. People who have suffered loss emotionally argue, "If a God like that exists, I don't want anything to do with Him!"

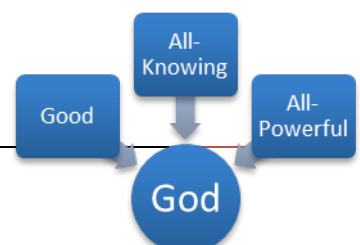
5. Two kinds of solutions to the problem of evil

a) Defense

- (1) A defense simply seeks to show the compatibility of the various propositions. This does not seek to prove that the propositions are true. Rather, it only shows that there is a way of rationally reconciling the seeming contradiction.
- (2) Alvin Plantinga developed the Free Will Defense of Christian theism. What is interesting about his defense is that it was written while he was teaching at Calvin College—a Calvinistic bastion that would deny the existence of the type of free will necessary for the Free Will defense to succeed. This shows that Plantinga's purpose was not necessarily to show the precise way one could reconcile the propositions in Christian theism. Instead, his purpose was to refute the *logical* claim that these beliefs were incompatible.

b) Theodicy

- (1) A theodicy (*Theos*=God *Dike*=Justice) is a justification of God in the face of evil.
- (2) Theodicy goes beyond a mere defense, because a theodicy is not satisfied with merely showing *possibility* but *actuality*. That is, it does not want to say that the three propositions are compatible, it wants to



show definitively *how* they are compatible.

6. Insufficient Solutions to the Problem of Evil

a) One way to solve the problem of evil is to make some modifications to our understanding of three significant truths.

(1) In other words, we can solve the problem in the following ways:

(a) God does not want to stop evil (i.e., questioning His goodness).

(b) God is not capable of stopping evil (i.e., questioning His power).

(c) God does not know how to stop evil (i.e., questioning His knowledge).

(2) Nash summarizes, "In short, the existence of evil seems inconsistent with our belief in God's goodness or omniscience or power."¹⁰⁸

(3) Few people are bold enough to make the statements mentioned above. Nevertheless, the following answers to the problem of evil—in one way or another—seek to redefine the character of God in a way that Scripture does not allow.

b) Evil does not exist.

(1) Some have wanted to solve the problem of evil by simply denying its presence.

(2) Types of this theodicy

(a) Eastern Theodicy (Buddhism, Hinduism, etc.)

(i) Evil is only an illusion. All of reality is merely an illusion. There is no problem of evil.

(ii) The ridiculousness of this view is shown in the following quote: "One day I was talking to a group of people in the room of a young South African in Cambridge University. Among others, there was present a young Indian who was of Sikh background but a Hindu by religion. He started to speak strongly against Christianity, but did not really understand the problems of his own beliefs. So I said, 'Am I not correct in saying that on the basis of your system, cruelty and noncruelty are ultimately equal, that there is no intrinsic difference between them?'

¹⁰⁸ Nash, *Faith and Reason*, 178.



He agreed. The people who listened and knew him as a delightful person, an 'English gentleman' of the very best kind, looked up in amazement. But the student in whose room we met, who had clearly understood the implications of what the Sikh had admitted, picked up his kettle of boiling water with which he was about to make tea, and stood with it steaming over the Indian's head. The man looked up and asked him what he was doing, and he said with a cold yet gentle finality, 'There is no difference between cruelty and noncruelty.' Thereupon the Hindu walked out into the night."¹⁰⁹

- (iii) John Frame also critiques this position by saying, "If evil is an illusion, it is a terribly troublesome illusion, an illusion that brings pain, misery, suffering, and death. If it is said that the pain also is illusory, I reply that there is no difference between illusory and real pain... The problem just backs up a step and asks, 'How could a good God give us such a terrible illusion of pain?'"¹¹⁰

(b) Privation Theodicy

- (i) This theodicy says that evil is not real; rather, evil is simply the absence ("privation") of good.
- (ii) In this light, evil is the hole in the roof.¹¹¹ It cannot be classified among things; rather it is the lack of something.
- (iii) Problems
 - (a) First, even if evil were only a lack of good, it is nevertheless a significant experience of life. Simply naming it a lack does not minimize its devastating effects and consequences.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Francis A. Schaeffer Trilogy* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1990), 110.

¹¹⁰ Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God*, 156.

¹¹¹ Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 618.

¹¹² Later in the notes we will see that some argue that the existence of good coupled with the freedom of man provides the possibility of a lack of good (evil).



- (b) Second, what makes love more real than hate? Cursing than blessing? Killing than saving life? It does not appear possible to give these concepts a different metaphysical position. Hate may be the absence of all strains of love, but love is also the absence of any strain of hate.
- c) God is not all-powerful
 - (1) There are multiple ways this has been expressed in the past. One of the most common is the **Best of All Possible Worlds Theodicy**.
 - (2) Leibniz, who originally designed the theodicy, argued that God's perfection required that He create a perfect creation. Unfortunately, the best possible world (perfect world) was one that contained evil.¹¹³ While it may have been possible to create a world without evil, this would not have been perfect, since it would have been a world without the freedom of the will (and many of the most precious characteristics of humanity i.e., those characteristics that can only be gained by experiencing difficulty).
 - (3) Problems
 - (a) First, in Scripture, the best things actually do not contain evil (God Himself, original creation, future creation, etc.). If a sinless environment can be made "better" by evil, maybe the new heavens and the new earth could be made better in the same way.
 - (b) Second, Leibniz began with the philosophical assumption that a perfect being must create a perfect world (best of all possible worlds). But does God always have to create the best/perfect? Adam was originally created alone, which was not perfect (Gen 2:18).
- d) God is not all-knowing (Open Theism Theodicy)
 - (1) Similar to those above, people in this camp argue that God has given man a libertarian free will.
 - (2) People in this camp believe that God does not know the future. He is unaware of the evil that is

¹¹³ Notice that the world we now live in can be called a perfect world, because it is the one God created. It can also be called imperfect, because it has sin. Leibniz, and those who follow him, means the first when he says God created a perfect world.



coming to pass. As a consequence of this view, theists have also denied God's omniscience.¹¹⁴

(3) Major Problems

- (a) While a finite God would solve some issues, it raises many more. Namely, this God is not the perfect God of Scripture (see previous critique of open theism above).
- (b) Frame notes the central problem with a God who is not omnipotent nor omniscient. He says that the one who proposes such a God "may thereby get a solution to the problem of evil, but he loses any sure hope for the overcoming of evil. He gains intellectual satisfaction at the cost of having to face the horrible possibility that evil may triumph after all. Surely there is something ironic about calling this a 'solution' to the problem of evil."¹¹⁵

e) Clean Hands Theodicy

- (1) Many reformed defenders of Scripture use this theodicy (Van Til, Gordon Clark).
- (2) This theodicy claims that though God ordained evil, He is not responsible for evil. This is because God did not commit the action. Differentiating between primary (one who acted) and secondary causation (one who commanded), this theodicy claims that God is not culpable for human sin.
- (3) The major problem with this theodicy is that it requires us to believe God is not responsible in the same way that man is. Man would be guilty of a crime whether he committed a murder (primary causation) or ordered someone else to commit the murder (secondary causation). Frame notes the problem clearly, "If that were the only solution to the problem of evil, it would be an inadequate one. For it would picture God as some kind of giant Mafia boss who keeps His hands legally clean by forcing His underlings to carry out His nasty designs."¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ We will note that they do not deny omniscience, but redefine it. In the end, it looks so different than the historic understanding that it can be called a denial.

¹¹⁵ Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God*, 157.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 166.



- f) No-Law Theodicy
 - (1) Some reformed thinkers claim that God is so different than His creation that He is not under the laws of creation. Man can kill and be evil, but God can kill and be righteous. The difference is not in the act, but in the One committing the act.
 - (2) This position fails because it does not recognize that we are designed to model our ethics after God's ethics. We are to be holy as God is holy. But if God's righteousness is distinct from the righteousness we are to express, how can we model His actions? This seems to betray the very first purpose of man—to image God (Ex 20:11; Lev 11:44-45; Matt 5:45; I Peter 1:15-16)
- 7. The Christian's argument:
 - a) If good and evil exist, then there is an objective moral law in which to differentiate between them.
 - b) Good and evil exist.
 - c) Therefore, an objective moral law exists.
 - d) If there is an object moral law, then there is an object moral law giver (i.e. God).
- 8. The Origin of Evil
 - a) "Where did evil come from?"
 - (1) When one inquires about the origin of something, what he is actually asking is, "What is the *cause* of X?"
 - (2) Philosophers have distinguished among various types of causes:
 - (a) *Material cause*: That out of which something is made (e.g., the stone out of which a statue is carved)
 - (b) *Formal cause*: The design or idea followed in the process of making something (e.g., a sketch made by the sculptor as a pattern for the sculpture)
 - (c) *Final cause*: The purpose for which something is made (e.g., the reason why the sculptor is doing the sculpture)
 - (d) *Instrumental cause*: The means or instrument by which something is made (e.g., the sculptor's chisel)
 - (e) *Efficient cause*: The chief agent causing something to be made (e.g., the sculptor)



- (f) *Sufficient cause*: A cause equal to the task of causing the thing to be made (e.g., a person capable of sculpting)
- b) "God created everything, so God created evil."
 - (1) When critics present this argument they are usually referring to God as the *efficient cause* of evil (whether they realize it or not). But should all evil be attributed to God? To answer this question, we must first address another question: "Did God create everything?"
 - (2) Consider John 1:1-3.
 - (a) Instead of saying "God created everything," it is more accurate to say "all things were created through God."
 - (b) Similarly, "through" my great grandmother, my family (I am referring to those who are blood relatives descended from my great grandmother) was "created" or birthed. My great grandmother did not give birth to each one of my aunts, uncles, or cousins, nor did she give birth to my mother, sister, or me. Yet, without her, no one in my family would have been born.
 - (c) God did not specifically create the computer I am using now; but without him, it would not have been made.
 - (3) God often supplies the *material causes* and *instrumental causes* for many of the created entities we see today (like my computer). Scripture does not affirm that God is the *efficient cause* of everything that exists.
 - (a) "What about evil?"
 - (b) Let me suggest that, through God, evil was made.
 - (i) Did God create evil?
 - (ii) No, just as God did not specifically create my computer; however, God did set in place the "ingredients" that allow evil to come into existence (i.e., the material and instrumental causes).¹¹⁷

9. Responses to the Problem of Evil (theodicy)

¹¹⁷ Also, God created the *sufficient causes* of evil; namely, humans. This is explored further in the "Freedom to Choose" theodicy, as is an answer to why God would create the potential for evil in the world.



- a) The argument from volition:
 - (1) Man can love God only if there is the freedom to choose or reject Him.
 - (2) Man can love God.
 - (3) Therefore the freedom to choose or reject God exists.
 - (4) The freedom to reject God allows for the possibility for evil.
 - (5) Therefore, the possibility for evil exists.
 - (a) Happiness is not the primary goal of life (a common misconception)
 - (b) In demographic areas where the most gratuitous suffering and evil exists, the gospel is flourishing the most. In the west, the church is flat – where we are comfortable.
- b) *The Freedom to Choose Theodicy*. Also called the “free will” defense, this theodicy claims that evil exists because God created people with the freedom to choose. Humans have wills, and therefore the potential to sin and create evil.
 - (1) In other words, God created man as the *sufficient cause* of evil (God did not create humans so they would sin – if one is to be free to choose, then evil must be one of the possibilities). When man commits evil, he becomes an *efficient cause* of evil.
 - (2) God created mankind so that he could share his love with them. Man was created to receive that love, and worship God and love him in return. In order for this relationship to exist, a decision must be made by both parties to love, trust, and be faithful to each other. God cannot have that with machines or puppets.
 - (3) “But God is omnipotent. That means he can do anything, including create a world where people have freedom to choose and yet don’t sin, right?”
 - (a) This is a classic case of the God of the Bible vs. the God of the philosophers.
 - (b) He could have, but had he done so, we would not have freedom of choice. We would be robots, or “talking dolls” that always speak the same thing when someone pulls the string or pushes the button. We would not be *human*.



- (c) “If you choose to say ‘God can give a creature free-will and at the same time withhold free-will from it,’ you have not succeeded in saying *anything* about God: meaningless combinations of words do not suddenly acquire meaning because we prefix to them the two other words: ‘God can.’ It remains true that all *things* are possible with God: the intrinsic impossibilities are not things but nonentities. It is no more possible for God than for the weakest of his creatures to carry out both of two mutually exclusive alternatives, not because his power meets an obstacle, but because nonsense remains nonsense, even when we talk it about God.”¹¹⁸
- (4) “Why doesn’t God intervene every time someone is going to misuse his freedom and hurt another person?”
- (a) A freedom which was prevented from being exercised whenever it was going to be misused simply would not be freedom.
- (b) That was the point of God’s putting the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” in the garden in Eden.
- (c) According to Scripture, God created the world, and he said it was “very good.” That was, I think, the intention.
- (5) “Is freedom worth all the risk?”
- (a) Some people wonder whether this freedom to choose good or evil is worth the problems it causes.
- (b) Is life worth living when we must endure suffering and evil?
- (c) I argue that it is. Indeed, just as humans are *sufficient causes* of evil, so also they are sufficient causes of good. Dr. Gregory Boyd explains it this way: “The fact that we humans have such an incredible amount of potential for evil, then, is to my mind indicative of the fact that we also have an incredible amount of potential for good... Yes, there are Hitlers and Stalins in the world. But there are also the Ralph Walenbergs, the Mother Teresas, the

¹¹⁸ Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, 16.



Martin Luther King, Jr. And I don't see how you could have the latter without at least risking the possibility of the former."¹¹⁹

- (d) The potential we have for love, goodness, and eternal fellowship with the Creator is certainly worth the risk of experiencing evil. God gives each of us a chance to make the best of our situations in life. We can either choose good or evil.
- (6) "Why do bad things happen to good people?"
 - (a) The question should be, "*Why do good things happen to anyone at all?*"
 - (b) God must work within the confines of a fallen world.
 - (c) The world is far from perfect. The world is fallen and corrupted. Evil is a reality in our world.
 - (d) God, to accomplish his plans for humanity, must work with flawed humanity living in a chaotic world.
 - (e) The cross is a perfect example of this.
 - (i) For God to bring salvation to the world, Jesus had to come to earth as a human, so he could be executed for our sake.
 - (ii) Jesus accepted the consequences of humanity's shortcomings.
 - (iii) His blood was shed as payment for our sin.
 - (iv) In Jesus, we see God working within the context of a messed up world to redeem it.
- (7) The benefits of the Free Will Theodicy
 - (a) On the surface, it seems to exonerate God from any charge of evil.
 - (b) It seems to accord with God's character in that He would only create the "best."
 - (c) It adequately describes how evil came into God's Good Creation.
- (8) Reservations of accepting the Free Will Theodicy alone
 - (a) It does not seem to explain the existence of natural evil (earthquakes, tornadoes, landslides, cancer, downs syndrome, etc.)

¹¹⁹ Dr. Gregory A. Boyd and Edward K. Boyd, *Letters From a Skeptic* (Colorado Springs: Victor Books, 1994), 26.



- (b) It does not explain why God does not stop *some* evil now. That is, couldn't God prevent many large cases of evil, and if He is good, wouldn't He want to do that?
- c) Natural Law Theodicy
 - (1) A Free Will Theodocy demands a Natural Law Theodicy
 - (a) This theodicy joins the Free Will Theodocy by noting that God had to create the world in an ordered way in order to make morally *responsible* creatures.
 - (b) "Moral freedom could not exist apart from an orderly environment. If the world were totally unpredictable, if we could never know from one moment to the next, what to expect from nature, both science and meaningful moral conduct would be impossible."¹²⁰
 - (c) Further, this orderly environment places man in a context where he can either do *good* or *evil*.
 - (d) The opportunity to be kind presumes the opportunity to be unkind. The opportunity to love necessarily implies the opportunity to hate. In other words, when God created an orderly environment where we could be morally praiseworthy, it necessarily meant we were placed in a context where we could be morally blameworthy.
 - (e) "The very same framework which allows free will to be exercised in acts of respect, courtesy, modesty, charity, and love also allows free will to be expressed in acts of hostility, greed, cruelty, and hate."¹²¹
 - (f) "The same water which sustains and refreshes can also drown; the same drug which relieves suffering can cause crippling psychological addiction; the same sun which gives light and life can parch fields and bring famine; the same neural arrangements which transmit

¹²⁰ Ibid., 201.

¹²¹ Michael Peterson, *Evil and the Christian God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 110/ See also <http://members.core.com/~tony233/Evil-and-the-Christian-God.htm> (accessed February 27, 2012).



intense pleasure and ecstasy can also bring extreme pain and agony.”¹²²

- (2) Natural evils are explained by the assertion that God had to create nature as unchanging.
 - (a) Earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, etc. are natural results of God’s created order. Much like God’s perfect creation included the freedom of man such that he would be able to sin, so God’s perfect creation included the operation of natural laws that would lead to natural disasters.
 - (b) While we may not be able to explain how natural disasters are required in light of the natural order, we should be able to see that they are, since they were included in God’s perfect design.¹²³
- (3) Problem: God does miracles, so why doesn’t God do a new miracle previous to each natural disaster?
 - (a) First, the laws of nature are complex and interweave.
 - (i) Changing one event inevitably leads to modifying the entire natural order.
 - (ii) Asking God to prevent a volcanic eruption means enormous changes to the entire ecological and natural system.
 - (b) Second, modifying the natural order would make morality meaningless
 - (i) If the natural order were destabilized by God’s constant interaction, man would be unaware of how his actions will be followed through. In other words, if there were no regularity, one would not know what the effect of his causes would be.
 - (ii) Bassinger defends this position when he says, “Continuous, widespread divine intervention into our present natural

¹²² Ibid., 111.

¹²³ Nash tries to remove all mystery from his position; however, he is left with mystery here. After pointing out the problem of natural evils, he says, “If it makes sense to believe that God created the universe with the kind of regularity and order that makes the formulation of scientific laws possible, if it makes sense to think that this kind of orderly universe would be better overall than chaotic unpredictable universe, we might be wise to think twice before cursing some particular outcome of that order [i.e., hurricane, earthquake, etc.].” Nash, *Faith and Reason*, 201.



system would make meaningful human choice impossible (or at least greatly lessen its meaningfulness).¹²⁴

- (c) Third, changing the natural order to prevent natural evil would change the dynamics of God's relationship to man
 - (i) If God always prevented natural evils, man would never know that they should be thankful to God for His deliverance.
 - (ii) If God always negated the effect of natural evils after they happened, man would believe he lived in an environment where nothing can go wrong.
 - (iii) Nash concludes, "Any request, then, for continuing divine intervention with the natural order in order to prevent every possible instance of natural evil appears to exceed the bounds of rationality."¹²⁵
- (d) Problem: If God is omnipotent, why didn't He create a world with different laws that allow for good, but disallow natural evils?
 - (i) Again, note that omnipotence *does not* mean the ability to do anything. God cannot lie, deny Himself, or do the illogical. Logic comes from God, and God cannot deny Himself.
 - (ii) It appears impossible to have a world where there is only good and no evil. For instance, imagine fire. How could fire, which provides heat and burns waste, not hurt human flesh when contact is made? It appears that the same properties that make fire useful are the same qualities that make it dangerous.
 - (iii) Fire is just one of a multitude of things in nature that would have to be changed to be effective in a world where there is no natural evil.
- d) The Soul-Making Theodicy
 - (1) SMT is the reason God does not stop evil
 - (a) The Free Will Theodicy explains the origin of moral evil.

¹²⁴ As quoted in Ibid., 202.

¹²⁵ Ibid.



- (b) The Natural Law Theodicy explains the origin of natural evil.
- (c) The Soul Making Theodicy explains the reason God allows all evil to continue.
- (2) John Stuart Mill recognized that human beings with refined faculties seek the higher pleasures of the mind. "It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied."¹²⁶
- (3) Certainly, God could have made us all pigs – we could wallow in the mud carefree and "happy." But, Mill would note, we would only be enjoying the pleasures associated with a "lower level of existence."¹²⁷
- (4) Enduring suffering and evil can help us achieve a higher level of existence.
- (5) The soul-making defense goes a step further by stating that God allows suffering and evil to continue in order to develop character and virtues in humans – James 1:2-4.
- (6) While God does not cause evil, Scripture explains that he can produce positive results from evil that exists.

"According to Jesus, a terrible act of group murder and a natural disaster resulting from an earthquake were reminders for each one of the necessity to repent and escape a tragic destiny (Luke 13:1-5). Likewise, hardships should be interpreted as disciplinary training that produces increased maturity and development of character in God's children (Heb. 12:3-17) through the purging of power of pain (1 Pet. 4:1). Even a persistent, lifelong affliction can become the means of producing greater dependency on God and of discovering the sufficiency of his grace (2 Cor. 12:7-10). The Bible teaches that, although God abhors evil, he sometimes utilizes it for beneficial purposes."¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Harold H. Titus, Marilyn S. Smith, and Richard T. Nolan, *Living Issues in Philosophy, Seventh Edition* (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1979), 129.

¹²⁷ Titus, *Living Issues*, 129.

¹²⁸ Gilbert Bilezikian, *Christianity 101* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 42,



- (7) Again, it is important to stress this point: *God works within the confines of a fallen world.*
- (a) His temporary tolerance of evil may be to accomplish a greater good we cannot yet see.
 - (b) Fyodor Dostoyevsky, the great Russian writer of the nineteenth century, argued that innocent suffering may perfect character and bring one into a closer relationship with God.¹²⁹
- e) *The Crucifixion – An Example*
- (1) Jesus Christ came to earth to suffer and die for our sake.
 - (2) Christ endured much suffering, evil and injustice in order to save mankind from the consequences of evil.
 - (3) “The second answer provided by Scripture to the startling concept of divine responsibility in regard to the existence of evil is that God, lovingly and servant-like, accepted that responsibility and assumed it upon himself. An arrogant and unholy god could have turned his back on a rebellious and corrupted planet, forsaking it to its self-destructive plight. But the same giving love that caused God to create the world also compelled him to save it. For God so loved the world that he gave his Son. God took it upon himself to enter the world – he became flesh and lived among us. . . . The God who created beings who chose evil and brought into the world sin, suffering, and death, also took it upon himself to defeat sin through the righteousness of the Son, to bear our suffering on the cross, and to overcome death in the victory of the resurrection. . . . As a result, God is able to offer those who submit to him access to new personhood in Christ, inclusion in God’s new community, and deliverance from the eternal consequences of evil.”¹³⁰
 - (4) Because of Christ, evil is not permanent.
 - (a) Evil will eventually be destroyed.
 - (b) The prosperity of evil is only temporary.
 - (c) There will be a Day of Judgment, and in the end, justice will prevail.

¹²⁹ Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 55.

¹³⁰ Bilezikian, *Christianity 101*, 46.



- f) Critical Questions for those who hold to the Soul Making Theodicy
- (1) Does all evil end in maturing a soul?
 - (a) No. Some souls are eternally lost.
Nevertheless, this is the real risk of making a world with free creatures in the first place.
 - (b) In order for a Soul Making Theodicy to work, there must be the genuine possibility of failure. The athlete who always runs against those who are slower than he is will not develop speed, since there is no competition. The athlete who runs against those who are quicker, however, learns to develop his speed, for there is a real possibility of failure.
 - (2) Are all evils intended to produce maturity or are there some evils that are senseless?
 - (a) Because of free will and natural law, it is impossible to avoid some evils that are completely senseless.
 - (b) In other words, there will be some evils that have no redeeming value at all. They are simply the result of creating a world where man is morally responsible. Examples might be the destruction of an entire city by a flood, the genocide of an entire people group by a dictator, etc.
- g) Conclusion
- (1) The problem of evil is not an issue that should be taken lightly.
 - (2) Our first goal should be to comfort and care for those who are suffering, and strive to do good in the world. Our job is not to merely sit back and do nothing more than think about the problem of evil.
 - (3) We should be sensitive to the needs of those around us.
 - (a) In times of crisis, a person needs to be loved, and he needs a person who will listen.
 - (b) It is hard to be rational when enduring great suffering.
 - (c) However, we must still put aside our emotions, as raw as they may be, and seek after the truth. It is easy to blame God for our difficulties when we are being dominated by our



emotions; it is much more difficult to search for the answers in spite of our emotional state.

- D. How can I accept the exclusive claims of the Christian gospel? How can Christianity be the only path to God when there are so many good and sincere believers of other faiths out there?
1. Every major world religion has a point of exclusion – the law of Non-Contradiction is applicable
 2. Harshness and retribution factor – Christianity is accused of this but it applies to other major world religions as well: Islam, you never know; Hinduism and Karmic law, you pay back in the next life
 3. Christianity offers forgiveness: This is a shock to the sensitivities of pantheistic religions and is unique to Christianity.
 4. If God had offered us a 1000 ways to come to Him, we would have wanted 1001. One way to God is not unfair.
- E. How do I know the Resurrection of Jesus occurred?
1. Importance of the resurrection
 - a) Rudolf Bultmann said, “If the bones of the dead Jesus were discovered tomorrow in a Palestinian tomb, all the essentials of Christianity would remain unchanged.”
 - b) Bultmann is not correct because the resurrection is the ground for:
 - (1) Forgiveness (1 Cor 15:17)
 - (2) Hope (1 Peter 1:3b; John 11:25-26; 2 Cor 4:14)
 - (3) Power (Phil 3:10; Romans 1:4, 8:11)
 2. Theories against the Resurrection
 - a) Swoon theory
 - (1) This theory says that Christ did not die on the cross. He was unconscious and the cold tomb awoke Him.
 - (2) Problems with this theory
 - (a) Christ could not have survived the crucifixion.
 - (b) His pierced side made sure He was dead.
 - (c) If Christ did not die, He would not have been able to escape the tomb.
 - (d) The disciples would not have followed that kind of Jesus.
 - (e) What happened to Him—did He just disappear?
 - b) Hallucination theory
 - (1) This theory says that the disciples merely imagined that they saw a resurrected Christ.



- (2) Problems with this theory
 - (a) Hallucinations occur one at a time.
 - (b) Hallucinations do not respond the way Jesus did (eat a meal, for instance).
 - (c) There is still an empty tomb.
- c) Conspiracy theory
 - (1) This theory says that the disciples concocted a diabolical plan where they fooled the world into believing Jesus was a resurrected God. Often this is combined with the idea that the disciples stole Jesus' body.
 - (2) Problems with this theory
 - (a) Where is Christ's body?
 - (b) The disciples were going to steal the body from a trained guard of soldiers?
 - (c) There was no motive for the disciples to lie.
 - (d) The changed lives of the disciples.
- d) Mistaken Identity Theory
 - (1) The disciples, on various occasions, did see someone, but that person was not Jesus (John 20; Luke 24; Mark 16:12).
 - (a) The lack of recognition at first is a sign of authenticity in the document.
 - (b) The disciples actually did recognize Him in all those instances and walked away believing they had seen Him.
 - (c) It is more miraculous to believe that over 500 people were fooled during a 40 day period than it is to believe Jesus was raised.
 - (d) The tomb is still empty.
 - (e) The lives of the disciples were changed.
- e) Myth theory
 - (1) This theory says that the writings concerning the resurrection were never meant to be taken as fact.
 - (2) Problems with this theory
 - (a) New Testament writing is vastly different than myth writing of the first century.
 - (b) There was not enough time for a myth to develop.
 - (c) The Scripture writers said that what they were writing was not myth.
 - (d) The death of the disciples proved it was not a myth.
- f) Wrong Tomb theory



- (1) The women went to the wrong tomb and found it empty. This false witness spread and people believed Jesus was resurrected
- (2) Problems with this theory
 - (a) Why did the authorities forget where Jesus' tomb/body was?
 - (b) This does not explain the later appearances of Christ.
3. Case for Biblical Resurrection
 - a) This view says that Jesus Christ was crucified, died, buried, and rose again three days after His death. His resurrection was a literal physical resurrection.
 - b) Reason to accept this view
 - (1) It is supported by historical literary reliability.
 - (2) Jesus' first appearance was to a woman (Mary Magdalene); a woman's testimony was never accepted in court.
 - (3) The empty tomb is best explained by this view.
 - (4) The changed lives of the disciples is best explained by this view.
 - (a) Paul
 - (b) James and Jude
 - (c) My changed life
4. Does this prove the resurrection?
 - a) If the historical Jesus actually walked the earth, died, and rose again, then we would expect evidence of this event.
 - b) Certainly someone could argue that the resurrection never happened, but they will have to wrestle with and dispose of vast amounts of historical evidence.
 - c) In the end, none of this information will make them a believer, but it might make them read the Scriptures and introduce them to Him who can make them a believer.
 - d) This is the role of all logical and historical proofs. None will save; only the Spirit can do that. Nevertheless, the Spirit can use these proofs in unity with His Word to draw people to Himself.
5. Inference to the best explanation: The best explanation among all competing explanations is that God raised Jesus from the dead.

XI. Are Miracles Possible?



- A. One may think miracles could not happen if one accepted this argument:
1. Premise 1: An event is a miracle only if it violates natural laws.
 2. Premise 2: Natural laws are exceptionless regularities which cannot be violated.
 3. Conclusion: If an event is a miracle, then the event cannot be possible.
- B. There are problems with the above argument.
1. Premise 1 is false.
 - a) The definition of miracle is not accurate.
 - b) An event does not necessarily need to defy established laws of nature to be a miracle.
 - (1) Consider the miracles of Jesus as recorded in Scripture.
 - (2) Some miracles were events that run contrary to what usually occurs in nature (e.g., walking on water, feeding the 5000, and the resurrection). We give the title “law of nature” to continually repeated occurrences we observe in nature (like gravity). So, some biblical miracles do run contrary to certain “laws of nature.”
 - (3) Other miracles performed by Jesus were not direct “violations” of natural laws; these miracles could have been caused by natural causes that were guided by God’s providence and occurred at just the right time. The time Jesus calmed the storm (Luke 8:22-25) and the time he used the coin from the fish’s mouth to pay the tax (Matthew 17:24-27) are both examples of miracles which could have been caused by God’s providential work using purely natural causes.
 - c) So how does one define “miracle”? While one definition of miracle which explicates every miracle is quite difficult to formulate, a good working definition is: *A miracle is an unusual event that runs contrary to our perception of the natural order. A miracle occurs when the world is not left to itself.*
 2. Premise 2 is also false.
 - a) The definition of natural laws is not accurate.
 - b) What scientists call “natural laws” are merely descriptions given to the repeated phenomena that scientists observe and study.



- c) We do not have the evidence to suggest that there are things in the universe called “natural laws” which mandate how the universe must function all the time.
 - (1) Paul Little refers to this notion as “deifying natural law.”¹³¹
 - (2) Contrary to this false notion, natural laws describe the ways in which the world works when left to itself.
 - (3) Thus, we should view “natural laws” as *descriptive*, not *prescriptive*.
 - d) Further, physicist Sir George Stokes said, “It may be that the event which we call a miracle was brought on not by suspension of the laws in ordinary operation, but by the super addition of something not ordinarily in operation.”¹³² In other words, there is the usual order of the universe (what we label the “laws of nature”), and there may be events that occur in the universe which are *unusual*. There is no contradiction here.
- C. How does one determine whether miracles are possible?
- 1. Something is logically possible if and only if it is not contradictory.
 - 2. The existence of miracles does not lead to a contradiction.
- D. Can we know a miracle has occurred?
- 1. Even if everyone accepts that miracles are possible, the objection that we are not able to know that a miracle has occurred must still be addressed.
 - a) The question now is, *What evidence would be enough to show that a miracle has actually happened?*
 - b) Winfried Corduan has written that “many of [the questions of miracles] are meaningless if it is in principle impossible ever to recognize a miracle when one has occurred.”¹³³
 - 2. *How do we weigh the evidence for and against a miracle?*
 - a) First, the abundant evidence of natural order *at most* suggests that miracles are the exception (which, of course, has already been established here).

¹³¹ Paul Little, *Know Why You Believe* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1968), 60.

¹³² Cited in Norman Geisler and Ron Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 101.

¹³³ R. Douglas Geivett and Gary R. Habermas, ed., *In Defense of Miracles* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997), 99.



- (1) The proper evaluation of evidence includes being open to new evidence, including those of unusual occurrences.
 - (2) Because philosopher David Hume had already decided that miracles do not occur, he gave no credence at all to evidence for them.
 - (3) Be a **true** free thinker who won't allow his thoughts to be stymied by preconceived notions and/or prejudices.
- b) Second, evidences should be *weighed*, not just *counted*. The quality of the evidence is what counts.
3. Hume believed that it would be more likely that, for example, all the witnesses lied than that a person was raised from the dead.
 - a) How was Hume so certain of this? "Because," he said, "that has never been observed in any age or country."¹³⁴
 - b) Hume is guilty of *adding* evidences, not *weighing* them.
 - c) Five poor arguments are not better than one sound argument; likewise, one strong piece of evidence is better than five weak pieces of evidence.
 - d) Alleged miraculous events can and should be investigated the same way a detective would investigate a murder or a reporter would investigate a story, by means of historical research, weighing the testimony of witnesses, and forensic examination. These are proper methods for weighing evidence for miracles.
- E. Are miracles compatible with the concept of God?
 1. The question is whether it is rational to believe in God and at the same time believe in the miraculous.
 - a) Most people view God and miracles as inseparable.
 - b) If a being exists who transcends our world and is responsible for bringing it into existence, then one can conclude that this being has the ability to perform that which we call "miracles" in our understanding of the world.
 - c) However, some argue against the idea that God needs or wants to perform miracles.
 2. *If God created the world "just right," then why would he need to go against the natural order?*

¹³⁴ Geivett, *In Defense of Miracles*, 33.



- a) This question borrows from the teleological argument, which argues that there is design in the universe that points ultimately to a designer of the universe.
- b) Theists argue that the universe displays this great order and function, yet God has to continually intervene by disrupting the “great order” he created.
- c) If miracles are necessary, then God must not have created the universe as well as many believe.
- d) A defense:
 - (1) The argument is based on the idea that since God needs to perform miracles to heal the sick, raise the dead, calm fierce storms, etc., the world must have been created with at least a few flaws.
 - (2) Not all miracles are meant to “fix flaws.”
 - (a) Many miracles serve other functions (such as turning water to wine, walking on water, and prophecy).
 - (b) God created a universe that was “very good,” but became flawed by mankind’s sin.
 - (c) Miracles are not God’s way of correcting his own mistakes, but at times are the response by God to humanity’s flaws.
 - (3) The order and design of the universe serve a *general* purpose and function, whereas miracles serve a *specific* purpose and function.
 - (a) The specific purpose of any single miracle does not take anything away from the general purpose of the created order
 - (b) For example, the parting of the Red Sea does not mean that the regular laws of physics are useless. Rather, the function of the world serves a general purpose (maintaining order), while the parting of the sea serve a specific purpose (rescuing the Israelites).

F. Summary

1. We have discussed the possibility of miracles, the evidence used to determine whether a miracle occurred, and the logical consistency of the co-existence of God and the miraculous.
2. The conclusions are that miracles are possible, there are good methods for investigating miracle claims, and it is rational to accept that God may be able to work miracles in the world he created.



XII. Using Apologetics

- A. What is in it for me?
1. A more confident Christian walk by knowing that it is rationally justifiable – *we need not check our brains out at the door when we come to church*
 2. Increased confidence in our ability to share the Gospel in a secular world – *secular society has marginalized the person of faith.*
 3. A new way to witness – *challenge the unsaved to rethink the Christian stereotype.*
 4. Obedience to God's Word – *we are called to be disciplined.* "Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding" (Proverbs 23:23).
 5. Have you encountered a situation where your faith was tried or challenged by an acquaintance, friend, or family member or by worldly wisdom?
- B. Under what conditions is an apologetic best applied?
1. Openness of heart
 - a) *You can't teach an old dog new tricks.*
 - b) Statistically we are far less likely to change our fundamental religious belief as we age.
 - c) A Barna Research study showed that the vast majority of those who are saved experience the conversion during childhood—before the age of 14. A person who is unsaved at the age of 14 only has a 10% chance of being "saved" later in life. The survey also showed that about 40% of all American adults consider themselves as having been saved during their lifetime. This number agrees with previous surveys.

Age range	% who experience salvation within that age range
5 to 13 years	32%
14 to 18 years	4%
over 19 years	6%

Only 4% of believers were saved when they were over the age of 30.

2. Conviction of the Holy Spirit versus a purely rational approach



- a) Apologetics is a tool to help remove roadblocks caused by false ideas.
 - b) Apologetics does not do the work of the Holy Spirit.
 - 3. Persuasion and winning souls, versus winning arguments
 - a) It is easy to fall into the pitfalls of argumentation.
 - b) It is easy to slip into a defensive posture.
 - c) It is easy to turn an apologetic into a force that drives people further from God. (We don't want to do that! – Romans 12:16-19)
 - 4. The better the apologist, the better one is able to discern when not to engage someone at that level. Look for those who are sincere and honestly seeking the truth.
- C. Rules of Engagement
- 1. Deal with people "...with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15b).
 - a) If no one likes you, no one will listen to you.
 - b) You may win a debate here and there, but such a victory does not lead a person to faith in Christ.
 - 2. Know your audience! Work hard to understand other peoples' beliefs completely, without offering any criticism.
 - a) The apostle Paul, in his sermon to the philosophers of Mars Hill, understood their mindset, their beliefs, and their customs.
 - b) To establish a point of contact, Paul referred to one of their religious statues – one dedicated "to an unknown God."
 - c) From there, Paul moved into a discussion of creation, followed by a proclamation of Christian theism (Acts 17:18-34).
 - d) Paul's attitude was to meet his audience at their level.
 - e) In 1 Corinthians 9:22, Paul writes: "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some."
 - f) *"Jesus' preaching thus begins where people actually are—in the everyday world of rural Galilee."*¹³⁵ Jesus met people where they were, and so should we.
 - 3. "Bracket" your judgment. In other words, suspend making judgments about another person's beliefs until you understand it completely.
 - 4. Be able to say their beliefs back to them in their own words. Then you will know you have a complete understanding of their perspective. Furthermore, they will

¹³⁵ Alister McGrath, *Intellectuals Don't Need God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 27.



see that you respect them because you've taken the time to learn about them and their perspective.

5. Learn the questions they are asking. People are different. The concerns you have, and the issues you feel are important will not always be the same as the concerns others have and the issues others feel are important. We must work hard to understand other people in order to have a meaningful and productive dialogue with them.
6. Ask yourself those questions they are asking.
7. Gently challenge their beliefs.
8. Let them challenge your beliefs. This is important! They will trust you more if you are open with them and you make yourself "vulnerable" by exposing your beliefs for criticism.
9. Find common ground. In other words, find areas where you and the other person(s) agree, and build from those points of commonality. Also, when you find common ground, you will see the points of disagreement more clearly, and thus you will be able to address those concerns more precisely.

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