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## APOLOGETICS

### CHAPTER ONE: FIRST THINGS FIRST

#### APOLOGETICS DEFINED

Apologetics is defined as *the rational defence of Christianity*. Greek: “apologia” meaning “reason”. This has to do with giving a reasonable defence for the positions you hold. Webster’s Dictionary: “*That branch of theology by which Christians are enabled scientifically to justify and defend the precepts of their faith, and to answer its opponents.*”

#### APOLOGETICS DEMONSTRATED

**(1 Peter 3:15)** “*In your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.*”

**(Col 4:5-6)** “*Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.*”

Aristotle said that, to be convincing, one needs to say it clearly (Logos), to say it passionately (Pathos) and to say it from a position of integrity (Ethos).

**Ravi Zacharias:** “*The ability to think on one’s feet is critically important but it is equally imperative to have personal and spiritual depth, fully aware of the nature of the battle – both intellectual and spiritual. ... Being an apologist is more than merely mastering academic content. God clearly places a high priority upon the character of the apologist. The Scriptures warn us that answers should always be tempered by humility, obedience and compassion.*”

#### Word Study:

1. “Set apart”: “*to make holy, or consecrate*”
2. “Be prepared”: “*fitness, adjusted*”
3. “Give a reason”: “*a rational and intelligible account of*”
4. “The hope”: “*expectation’ or ‘confidence*”

**Key assumptions in Peter:**

- ❖ The apologist is *madly in love with Jesus*. Thus his apologetics is rooted in intimacy not information, in action not academics, in trusting not theorizing.
- ❖ The apologist is surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.
- ❖ The apologist “lives ready”, well versed in Scripture and conversant with current thinking. He does not need to call an expert (pastor?) to help answer questions.

**Charles Colson:** *“If our culture is to be transformed, it will happen from the bottom up – from ordinary believers practicing apologetics over the backyard fence or around a barbeque grill.”*

- ❖ The apologist lives such an attractive life that the questioner initiates the discussion based on what he sees in the apologist.

**Todd Hunter:** *“Why did Christianity spread so rapidly in the early years of the Church? Over and over again we can see that the first Christians didn’t out-argue pagans – they outlived them. Their relation to the world was proactive instead of reactionary. They simply made Jesus their master, and routinely gave to those who stole from them, loved those who were persecuting them, blessed those who cursed them, lived humbly, and laid down their lives for others. And it was in observing these communities of people that outsiders saw and understood the Gospel.”*

**Francis of Assisi:** *“Go into all the world and preach the Gospel, and if you have to, use words.”*

**Eddie Gibbs & Ian Coffey:** *The world needs to see what the Christian life looks like. People, who think God is unnecessary, or just optional in life, need fresh images of how life is meant to be lived. They need hard evidence that following Jesus really makes a difference. In order to engage today’s world with a credible Christianity, contemporary followers of Jesus will need to be*

*strategic. Injecting fresh meaning into the old Gospel will not be achieved by buying more prime-time television or by handing out coloured tracts. Rather, the Gospel will be perceived as a feasible alternative when those who do not know God have some positive personal experiences with people who do know Him.*

- ❖ The apologist's hope is reasonable – able to be explained. She does not need to “check her brains in at the door”.

**Charles Colson:** *“The Christian faith is not an irrational leap. Examined objectively, the claims of the Bible are rational propositions well supported by reason and evidence.”*

**Michael Moynagh:** *“Many people need persuading that Christianity makes sense, that the arguments in favour stack up, that you don't need an empty brain to believe.”*

- ❖ The apologist must be courteous, gracious, respectful and kind in his response to the questioner. You can be an apologist and a monster!!
- ❖ The apologist knows that apologetics isn't about winning arguments; it's about winning people (its about relationships!). He can win the battle, but lose the war.
- ❖ The apologist should not be surprised by the degree of opposition he may face. The context in 1 Peter 2 & 3 is submission to God's ability to justify you (1 Peter 2:23-24) in the face of injustice.
- ❖ The apologist must learn to listen to what is *actually* being asked.

**Ravi Zacharias:** *“We must unwrap the question so as to reveal the questioner's own assumptions. Frequently those assumptions run counter to the very conclusion they have drawn when answering their own question. Questioning the questioner was the genius of Christ's method before He ever moved to the answer.”*

**Peter Kreeft**, Professor of Philosophy at Boston College:

*“There is nothing more pointless than an answer to a question that is not fully understood, fully posed. We are far too impatient with questions, and therefore far too shallow in appreciating answers.”*

### **FORMULA FOR SUCCESS AS AN APOLOGIST**

Success = spiritual disciplines (pathos + ethos) + systematic apologetics (logos)

Success = careful lifestyle + seasoned speech + ongoing study

Success = paid taxes + working marriage + joie de vivre

Success = paid bills + happy singleness + growing EIQ

**Note:** 1. Communicating the Gospel is the work of the Holy Spirit – we are to merely bear witness. 2. Intellectual gymnastics will not ultimately sway the human heart.

3. When all intellectual arguments have been expressed, we still face issues without answers because life also touches the emotions.
4. Sometimes tensions between theology and life are best resolved on the ash heap in worship and devotion (Psalm 73).
5. We must be willing at some point to actually say, “I don’t know the answer to that one.”

## CHAPTER TWO: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**ABSOLUTE:** Something that is independent of, and unconditioned by, anything external to itself.

**ABSTRACT IDEA:** A general idea, that which exists in the mind, rather than in the external world.

**ABSURD:** In logic, that which is irrational or contradictory.

**AGNOSTICISM:** The belief that one does not, or cannot, know ultimate reality.

**AMORAL:** That which is neither moral nor immoral, outside the moral realm.

**ANTHROPOMORPHISM:** The act of ascribing human characteristics to non-humans (especially to God).

**ATHEISM:** The belief that no God or gods exist in or beyond the universe. Also defined as an absence of belief in God.

**CAUSALITY PRINCIPLE:** Every effect must have a sufficient cause; everything that comes into being must have a cause.

**CIRCULAR REASONING:** Claiming to have explained reasonably only to have restated the claim without adequate explanation.

**COHERENCE THEORY OF TRUTH:** Truth is determined by that which is internally and logically consistent.

**CONTRADICTION:** The assertion of the contrary or opposite, inconsistency, absolute logical inconsistency.

**COSMOS:** From the Greek word cosmos, meaning world or universe.

**COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT:** A proof for the existence of God; derived from the Greek word cosmos (world), the argument states that a contingent world requires the existence of God as its ultimate cause.

**DEDUCTIVE REASONING:** Reasoning in which the conclusion of an argument follows with logical necessity (certainty) from the premise.

**DEISM:** Belief in a God who created the world, but does not intervene within it.

**DUALISM:** In metaphysics, the view that reality consists of two fundamentally distinct entities.

**DETERMINISM:** The view that everything in the universe is controlled by previous conditions, and therefore could not be otherwise.

**EMPIRICISM:** The belief that the source of all knowledge is five-sense experience.

**ETHICS:** The branch or field of philosophy concerned with moral values and human conduct.

**EXISTENTIALISM:** A modern approach (movement) to philosophy that rejects abstractions and stresses concrete reality, especially individual human freedom, choice, subjectivity and existence.

**HUMANISM:** The view that “mankind is the measure of all things.” Something’s value or significance is measured by its relationship to mankind.

**INDUCTIVE REASONING:** Reasoning in which the conclusion of an argument follows only probably from the premises. Proceeds from the particular to the general, or from parts to the whole.

**LAW OF NON-CONTRADICITON:** The assertion that a statement and its opposite cannot both be true.

**LOGIC:** The study of the principles of correct thinking. The science that evaluates thinking and argumentation.

**NATURALISM:** The belief that physical nature is the only reality.

**NIHILISM:** The view that there is no meaning, purpose, significance, or value in the universe.

**PANTHEISM:** A world-view that makes God identical with the world.

**PHILOSOPHY:** Literally, “a love of wisdom”, an attempt to provide rational and coherent understanding of the fundamental questions of life.

**POSTMODERNISM:** A culture emerging out of the modern culture, a dominant theme being the belief that there are no absolutes.

**PRAGMATISM:** An American philosophy that makes workability and practical consequences the test for truth.

**RATIONALISM:** The epistemological view that stresses reason as the test of truth. Contrasted with Empiricism.

**RELATIVISM:** The belief that no absolutes exist (in truth and/or ethics). Truth and morality vary from person to person, time to time, circumstance to circumstance.

**SKEPTICISM:** In a loose sense, to doubt, to question, to suspend judgement on philosophical issues. In a strict sense, to deny that true knowledge is attainable.

**SOLIPSISM:** “I myself only exist.” The only reality that exists is one’s self.

**TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT:** A proof for the existence of God, design, beauty, harmony, and purposiveness in the universe require a cosmic architect (i.e. God). Known as the design argument.

**THEISM:** The world-view that affirms the existence of an infinite, personal God, who is the transcendent creator, and immanent sustainer of the world. (Judaism, Christianity, Islam are theistic religions.)

**TRANSCENDENCE:** Beyond, or distinct from, the time/space world.

**WELTANSCHAUUNG:** German term, referring to a person's world-view (a conceptual scheme for interpreting reality).

**WORLD-VIEW:** An individual's take on reality, that which seems obvious to him.

Source: mainly from Kenneth R. Samples, Augustine Fellowship Study Center, P.O.Box 23, Hemet, CA

## CHAPTER THREE: THE NECESSITY OF MARKET RESEARCH

### TIME IS TOO VALUABLE TO WASTE

Many times Christians fail to really understand the questioner, his context and motive in asking. There is an inherent foolishness in rushing to answer questions that we don't fully understand, particularly if we are ignorant of the questioner's world-view (where he is coming from). It takes relational finesse and discernment to understand the force behind the question. It is often better to deal with the issue behind the question than the question itself. Things are often not what they seem.

### UNDERSTANDING WORLD-VIEW

**John Stott:** *“Each of us is a cultural creature. We have drunk in our cultural inheritance with our mother’s milk. The way we think, the way we talk, the way we dress, the way we work, the way we play, and the way we do everything is conditioned by our cultural inheritance.”*

**Francis Schaeffer:** *“People have presuppositions, and they will live more consistently on the basis of these presuppositions than even they may realise. By presuppositions we mean the basic way an individual looks at life, his basic world-view, the grid through which he sees the world. Presuppositions rest upon that which a person considers to be the truth of what exists. People’s presuppositions lay a grid for all they bring forth into the external world. Their presuppositions also provide the basis for their values and therefore the basis for their decisions. Most people catch their presuppositions from their family and surrounding society the way a child catches measles.”*

A world-view is a lens through which we perceive and interpret life. A humanistic world-view would see life and reality through presuppositions such as atheism, humanism, evolution and relativistic morality.

A Christian world-view would see life through the lens of theism and Biblical absolutes.

Worldview: is *inherited from our background* (family, upbringing, education, ethnicity) and is *inhaled from our culture* (media, societal norms and values).

In his book, “**A Shattered Visage**,” Ravi Zacharias quotes Arlie J. Hoover who maintains there are **6 components for establishing a valid world-view**: A good world-view, he asserts,

1. **will have factual support** (it will have a strong foundation in correspondence, refuting that which is known to be false),
2. **a high degree of coherence and internal consistency** (it can't be logically contradictory),
3. **has explanatory power** (the facts are integrated, the deductions lead somewhere)
4. **will avoid 2 extremes** (it will neither be too simplistic or too complex),
5. **has more than one line of evidence** (not just one knock-out argument). Zacharias adds a 6<sup>th</sup>:
6. **it is not complete until it is able to refute, implicitly or explicitly, contrary world views** (the Law of Non-contradiction applies).

### **INSIDE THE MIND OF UNCHURCHED HARRY AND MARY**

Lee Strobel identifies fascinating world-view dynamics at work in the minds of unreached people.

He says: **Unchurched Harry**:

1. ... has rejected church, but that doesn't necessarily mean he has rejected God.
2. ... is morally adrift, but he secretly wants an anchor.
3. ... resists rules but responds to reasons.
4. ... doesn't understand Christianity, but he's also ignorant about what he claims to believe in.
5. ... has legitimate questions about spiritual matters, but he doesn't expect answers from Christians.
6. ... doesn't just ask, “Is Christianity true?” Often, he's asking: “Does Christianity work?”
7. ... doesn't just want to know something; he wants to experience it.
8. ... doesn't want to be somebody's project, but he would like to be somebody's friend.
9. ... may distrust authority, but he's receptive to authentic Biblical leadership.
10. ... is no longer loyal to denominations, but he is attracted to places where his needs will be met.

- 11.... isn't much of a joiner, but he's hungry for a cause he can connect with.
- 12.... may seem to be spiritually insensitive, but he wants his children to get a quality moral training.
- 13.... and Mary, is confused about sex roles, but they don't know that the Bible can clarify for them what it means to be a man and woman.
- 14.... is proud that he's tolerant of different faiths, but thinks Christians are narrow-minded.
- 15.... would try church if a friend invited him.

It is imperative that we take note of *how* Harry thinks before we launch into a defence of the Gospel.

## UNDERSTANDING HARRY'S WORLD

1. **SECULAR HUMANISM:** Humanism is an ideology based on the centrality of humankind, implying a focus on man apart from God, whether He exists or not. In 1933 the *Humanist Manifesto* was drawn up and signed by many of the leading atheistic scholars of the day. Some of their claims include the following:
  - Humanism believes that man is a part of nature and that he has emerged as the result of a continuous process.
  - Holding an organic view of life, humanists find that the traditional dualism of mind and body must be rejected.
  - Humanism asserts that the nature of the universe depicted by modern science makes unacceptable any supernatural or cosmic guarantee of human values.
  - We are convinced that the time has passed for theism, deism, modernism, and several varieties of 'new thought'.

The *Humanist Manifesto II* was written in 1973. Some of their claims included the following:

- "Traditional dogmatic or authoritarian religions ... do a disservice to the human species. We find insufficient evidence for the existence of the supernatural. For as non-theists, we begin with humans, not God, nature not deity. We can discover no divine purpose or providence for the human species. No deity will save us - we must save ourselves.
- Promises of immortal salvation and fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful. They distract us from present concerns, from self-actualisation, and from

rectifying social injustices. Science has found no credible evidence that life survives the death of the body.

- In the area of sexuality, we believe that the intolerant attitudes often cultivated by orthodox religions and puritanical cultures, unduly repress sexual conduct. We affirm the right to birth control, abortion and divorce. We permit any form of sexual behaviour between consenting adults, for, short of harming others or compelling them to do likewise, individuals should be permitted to express their sexual proclivities and pursue their lifestyles, as they desire.

Later another document was produced called, “*A Secular Humanist Declaration*”. They added:

- Contemporary orthodox religion is anti-science, anti-freedom, and anti-human.
- Secular humanism places trust in human intelligence rather than in divine guidance.

(Quoted in *Is Man the Measure* by Norman Geisler, pp 115-118)

**2. HUMANISMS MAJOR TENANTS:** There are 5 major tenants to secular humanism:

- **Atheism:** there is no God.
- **Evolution:** We live in a closed universe. We have evolved by chance. Life is biological. What exists is not created, but by natural selection has randomly progressed to more complex forms of existence.
- **Amorality:** Behaviour is neither immoral nor moral. There is no right or wrong. Everything is relative. Relativism.
- **Self-Autonomous Man:** Man is now the master of his own destiny. Religion is regarded as a delusion blinding man to his responsibility as the architect of the coming “new world order.”
- **One World Government:** An emerging global totalitarianism is on the drawing boards. There are minds at work in our world colluding to formulate the ultimate “Babel-like” defiance of God.

**3. CONSUMERISM:** Harry, particularly if he lives in the West, lives in a very self-absorbed world. Eugene Peterson calls it “soggy suburbia.” This is not a problem unique to unchurched Harry.

**Eugene Peterson** says: *“Surveyed as a whole, we are immersed in probably the most immature and mindless religion, ranging from infantile to adolescent, that any culture has ever witnessed. The culture of this place, both secular and religious, (has) marginalised God and passion.*

He goes on to illustrate the influence the modern materialistic culture has on the church itself.

*“The world of religion generates a huge market for meeting all the needs that didn’t get met in the Shopping Mall. Pastors are conspicuous in this religious market place and are expected to come up with the products that give customer satisfaction.*

Because that’s what the world says we need – stuff. The culture has reduced life to thing and function.

*“We spend our time figuring out ways to attractively display god-products. We become skilled at pleasing the customers.*

Because the flock has schooled the (weak) leaders into also believing the lie that man is the centre of all reality.

*“It is a marshmallow culture, spongy and without substance. No hard ideas to push against. No fiery spirit to excite. Soggy suburbia.”*

**John Piper:**

*“Where is the church’s concept of militancy, of a mighty army willing to suffer, moving ahead with exultant determination to take the world by storm? Where is the risk-taking, the launching out on God alone? ... it has been swallowed up in a peace-time mentality. Thousands of Christians do not hear the diabolic bombs dropping and the bullets zinging overhead. They do not smell the hellish Agent Orange in the whitened harvest of the world. They do not cringe or weep at the thousands who perish every week. They do not reckon with spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places and the world rulers of this present darkness. It is bright and comfortable and cheery - just look at my home and car and office and cabin and boat. And listen to my new disc-player and look at my new video equipment.”*

Harry does not need God, the church, the Bible (or so he thinks). His every whim is catered to. If he is in pain, he can medicate it.

He may not want to admit it but he is universally looking for answers to origin (how did I get here), to meaning (why am I here), to destiny (where am I going) and to morality (what is right and wrong).

## CHAPTER FOUR: GETTING DOWN TO IT

**TYPES OF APOLOGETICS:** these include *Classical, Evidential* and *Presuppositional* approaches.

**A. CLASSICAL APOLOGETICS:** Most secular philosophy only dialogues with this form – the problem is many of the classical arguments are not very effective. The Catholic Church favours this approach, with the result that many people are led to believe that these arguments are the main line of Christian defences. There are *three* Classical arguments for the existence of God.

**1. The Ontological Argument:** this argument attempts to prove that the *existence of God necessarily follows from the idea of God*.

**Proslogion 2 form (positive form)**

1. Everyone can conceive of God (the infinite, eternal Being of Scripture).
2. God is that being, greater than which cannot be conceived.
3. A non-existence God is not greater than which cannot be conceived, because a greater God can be conceived – one who does exist.
4. Therefore God exists.

**Descartes'' Meditation #3 (another positive form)**

1. Everyone can conceive of God.
2. The idea of God is that of an infinite perfect unlimited Being.
3. For everything there must be a cause as great or greater than the effect.
4. Therefore, for the idea of God, which we have, there must be an infinite, perfect, unlimited cause.
5. But we are not infinite, perfect or unlimited, and thus could not create such an idea ourselves.
6. Therefore there must be a cause outside of ourselves, which is infinite, perfect, and unlimited, which caused the idea of God, which we have in our minds.
7. This Cause is the God of the Bible.

### **Proslogian 3 form (a negative form)**

1. No contradictory thing can be conceived of.
2. No inconceivable thing can exist (where inconceivable because contradictory)
3. God is by definition the greatest “Thing” which can exist.
4. God either exists just as an idea, or really exists.
5. To really exist is greater than to be just an idea.
6. Therefore God who is just an idea is a contradiction in terms.
7. Therefore a God who is just an idea is inconceivable.
8. Therefore a God who is just an idea cannot exist.
9. Therefore God must really exist.

**Critiqued:** the Ontological argument is not effective and should be used. We cannot deduce the existence of a being from the idea of that being. The attempts to do so usually involve untrue premises or conclusions that do not follow from the premises.

E.G:

- In Proslogian 2 form, #4 does not necessarily follow from #1-3.
- In Descartes’ Meditation #3, premise #3 is unproven. Further, it is the God we think of that is perfect, not our thought of Him. This undermines #4. Conclusion #6 is false. We are not claiming to understand infinity, only to be aware of it.
- In Proslogian 3 form, step #5 is neither a logical conclusion or axiom, but an unproven value judgement.

**2. The teleological or design argument:** this argument argues *that the presence of order in the universe requires the existence of an orderer.*

A typical argument goes like this:

1. The universe manifests evidence of design.
2. All design demands a designer.
3. Therefore, the universe must have a designer.
4. This designer is the God of the Bible.

**Critiqued:** 1. The main problem with this argument is the effort usually made to frame it as an inescapable deductive proof of theism. It would be better to frame this argument as an inductive argument which points to the presence of a designer as one of the more likely explanations for apparent design. Burden of proof is an issue here; viz. the Christian needs to show as much proof for his position as anyone else. 2. The argument,

while showing the existence of a designer to be likely, does not by itself necessarily lead to a belief in Biblical monotheism. 3. Critics feel that Darwinism (natural selection theory) has destroyed this argument, by showing that changes come from purely natural causes rather than by special design. This is not true. While natural selection may account for which forms “survive”, it cannot account for which forms “arrive”. Stated differently, a distinction must be made between change within given levels of complexity, versus the emergence of new levels of complexity. For example, a screw-cutting machine may accidentally produce a backward threaded screw. However, it cannot produce a TV!

**3. The cosmological argument:** differs from the Teleological argument in that it considers *why* anything exists, whereas the Teleological argument considers the *nature* of what exists.

**Norman Geisler’s Cosmological Argument:**

1. Some contingent (dependent) beings exist.
2. All dependent beings must have a cause or explanation for their dependent existence (Principle of Sufficient Reason).
3. An infinite regress of existentially dependent causes is impossible.
4. Therefore there must be a first uncaused Cause of the dependent beings.
5. This Uncaused Cause is the God of the Bible.

**Sproul’s Cosmological Dilemma:**

Either the Universe is:

1. Illusion – (but I think, therefore I am – who is thinking of non-existence?)
2. Spontaneously Generated – (but this is an unthinkable thought, because it is an effect with no cause).
3. Eternal – (but it would still need a cause).
4. Created by something eternal.

**Put more simply:** 1. It is assumed in science and reasoning that any effect or event must have a cause. Since the universe is an effect, or result, then the whole universe has a cause. 2. Scientific Arguments: Physicists believe there is a universal tendency towards greater entropy, which means the amount of energy available for use, is always decreasing. In a sense the Universe is running down – which means it should completely run down sooner or later. This implies the universe is not eternal. Astronomers believe the universe is expanding (the “red

shift” Doppler effect) – meaning the universe began somewhere, sometime.

**Critiqued:** 1. If everything requires a cause, then God requires a cause. If God requires no cause, then not all things require a cause. (However, if it can be shown that the eternal existence of God is different than the eternal existence of the Universe, this argument might hold up. John Hick argued that since God is personal, He is not subject to natural laws that govern and apply to the physical realm. Therefore, there are fewer problems with His eternity than there would be with the eternity of the physical universe. 2. The appeal to scientific laws and to the Big Bang theory is primarily useful for showing that there are problems with the naturalistic view. They do not provide proof re the existence of God – but by comparing the theistic model with the naturalistic model in the light of these laws of nature, it is possible to show that theism would remove some of these problems that naturalism cannot. The result is greater probability for theism.

**Summary:** The Classical arguments cannot prove the existence of God. If they could, the explanations would be pages long and would be incomprehensible to the average man. Finally, if Classical apologetics could prove the existence of God, it would not necessarily be the God of the Bible.

**B. THE EVIDENTIALIST APPROACH:** this approach was influenced by the rise of modern science and modern historiography. Christians were eager during the Enlightenment period to show that a scientific approach to Christianity was possible. Forensic or inductive approaches – as used in a courtroom – were employed. Forensic science collects the evidence after the fact, and seeks to find the most plausible explanation for the event. These arguments do not claim to “prove” Christianity but to render it probable. (Spokesmen for this approach would include Josh McDowell, C.S. Lewis, John Montgomery, Hal Lindsey and others).

**The Historical Argument:**

1. Historiography, textual criticism, archaeology etc. demonstrate that the Bible is a reliable history book.
2. The Bible teaches that Jesus lived, and claimed to be God.
3. Jesus could only be, a. Lord, b. Liar or c. Lunatic.
4. Various parts of the description of Jesus’ conduct and the response to His character rule out His being a lunatic.

5. Other parts of His conduct and a lack of clear motive rule out His being a liar.
6. Therefore Jesus was who He said He was: Lord, and God.
7. Additional steps to add verification of steps 4-6:
  - Jesus fulfilled prophecy in a way no liar or lunatic could.
  - Jesus performed miracles in a way that a liar or lunatic could not.
  - The historical fact of the empty tomb and the resurrection account cannot be explained if Jesus was a liar or a lunatic.
  - The phenomenon of the faith, integrity, and sacrifices of the early Church cannot be explained if Jesus was a liar or lunatic.

**Critiqued:** the evidentialist approach has *strengths* in certain contexts. It is used in Scripture, by Christ, the Old Testament, and by the apostles. The challenge is not to make the evidences do more than they can legitimately do. These arguments have done much to strengthen the faith of Christians. The reference to fulfilled prophecies is the best part of the argument to use, and the argument has definite value in establishing the likelihood of Biblical revelation and the uniqueness of Christ. The arguments create curiosity and a willingness to hear a more complete presentation of Biblical teaching. They should also be used to correct the misconception that Christianity is without evidence. They are pre-evangelistic in scope.

*Weaknesses* include: 1. Modern evidentialist apologists have made exaggerated claims regarding our ability to verify the historicity of the Gospels. Secular scholars have a problem with the supernatural aspects of the Gospel narrative. 2. Even though the Gospels can be correlated with other sources regarding geography and non-Christian historical facts, they lack correlation in the area of Jesus' acts, words and character. 3. The work of many evidentialists has the appearance of "working from the bottom up" (looking for anything that would prove the point) rather than careful scholarship.

**C. PRESUPPOSITIONAL APOLOGETICS:** the central idea here is that everyone has certain presuppositions, no matter what their worldview. These may not even be clear to the one that holds them, so there often needs to be a step of discovery of the other's

presuppositions. Supporters of this approach include Cornelius Van Til, Gordon Clark, and Francis Schaeffer.

**Van Til's approach:** 1. Gain awareness of each other's presuppositions and of their absolute difference. 2. Place oneself upon the presuppositions of the unbeliever for arguments sake – show that they do not provide an adequate reference point for prediction (i.e., a sufficient base for reasoning at all). 3. Show that on Christianity's presupposition (the Trinity as ultimate Creator and Interpreter), rationality is upheld. Only Christianity does this. 4. Press the claims of the Gospel.

- Point out that since rational conversation has gone, the unbeliever must abandon his presuppositions and adopt Christian ones.
- Point out why unbelieving presuppositions were chosen and call for repentance and faith.

**Schaeffer's One on One Approach:** 1. Establish communication and common meanings. 2. Dialogue to discover the other's presuppositions. 3. Carefully push the non-Christian's presuppositions to their logical conclusion with an attitude of compassion. 4. Find the point of tension, pressing the unbeliever to compare the logical conclusion of his beliefs to the real world, himself and his actual conduct. 5. Show that the Christian worldview better allows him to live in the real world, thus suggesting that this worldview is true.

**Critiqued:** this is a better argument than most other approaches. One problem is` that the hearer could become argumentative and resistant if he feels he is being "bested" in a debate. As the presuppositional approach is confrontative, the risk is run of agitating his ego. Public speaking is a good forum for using this method. In this case the opponent is imaginary, the crowd is not provoked to ego-behaviour. Van Til's step #3 and Schaeffer's #4 are difficult to establish without sophisticated arguments being employed.

## **THE POWER OF LOGIC**

Often detractors will accuse Christianity of being unscientific, illogical and intellectually inferior. But many of the statements they make are illogical. Why is the Christian the only one who is required to be logical? It is important to try to understand the person's worldview and the nature of their thinking processes. Paul and Jesus were wonderful examples of using a logical approach in dialoguing with detractors. Ravi Zacharias: *"The laws of logic can be a vast subject, but the foundational laws are indispensable to the communication of truth."*

**Examples of logical fallacies:**

*“There are no timeless truths.”* (is that a timeless truth?)

*“Your religious ideas are only true for you.”* (is this only true for you?)

*“There is no one answer to any great question in life.”* (what is the great question? Is this not an answer you are giving?)

*“God exists because the Bible says He does.”* (begging the question – using a conclusion as a premise)

*“There is too much evil in the earth, therefore there is no God.”* (id evil, id God (describe Him), begging the question)

*“You are wrong to judge people who do not agree with your views.”*  
(Law of non-contradiction)

*“We cannot know anything about reality.”* (is that a statement about reality?)

*“We cannot be certain about religious truth claims.”* (are you certain?)

*“There are no better views about God or religion, all are equal.”* (is that a better view?)

*“There is no objective truth, our mind moulds reality as we see it.”* (is that an objective truth?)

*“Homosexuality is not right or wrong. It is just a different lifestyle.”*  
(begging the question)

*“All religious truth is relative.”* (is this an absolute religious truth?)

*“Only that which can be scientifically verified is true.”* (is your statement verifiable?)

*“Miracles are impossible because they never happen.”* (begging the question, circular reasoning)

*“God violates His own laws because He kills innocent people.”*

(Category mistake re God – He does not violate His laws because He is an absolute. Define “innocent people”, God kills is a category mistake – He alone has the right to take life, He’s the Author of life. “take life” vs. “kill” – reality does not end when you die.)

*“Everything in life is meaningless”* (Is this a meaningful statement? If you think it is, then not everything in life is meaningless.)

**The Front Door of Reason** – In his book, “Rules for Talking Back”, philosophy professor at Boston College, Peter Kreeft says, “*There are three things that must go right with any argument: 1. The terms must be unambiguous, 2. The premise must be true, and 3. The argument must be logical.*”

## CHAPTER FIVE: OBJECTIONS

### 1. RESPONSES TO OBJECTIONS

- ✓ Don't panic, relax, don't be defensive.
- ✓ Don't act like a know-it-all.
- ✓ Don't create a verbal Niagara of confusing vocabulary.
- ✓ Don't ignore the objection.
- ✓ Don't ridicule the objection.
- ✓ Don't give in to a spirit of debate.
- ✓ Don't get sidetracked.
- ✓ Don't play Holy Spirit.
- ✓ Don't be disrespectful (1 Peter 3:15)

### 2. HANDLING OBJECTIONS

1. ***"I don't believe in Heaven"***: A. Many things exist even though you can't see them (radio waves – do you believe in radio waves? Can you see them – you need something to process and interpret the invisible waves – called a radio). B. Logic: You cannot prove a universal negative, i.e. "in all the universe there is no x !" It is an irrational statement – in order to prove there is no Heaven you need to be simultaneously Omnipresent and Omniscient. "Ok, then you prove there IS a Heaven." It is easier to prove something exists than something does not exist. (E.g. Island –if I am required to prove "life" – All I must find is 1 earthworm, 1 feather, and 1 animal dropping).
2. ***"I don't believe in the Bible"***: Remember, it is the job of the Holy Spirit to convince people of the validity of the Bible. Our job is to help them see that the Bible is highly authoritative, reliable, credible, and believable. A. *It is a highly respected book*: published, sold, and translated more than any other book in history. George Washington: "I don't know how a person could govern his own life and a government without the Bible." Abraham Lincoln: "The Bible is the greatest gift God ever gave to mankind." B. *Prophetic accuracy*: 1000's of prophecies were uttered before the events occurred. The odds are too great to be a fluke. C. *History*: There is nothing in the traditions of Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Phoenicia, Greece and Rome nor in Germanic, Indian and Chinese tradition, which compares with the Bible as a source of history, particularly that

of the Hebrews. Archaeology (25000 dig sites) is / has confirmed much of the Bible's statements re peoples, customs, cultures, geography etc. 1000's of manuscripts have been discovered in which 95% are without variation, 5% being variation in areas of spelling.

D. *Survival*: Voltaire, French philosopher said in 100 years from his time the Bible would have disappeared. (Geneva Bible Society uses his home as an office). Many have tried to burn, ban, outlaw the Bible – from emperors, communists to liberals. For 3500 years it has withstood relentless onslaught of critics, with venom, scepticism and thoroughness upon every chapter, line, word and idea contained in it. E. *Continuity*: written over 1500 year span, over 40 generations, by more than 40 authors, from every walk of life (kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, poets, statesmen, scholars etc) – in different places, different times, during different moods, on 3 continents, in 3 languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek). Yet it speaks with a harmony and continuity from Genesis to Revelation which is breathtakingly miraculous and totally beyond the concoctive abilities of the human mind. F. *Influence*: it has touched men and women, nations and cultures. Lives have been touched by it. It has influenced endless numbers of literary writers through the ages. G. *Self-promotion*: the Bible itself claims to be the Word of God. (2 Tim 3:16). French philosopher and sceptic, Rousseau: *“I must confess to you that the majesty of the Scriptures astonishes me; the holiness of the evangelists speaks to my heart and has such striking characters of truth, and is moreover, so perfectly inimitable, that if it had been the invention of men, the inventors would be greater than the greatest heroes.”*

**ASK THE OBJECTOR:** *“What is the basic message of the Bible?” “What do you understand that the Bible teaches as to how a person may have eternal life.”?* Many reject the Bible without even understanding its message.

**WHAT IS THE MAIN MESSAGE?** God wants a relationship with us – it's a love-letter, and a revelation of Himself.

3. ***“How can a God of love create hell?”*** Hell was never created for man. It was created in response to the rebellion of satan and the third of the angels who followed his insurrection. Hell is the logical result of a choice to rebel against God. The question should really be, “how can a holy.

just and righteous God allow a sinful individual into His presence?”

4. **“Why does God allow evil?”** This is the most persistent argument raised against theism.

**A. Atheist Arguments:**

**First Formulation:**

1. If God is perfectly loving, He must wish to abolish evil.
2. If He is all-powerful, He must be able to abolish evil.
3. But evil exists. The problem is if you affirm two of these facts, you cannot affirm the third.
4. Therefore, an all-powerful, loving God does not exist.

**Second Formulation:**

1. God is the author of everything.
2. Evil is something.
3. Therefore God is the author of evil.

**Third Formulation:**

1. God made everything perfect.
2. Imperfection cannot come from perfection.
3. Therefore perfectly created beings cannot be the origin of evil.
4. Therefore God must be the origin.

**Attack based on the persistence of evil:**

1. If God were all good, He would destroy evil.
2. If God is all-powerful, He could destroy evil.
3. But evil is not destroyed.
4. Hence, there is no such God.

**B. Christian Responses**

**Alvin Plantinga’s Free Defence**

1. Free will is of moral value – a world with free will is better than one without it.
2. God has allowed man to choose good or evil.
3. God must bring about the best possible world in His capacity.
4. Therefore, God must create a world with free will.
5. But God is not responsible for evil (choices), since it is not in His power to bring it about that men freely choose only the good.

**Other statements of the Biblical Position:**

1. God created the fact of freedom – man performs the acts of freedom.
2. God made evil possible, but free will creatures make evil actual.
3. The ability to do something does not necessitate doing it. God is able to control everything yet he allows free will.

**Eschatological Formulation:**

1. If God is all-powerful, He can defeat evil.
2. If God is all loving and good, He will defeat evil.
3. Therefore, evil will be defeated.

NOTE: 1. The atheist presupposes an ultimate standard of justice and good when he refers to evil. 2. Ask him to explain the basis of his saying there is evil in the world. What does he mean by evil? And are his opinions not an appeal to his own relative moral feelings and opinions? Why should his feelings be authoritative? 3. Never accept the burden of being the only one who has to hold to a cohesive and consistent worldview.

5. ***“Why does God not just destroy the devil?”*** 1.

Biblically, the devil is not pitted against God in a do-or-die; winner takes all, epic struggle. The devil is a created being that exists by express permission of the Creator and Sustainer of all things. 2. The conflict at hand has more to do with the abuse of freedom of choice by created moral agents or beings that do not always act in the interests of their Creator. 3. These beings are not just demonic, but include rebellious humans. 4. God’s holiness requires that He arrest this rebellion in His universe. 5. For God to destroy the devil immediately would be inconsistent with His nature – He cannot be selective in destroying the devil and leaving all other rebellious moral agents unpunished. He would thus be obliged to wipe us out too. 6. So the Bible reveals that on a certain Day, He will judge the world, by that one man Whom He has appointed Judge over all, Jesus Christ. The apparent, or perceived delay has to do with His redemptive timetable. This delay must be seen in the light of His mercy and long-suffering. 7. The devil will be finally judged by God.

6. **“What about evolution?”** Evolution is a theory cooked up by Charles Darwin. **Definition:** *“Opening up, appearance of events in due succession, development from rudimentary to complete / mature state. A natural progression from one state to another.”*

The basic belief system goes like this: 1. Life began as a chance combination of non-living chemicals. 2. All living things today developed from one-celled creatures which, 3. Over millions of years gradually changed into the fish, reptiles, birds and mammals of today’s world.

**History of evolutionary thought:** 1. Earliest idea – 550 BC **Whales** from Greece postulated idea that all life is marine in origin. 2. 384 BC **Aristotle** – “Degrees of Perfection” – means of classifying animals. 3. 3<sup>rd</sup> Century AD **Poltinius** of Rome – “A Great Chain of Being.” 3. 1450-1650 scientific Renaissance occurred. 4. In the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, **John Ray** (a naturalist and a believer) introduced the concept of interbreeding between species. 5. Philosophers and politicians used the emerging new biological theories to advance a new society. A radical shift in thinking occurred in 19<sup>th</sup> Century with people engaging in and investigating nature without reference to God.

**Evolution and Darwinism:** 1. **Charles Darwin** was born in 1809. After graduating he travelled the world on HMS Beagle and studied various species, particularly in the Galapagos Islands. He noticed species seemed to undergo adaptation to their environment. Even Darwin never claimed that he had proved that species evolve by natural selection. He claimed he had found the mechanisms by which they changed but could not demonstrate it.

**Problems with evolution:** 1. Increasingly large numbers of scientists (many unbelievers) have and are rejecting the theory of evolution – but are not necessarily embracing Theistic creationism. 2. Natural selection does not explain evolution because each creature’s genetic make-up appears to be fixed. 3. **Prof Andree Tetry**, one of France’s leading evolutionists said: *“It is hard to believe that complete organs and above all the human brain, could really have been produced by mutations which are controlled by sheer chance. To do any good, a mutation must not only happen to be an exceedingly fortunate step forward, it must also adjust itself to the preceding mutation and occur at just the right time and place.”* 4. **Pierre-Paul Grease**, a French zoologist and Director of the Evolution

of Living Beings at the University of Paris says: “*Today our duty is to destroy the myth of evolution ... some people purposely overlook reality and refuse to acknowledge the inadequacies and the falsity of their beliefs.*” He says natural selection could never produce a system where blood, exposed to air, clots (preventing man from bleeding to death). Very different and complex chemical substances act together to achieve the necessary clotting result. He calls Darwinism a “*pseudo-science*” but refuses to admit the involvement of a Creator God. 5. **Sir Fred Hoyle**, mathematician and astronomer, looked at the probability of a chance chemical encounter producing the first living cell. He suggests the first organism would have been simpler than present day bacteria. The chances of all the right but very simple chemicals arising at the same place, at the same time, was a chance of 1 in 10 to the power of 20 (1 with 20 zeros behind it). To put simple living creatures together would require thousands of different combinations of enzymes and chemical systems to create cells. Hoyle estimates that a simple living creature would need thousands of different combinations of enzymes and chemical systems to create cells. In a simple creature, having only 2000 different enzymes needed, the chances of these enzymes “just appearing” is 1 to 10 to the power of 40 000 (1 in 1 with 40 000 zeros after it.) 6. In his book, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, Australian biologist and self-described agnostic, **Michael Denton** says that evolution’s intellectual foundations have been steadily eroding and that only a philosophical “*will to believe*” in Darwin remains. New findings of biology are bringing us very near to a “*formal, logical disproof of Darwinian claims,*” he says.

**Effect of Darwinism on culture:** Evolutionary ethics dictate in society. Evolution is a religious belief system that has eradicated a personal God Who has demands on mankind. Man is a self-made, master of his reality. Thus, in this arbitrary system, there are no absolutes, our morality is not fixed, there is no absolute good, and anything goes as long as it can be explained in the light of change and higher development. Life is cheap (abortion, euthanasia, genetic engineering) because man is the centre of reality.

**Our response:** Creation is a marvellous mystery, but our Creator is not. He is personal, knowable and involved in the affairs of men and nations. He has made Himself known to us, one of the ways being through creation. Man is left with the

choice of surrendering to Him or not. Man will never “evolve” out of his sinful condition but needs a Redeemer Who stands outside his moral morass and Who alone has the power to save mankind.

7. **“What about other religions?”** Just look at all the sincere Muslims, Hindus, Mormons etc! Can’t we just be tolerant and learn from them and not be so dogmatic?
- Belief systems:** 1. *Pantheism* (God is everywhere and is in all), 2. *Polytheism* (there are many gods), 3. *Monotheism* (there is only one personal Creator Who is God). 3. *Atheism* (there is no personal God and such a view is unscientific).
- Problems of integration:** The views above are so divergent and thus it would be impossible to integrate these beliefs.
- Probability of truth:** We can all be wrong, but we cannot all be right! This may not be a popular belief but it is the only logical one!
- Limitations to sincerity:** Sincerity is a highly exalted virtue. But it is over-rated, for one can be sincere and sincerely wrong!
- Consequences of belief systems:** There are consequences to ideas and beliefs. Tolerance is a highly exalted virtue in the modern era (political correctness), yet the so-called tolerant lobby are very intolerant towards monotheistic religions. The real “god” in these debates has become tolerance itself. Our attitudes towards and our beliefs about God will have, and do have present and future consequences.
- Response of believers:** If we really believe Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life, and that no one comes to the Father but through Him, then there is an urgent imperative to win the lost at any cost.