

EVIDENTIAL APOLOGETICS

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PREFACE TO 2002 EDITION

There are a number of objections that non-Christians often raise against Christianity. What many Christians do not know is that there is a vast amount of evidence and arguments in their favor. A systematic study of such information belongs to what we call Christian apologetics. This small book is designed to introduce the topics and ideas generally involved, and outlines one way for arguing for the truth of Christianity. The following chapters are written in a manner that readers with little or no background should be able to understand; nevertheless, the reader will discover useful answers and refutations to some common objections against Christian beliefs.

This revision of *Evidential Apologetics* improves the text primarily from a theological point of view. Numerous small changes have been made to increase precision in how certain ideas are expressed. Although several major structural changes have taken place, the book's organization remains essentially the same. I have added several references to presuppositional apologetics, but have not included actual instructions on how to argue in such a manner, since this is intended as a text that outlines the evidential approach.

This revision has eliminated several major deficiencies of the previous version; nevertheless, a further revision of this book may occur in the future, or an entirely new text may be produced to replace it. For now, the following chapters will introduce the structure of the evidential argument for the Christian faith. As the text itself reminds the reader in several places, this book intends to outline the evidential argument for Christian apologetics, and does not provide evidence or data to support every premise. The book serves as a useful syllabus for teaching or reviewing the basic structure of the evidential approach to defending the faith.

1. REASONS FOR CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS

The Scripture says in 1 Peter 3:15, "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." The Greek word translated "answer" here in the NIV is "*apologia*," which means a reasoned argument or defense. The verse is instructing us to "be prepared to give [a reasoned defense]" for the claims of Christianity. Christian apologetics, therefore, is the rational defense of the Christian faith.

It is important to note at the beginning that the only truth-claims we are obligated to defend are the doctrines of Christianity as taught in Scripture, and not the traditions and practices of particular denominations. Furthermore, we are not usually required to defend all the claims of Christianity, but only those major claims whose truth must be sufficiently demonstrated before one can establish Christianity as true.

What this means is that we will need to argue for God's existence, the infallibility of the Scriptures, the deity and resurrection of Christ, and the general coherence of Christianity as a system of belief. In other words, we must be able to show that the major claims of Christianity are true, and that there are no inherent contradictions among the various claims that it makes. It would be rare if any unbeliever would argue over the details of a topic such as water baptism, a debate that would usually take place only among Christians.

There are at least five reasons why Christians need to be trained in apologetics:

(1) God commands believers to defend their faith. According to the verse cited above, we need to "be prepared" to defend the Christian faith. Likewise, according to Jude v.3, we are to "contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints." Ministers are especially commanded to be knowledgeable and skillful in Christian theology and apologetics. As the apostle Paul says, "He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it" (Titus 1:8-9).

(2) The study of Christian apologetics answers the intellectual objections from unbelievers. Some people question the credibility of the major claims of Christianity. For example, Christians affirm the literal resurrection of Jesus Christ. In a day and age when the miraculous are looked upon as either myths or unscientific explanations to natural occurrences, some find it difficult to accept such claims from the Christians. But the claims of Christianity, even the existence of God and the resurrection of Christ, can be supported based on principles the objectors themselves subscribe to, as inadequate as these principles may be.

(3) Removing intellectual objections serves to expose the moral resistance of unbelievers. Many appear to have intellectual objections against Christianity, but the truth is that they

are using them to hide their moral resistance. Eliminating these objections may not cause them to receive Christ, but it will remove this type of excuses, and expose the true reasons for their rejection of the Christian faith.

(4) Christian apologetics help establish Christianity as a credible, and in fact only true, worldview. Christianity has the ill-deserved reputation of being narrow-minded and unscientific. The Bible reveals that "the church of the living God" is to be "the pillar and foundation of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15) in this world. If the foundation of truth is judged with great skepticism, then naturally our society will lack a standard of truth, resulting in moral and spiritual decline. In fact, this is precisely what has happened. Christian apologetics helps to give Christianity a better reputation as a faith characterized by true and rational beliefs, not groundless assumptions.

(5) The study of Christian apologetics increases the awareness among believers of the vast amount of evidence and arguments in favor of the Christian faith. Ignorant of such information, many believers are intimidated when being confronted with objections from unbelievers. There are those who even defect from the Christian faith. Christian apologetics help affirm the faith of the believers, and give them confidence that Christianity is indeed true and that it is secure against every kind of attack.

Some Christians object to doing apologetics because they think that it is impossible to prove the truths of Christianity to the unbeliever. What they do not realize is the astounding amount of evidence and the many strong arguments that are available to defend all the major claims of Christianity. This is why we must learn about Christian apologetics. Believers never need to be ashamed or intimidated in the face of objections and harsh questions coming from unbelievers if they have been equipped with the right answers beforehand.

One point the reader must note is that it is much easier to raise objections against something than it is to understand the arguments in defense of it. People who are intelligent enough to raise objections may not be intelligent enough to understand the answers. The intelligence and learning of the people we are trying to convince is often limited. The challenge, therefore, is often not in finding an adequate answer for people's objections, but to have the patience and the ability to clearly articulate the relevant concepts in a way that they can understand.

For example, it is easy for a child to ask how a car works, but it may not be so simple to formulate an answer that is truthful, complete, and at the same time understandable to the child. The answer in this case will necessarily be much more complicated than the question. The child may have the curiosity and intelligence to ask the question, but may not possess the background and the learning to comprehend the answer. The same is often true when attempting to answer objections against Christianity. This is a genuine hurdle in apologetics, and one that the believer should not overlook.

2. FAITH AND REASON

The study of Christian apologetics often includes a discussion on faith and reason. One view suggests that reason can formulate arguments that compel the assent of unbelievers using premises acknowledged by both sides. That is, the major claims of Christianity may be proven true by reason alone, independent of biblical premises. However, upon a presuppositional analysis, it may be demonstrated that even reason itself requires the Christian worldview as its precondition, without which one cannot even account for logic itself.

Recall that this book concerns itself only with outlining one method of apologetics, or one way for arguing for the truth of Christianity. The method currently presented is often called *classical apologetics* or *evidential apologetics*. While adherents to this approach often adopt the first view of faith and reason as explained in the previous paragraph, the current writer is convinced that it is inadequate, and that the second view is correct.

Nevertheless, since this book introduces evidential apologetics, the following attempts to explain further the first view of faith and reason, to show the reader how this system of apologetics usually fits together. But keep in mind that without first assuming the Christian faith, even reason itself is without foundation. This last consideration serves as a deviation from evidential apologetics to presuppositional apologetics, but we will not consider the latter in this book. Now we continue with evidential apologetics.

When speaking to others about the Christian faith, we need a common ground on which both sides can rely, and to which both sides may appeal. Christians rely on the Scripture to inform them about God, the universe, human nature, society, and every other aspect of faith and life. We consider the Scripture as authoritative and infallible because its very words were inspired by God. God directly tells us the truth through the Bible.

However, problems arise when Christians attempt to use the Scripture in their conversations with unbelievers or members of non-Christian religions – namely, these do not consider the Scripture authoritative and therefore fail to sense any impact in the Christians' arguments by its use. Of course, most non-Christians have no problem with the Christians appealing to the Scripture when the debate is on what authentic Christianity believes, but it does not mean that they would acknowledge what is taught in the Scripture as true. Those who belong to non-Christian religions often have their own trusted sacred texts, and would respond to a Christian's appeal to Scripture by appealing to their own holy book.

It appears that even if we were to use the Scripture in our arguments, we must appeal to some other common ground that we have with the non-Christians in leading them to believe the claim that the Bible is reliable. The Scripture cannot be the first and only common ground that we have with the non-Christians because they do not acknowledge

its authority. Of course, it is possible for the Holy Spirit to use passages from the Bible to convict the unbelievers and open their mind to accept the Christian's position.

Therefore, we need a common ground that is considered authoritative to the unbeliever, so that when the Christian demonstrates the truth of Christianity using this common ground, the unbeliever is either forced to abandon the common ground, or to accept Christianity as true. The best common ground that qualifies is reason. Most unbelievers respect the authority of reason, and many claim that they are non-Christians precisely due to their reliance on reason.

If it can be demonstrated that reason favors the claims of Christianity, and would in fact show atheism, or any other philosophy or religion held by the unbeliever to be false and contradictory, then the unbeliever must either retreat into the realm of irrationality (a charge which they falsely bring against Christianity), or agree with the claims of Christianity and act accordingly.

Some Christians may object at this point, saying that reason is against Christianity; however, this is a lie that unbelievers had publicized for years, so much so that many Christians have come to accept it as truth. Logic is such that it is impossible to argue against its use without using it. Whether one affirms or denies its use, one is affirming it. It is like saying, "I can speak English" and "I cannot speak one word in English" – the former uses English to affirm one's ability to speak the language, while the latter uses English to deny the ability to speak English, which also has the effect of affirming one's ability to speak English. Once one argues against using reason to defend Christianity, he is already using reason to speak about the subject of defending Christianity.

Not all Christians are against the use of reason because they consider it an impious way for defending the faith. Although some may cite this as their reason, the real source of their concern rests on the idea that the unbeliever will win the argument if we were to agree on reason as our common ground. They suspect that if we agree that contradictory beliefs must be false, then Christianity will be shown as false.

This insecurity comes from a lack of information and training. It is safe to say that many will stop objecting to the use of reason and logic as our common ground with the unbeliever if they have the assurance that Christianity is not contradictory and can be demonstrated to be the only logical, coherent, and realistic system of belief in existence.

We must realize that God's own nature is logical and non-contradictory. Sound reason proceeds naturally from God, and any speech about him or any study of the Scriptures must employ reason and the rules of logic to receive and convey ideas in a meaningful and coherent manner. Without reason to hold us responsible for our (and the unbeliever's) beliefs, apologetics would be impossible, since all our beliefs would be reduced to subjective, personal, and non-demonstrable preferences.

To say another word concerning presuppositional apologetics, it may seem that if the Christian faith is the precondition of logic itself, then the common ground of reason

between the believer and unbeliever disappears; without first assuming the Christian worldview, the unbeliever has no right to reason. But the point is that the unbeliever does attempt to use logic, and to do so reveals an inconsistency on their part, since their inadequate worldviews renders logic impossible. This is one of the arguments available to presuppositional apologetics.

A presuppositionalist may deny that without assuming Christianity one may come to any truth at all, and thus by its faulty first principles, science always fails to attain truth. Nevertheless, such a apologete may still employ scientific evidence in support of his position as effective *ad hominem* arguments; that is, even by the unbeliever's presuppositions, Christianity stands triumphant over opposing worldviews. The remainder of this book continues to set forth how an evidentialist tends defend the Christian faith. To understanding more concerning how one's presuppositions affect his reasoning, the reader is encouraged to study my other writings on the subject.

3. THE NATURE OF TRUTH

Christianity makes many truth-claims – that is, it makes certain statements and asserts that they correspond to reality and history. Not only that, but it claims these propositions to be true to the exclusion of other claims – that other claims cannot be true if its claims are true.

For example, we claim that Jesus Christ is God. We assert that this is true, that it corresponds to the reality of Jesus being God. We further state that this claim excludes other claims to deity, that the triune God as revealed in the Scripture is the only God, and that the objects of worship in all non-Christian religions are false gods.

Christians also claim that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and that this is a historical event, not merely our opinion or preference, and not some mystical and symbolic fable. We claim these to be absolute and objective truths, that they are true for everyone. We deny the possibility of saying that Jesus is God for one but not for another, but that the deity of Christ is true and applicable to everyone, although many deny this to their own damnation. These claims are exclusive claims in that all other statements contradictory to these are considered to be false. Thus, Christians believe in absolute, objective, and exclusive truths.

Disagreement often arises at this point when one discusses Christianity with unbelievers. The latter often deny that there is such a thing as absolute and exclusive truths. They are not simply denying that the claims of Christianity are absolute and exclusive truths, but they do not believe such truths even exist. In order to effectively engage unbelievers in apologetics and evangelism, we must take some time to deal with this topic.

All arguments against the existence of absolute truths are self-refuting. A self-refuting statement is one that cannot be true if we accept it as true; it cannot satisfy its own conditions. The statement, "I cannot speak one word in English," refutes itself because it uses English to deny the ability to speak English. No self-refuting statement can be true since it defeats itself in the process of asserting itself.

Such are the statements "There is no absolute truth," "All truths are relative," or variants of these. The statement, "There is no absolute truth," asserts itself as a piece of information about truth that is absolute and universal. It is absolutely true, according to this statement, that there is no such thing as absolute truth. If we accept this statement as true, then this statement must be false. Thus, in the process of asserting itself, the statement has defeated itself. Likewise, the statement, "All truths are relative," refutes itself by claiming that it is absolutely true that truths are relative. If we accept this statement as true, then this statement itself is only relatively true (and therefore the statement must be false), and is not universally applicable, nor is it binding for anyone.

Before demonstrating the existence of exclusive truths, we must understand the law of noncontradiction (or, the law of contradiction). It affirms that "X is not non-X," or that something cannot be true and untrue at the same time and in the same sense. A person cannot be a man and not a man at the same time and in the same sense. One may say that he is a man in terms of gender, but in terms of his character he is not a man in that he is not masculine (he is not manly); however, that would be using the word "man" in two different senses.

To say that this person is of the male gender and not of the male gender at the same time and in the same sense would be a contradiction, and a contradiction cannot exist in reality. A contradiction is meaningless. For example, square circles and married bachelors are contradictions that cannot exist in reality. If it is a square, it cannot be a circle; if one is married, he cannot be a bachelor.

Exclusive truths must exist if absolute truths exist and the law of noncontradiction holds. A statement of absolute truth such as "God exists" is claimed to be true for all people. Such is the nature of absolute truths. If we factor in the law of noncontradiction, then all claims against the existence of God runs directly against this statement. "God exists" and "God does not exist" cannot be true at the same time and in the same sense. If absolute truths exist, as I have already demonstrated through defeating its denial, and the law of noncontradiction holds, then exclusive truths exist.

That is, any statement of absolute truth excludes the possibility of any contradictory statement from being true. So the existence of absolute truth implies the existence of objective truth, meaning that an absolute truth is true for everyone, not only when one subscribes to it. Therefore, no one can say that there is a God if he believes in him, and there is no God if he does not believe in one. Belief and disbelief in God cannot both correspond to reality at the same time and in the same sense.

Not knowing this, many unbelievers attempt to avoid confrontation or discussion with Christians by stating that it is acceptable for the believers to hold to certain truths, but the unbelievers' contradictory beliefs are just as acceptable. If absolute, objective, and exclusive truths exist, then this view cannot be correct since the Christian subscribes to many absolute truth-claims. If the unbeliever subscribes to contradictory claims, then either the believer or the unbeliever is mistaken.

Similarly, a Christian and a member of a non-Christian religion cannot both be correct. Even if the non-Christian does not claim the existence of his god as an exclusive belief, the Christian believes that his God is the only God, and therefore excludes the existence of other gods. The study of apologetics seeks to show that Christianity is correct, and that the contradictory beliefs of the non-Christians are false.

4. THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

God must exist in order for Christianity to be true. If God does not exist, then any religion claiming the existence of a deity (or deities) must be false. The Bible says, "anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (Hebrews 11:6). Certainly one must believe in God's existence before approaching him or seeking him earnestly.

The problem is that we run into disagreements with unbelievers even on this fundamental issue. Before they question the specific claims of Christianity, they have already rejected the theistic worldview. Theism believes in a single personal deity, a belief held by Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Of course, these three major religions have disagreements beyond this basic common belief, and therefore after having established God's existence, one must proceed to show the unique claims of Christianity to be true to the exclusion of other claims.

Many arguments demonstrate the existence of God. Since many Christians consider it impossible or even impious to prove God's existence, we must first realize that it is both possible and biblical. The apostle Paul writes, "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools" (Romans 1:18-22).

Although it may not be possible to demonstrate all the specific claims of Christianity through the use of reason or science, evidential apologetics claims that it is possible to do so regarding God's existence. The above passage states that God has made himself known to all people through their nature, especially their innate knowledge. He has made his "invisible qualities...clearly seen" by everyone through "what has been made." Christians believe that God created the universe, and God has placed enough evidence of his existence in this created world, and especially in man's mind, to lead to a belief in his existence.

Only one of the many arguments used to demonstrate God's existence is presented here, and as mentioned previously, the presuppositional approach is excluded here even though it is most powerful. Other arguments may be added to produce a cumulative case for the existence of God. We will now examine one of these arguments and answer some of the possible objections to it. Since this book only intends to outline the evidential approach, here we will only offer the argument in a most basic form.

The argument we will study here is called *the cosmological argument*. Using the principle of causality, it argues from the existence of the universe to the existence of the first cause, or the creator God. The argument begins by appealing to the fact that the universe exists. Variants of this first premise can be stated as "Something exists," or "I exist." Since every effect – that is, everything that has a beginning or everything that comes into being – must have a cause, the universe itself must then have a cause if it has a beginning. From the scientific and philosophical points of view, the universe indeed has a beginning, and therefore it must have been caused. An infinite regression of causes is impossible, therefore there must exist a first cause that is eternal, or who exists outside of time. And this being we acknowledge to be God.

Notice that this argument does not immediately demonstrate the numerous attributes of God such as his love and justice, but this is to be expected. We must first be assured of his existence before we proceed to examine his characteristics. Indeed, some of God's attributes have not been conclusively demonstrated by reason alone, but these must be derived from the study of the Scriptures. Nevertheless, our purpose at this point is simply to demonstrate God's existence, and we have reasons to believe that this argument fulfills this purpose. Let us now give a brief defense against some common objections to this argument.

Most people acknowledge the existence of the physical world. They agree to the existence of the universe, the planet earth, the chairs they sit on, or their own existence. A philosophical skepticism that doubts one's own existence is self-refuting. If they acknowledge their own existence, then the cosmological argument may begin from there. But if they deny their own existence, our response is that since they do not exist, their objections and doubts also do not exist, and therefore pose no threat to the cosmological argument. Their non-existence implies that they have nothing to contribute to the discussion. They may neither object nor agree to our arguments. They have removed themselves from the debate altogether. The statement, "I do not exist," is proven false once assumed to be true, since one who does not exist cannot make such a statement.

The law of causation is also commonly acknowledged. Although most unbelievers would readily acknowledge its truth in other contexts, when used in the cosmological argument, some would immediately entertain the possibility of uncaused or self-caused events or beings. Uncaused events or beings are impossible since "out of nothing, nothing comes." Nothing is not something in itself. Since nothing is not something, it cannot produce anything; no verb can be attached to the it – "it" being non-existent in the first place. A literal nothing cannot produce anything. Strictly speaking, it cannot really be referred to, since "it" does not exist and one cannot point to it. The only way for a being to be uncaused is if it has no beginning. The universe cannot be uncaused since it has a beginning.

Neither is it possible for self-caused events or beings to come about. A cause must precede an effect – at least logically, if not chronologically. If an event or being has a cause, and had not existed before it was caused, then there was no "self" to cause this

alleged self-caused event or being until this event or being had come into existence. If there was no "self" to cause this event or being, then the event or being in question could not have been self-caused. If the "self" exists, then the concept of it causing its own existence is meaningless since it already exists – that is, through a cause that precedes its own existence.

From the philosophical and scientific perspectives, only an infinite progression of causes and effects is possible, but a regression of causes is impossible. Citing the possibility of an infinite regression of causes is a strategy often used by those with little academic training. An infinite regress of causes is meaningless; it simply cannot exist in reality. An infinite progression can occur since as time progresses, causes can continue to lead to new effects. Logically, it is possible that this process will never end, and in this sense infinite.

However, if we were to assume an infinite regression of causes, then it is impossible that we would ever have reached the present. Just as it is impossible to reach the end of an infinite progression, our present is an "end" as seen from the past. From the perspective of the past relative to the present, it would have been impossible to reach the present if the chain of causes and effects are indeed infinite.

But if there exists a first cause – a beginning – then it would be possible to arrive at the present. It is logically possible for a flight of stairs to continue upward infinitely, but not without the existence of a first step. The key to understanding this is to realize that by definition, the concept of infinity means that there is no end. This is only possible with progression into the future, and not regression into the past.

The question then moves on to whether the universe has a beginning. Some deny this by saying that the universe was uncaused or self-caused. As shown above, an event or being cannot be self-caused, and an uncaused event or being requires it to have no beginning. Corresponding to this latter, some suggest that the universe is eternal, that it had always existed, and thus it is uncaused. This is impossible if the Big Bang Theory is true. All matter, and even time itself has a beginning, and thus a cause.

Those who deny the existence of a cause for the universe must refute the Big Bang Theory before the discussion may proceed. There are also other indications showing that the universe has a beginning, such as the Second Law of Thermodynamics. More recently, some have attempted to assert an uncaused or eternal universe based on quantum theory. But there are strong disagreements among scientists as to the implications of quantum theory, and arguments of this sort often misapply scientific speculations in this area. Often, all that the arguments accomplish, if anything, is to push the question one step backward. The existence of the universe still requires an explanation.

If there is a cause that caused the cause of the universe, then we still have not arrived at the first cause. We need a cause to explain every cause that is also an effect, but infinite regress is impossible, so there must be a cause that exists outside of time, one who is

eternal, one who had always existed even before time came to be. Since nothing that has a beginning can be uncaused, this first cause has no beginning, and therefore indeed can be uncaused. This does not violate the principle of "out of nothing, nothing comes" since we are not saying that this first cause came out of nothing, but that it never had to "come" into being, since it has always existed without a point of beginning or origin. This is the first cause, who we call God.

As for the objection saying that, "If everything must have a cause, then who caused God?" the law of causation only states that every effect, or everything that comes into being, must have a cause; however, God never came into being. He never started existing, but he had always existed.

The premises for many, if not most, of the arguments for the existence of God are often agreed to be true even by the unbeliever until they are used in the context of demonstrating God's existence. Objections against these theistic arguments are therefore often not based on genuine discoveries of faulty logic in them, but the presupposition of God's non-existence in the minds of the unbelievers.

5. THE INFALLIBILITY OF SCRIPTURE

In the transcendental approach to apologetics taught elsewhere in my writings, the whole of the Christian faith is defended at once, but for the evidentialist, success in demonstrating the existence of God only exposes atheism and agnosticism as irrational beliefs. Since many non-Christian religions acknowledge God's existence, and some are even monotheistic, we still need to distinguish Christianity as the only true revelation from the God whose existence we have demonstrated. If we can show that all the essential claims of Christianity are exclusively true, then we have both established the truth of Christianity and at the same time refuted every non-Christian religion. After this, we may proceed to attack the claims of individual non-Christian worldviews as the occasion demands.

Since authentic Christianity is defined by the Scripture, we defend it by demonstrating the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible. It would be a mistake for an unbeliever to attack the practices of a specific denomination, and having proven their absurdity, equates that with the defeat of Christianity. Just as it is wrong for our opponents to attack a misrepresentation of Christianity, we need only defend the system of beliefs that the Bible teaches. We should not defend the traditions, practices, and unbiblical beliefs of particular denominations or churches.

The Bible often refers to itself as the word of God, and since there is nothing more authoritative than God's word, we must conclude that the Bible is indeed the word of God. On the surface, this argument appears to be circular in that the conclusion is assumed to be true in one of its premises. It assumes that the Bible is the word of God in the process of proving that the Bible is the word of God. Also, non-Christian religions often use the same argument to endorse their own sacred texts. Since it is circular, there is no external factor that can challenge the truth of the argument, and the same circular argument used to support one religious text can hardly be used to challenge its use for another religious text; the argument remains in a closed circle connected with whichever text it is being applied to at the moment.

However, in a transcendental or presuppositional approach to apologetics, one may show that such a circular argument is only ineffective if the major premise fails to authenticate itself. One cannot object to our saying that the divine origin of Scripture is our first principle of reasoning, from which the entire system of Christian thought is logically deduced; all worldviews have their own first principles. But if the first principle or ultimate authority of a system of thought fails to be self-authenticating, then the entire worldview collapses.

A presuppositional analysis of Christianity demonstrates its first principle as self-authenticating, and at the same time destroys non-Christian worldviews. This is because only the Christian's first principle is able to sustain a coherent and comprehensive

worldview, while on all other axioms, one finds it impossible to construct a system of thought that can within a presuppositional critique. Nevertheless, as in accordance with the intent of this book, we will proceed by expounding on the evidential approach.

If we can demonstrate that the Bible is completely accurate in its historical details – that is, if everything that it says happened had occurred the way it describes, then it is at least a reliable human account. We are not claiming it to be the word of God at this point, but that the Bible, as penned by the hands of human beings, turns out to be completely accurate as a historical text.

Although the evidence is ample, we will not give any examples here; however, we will reproduce two statements made by experts in the field. Jeffery Sheler describes the implications of the available evidence when he stated, "In extraordinary ways, modern archaeology has affirmed the historical core of the Old and New Testaments – corroborating key portions of the stories of Israel's patriarchs, the Exodus, the Davidic monarchy, and the life and times of Jesus" ("Is the Bible True?", US News & World Report, October 25, 1999, p.52). Not only is the "core" of the biblical record confirmed, but the specific historical details of Scripture have also been shown as accurate. According to archaeologist Nelson Glueck, "No archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference" (Rivers in the Desert; History of Negev, p.31).

However, that the Bible is an accurate historical book does not grant it absolute authority when it speaks of divine and supernatural matters. It is possible for a humanly produced college textbook to be thoroughly accurate in all its details in terms of the events, names, dates, and geography that it records, but in itself this does not make the text the word of God. Some historical accounts can be verified, and so we can know the Bible to be reliable when it comes to history, but that does not mean it is also accurate when it speaks of things that cannot be tested this way, such as the attributes of God, the deity of Christ, the requirements for salvation, and the afterlife.

The reader should note, however, that even when subjected only to historical verification, only the Bible has proven to be reliable among all the sacred texts of the world. Therefore, by this point of the argument, all religious books except for the Christian Bible are already excluded, and only the Bible remains as possibly of divine origin.

One way to see whether the Bible is also authoritative regarding divine matters is to somehow connect the statements that it makes concerning divine things to the verifiable statements in the Bible. One type of evidence qualified to show the Scripture's authority in divine matters is predictive prophecy. In the Bible, we find descriptions of events written hundreds of years before they had occurred in history.

Assuming that we have established the historical reliability of the Bible, we know the events that were fulfillments to prophecies have been recorded faithfully, and the prophecies for which these events are fulfillments were also recorded faithfully many years before. Events that had fulfilled prophecies were recorded in the Bible, and we have

verified that these events had happened. We also know the prophecies that had predicted these events were written many years before their actual occurrences.

This type of evidence is therefore objectively verifiable, without the influence of any speculation or subjective opinion. Even an atheist can read a prediction in the Bible and check to see if it had been fulfilled afterward. The overwhelming number of fulfilled prophecies in Scripture points undeniably to a supernatural source, and therefore the Bible is also authoritative concerning divine matters.

The following lists a number of fulfilled historical and messianic prophecies. Those belonging to the latter category are given in pairs, since both the initial predictions and their subsequent fulfillments are recorded in Scripture. *Historical prophecies*: Isaiah 44:28-45:1; Jeremiah 49:16-18; Ezekiel 26:1-14; Ezekiel 36:33-35; Ezekiel 44:2; Daniel 2:36-45; Daniel 12:4. *Messianic prophecies*: Genesis 3:15 & Galatians 4:4; Isaiah 7:14 & Matthew 1:20-23; Genesis 49:10 & Luke 3:23-33; 2 Samuel 7:12-13 & Matthew 1:1; Micah 5:2 & Matthew 2:1, Luke 2:4-7; Isaiah 11:2 & Matthew 3:16-17; Isaiah 40:3, Malachi 3:1 & Matthew 3:1-2; Isaiah 35:5-6 & Matthew 9:35; Malachi 3:1 & Matthew 21:12; Isaiah 53:3 & John 1:10-11; Isaiah 53:7 & Matt 27:12-19; Psalm 22:7-8 & Matthew 27:31; Psalm 22:16 & Luke 23:33; Isaiah 53:12 & Mark 15:27-28; Isaiah 53:12 & Luke 23:34; Zechariah 12:10 & John 19:37.

There are many more historical prophecies in the Bible – J. Barton Payne listed 1817 prophecies in his comprehensive work on this subject. Others may acknowledge a higher or lower count. In any case, historical and messianic prophecies are by no means lacking in the Bible. Of these prophecies that Payne listed, 191 of them are messianic prophecies, which according to him have all been fulfilled in the life of Jesus Christ.

The argument goes on, but even at this point we have sufficient evidence to assert that if any book can be called the word of God, it will have to be the Christian Bible. No other sacred text can stand up to the scrutiny that our Scripture has been subjected to by numerous critics throughout the centuries; the Bible remains undefeated but has been vindicated time after time.

We have no record of God the Father speaking audibly from heaven to confirm the authenticity of the Scripture; however, Christians believe that Jesus Christ was God in the flesh. If we can show that he was indeed God in the flesh, and that he had affirmed the status of the Bible as the very word of God, then we will have God's own confirmation that the Bible is the word of God.

The Old Testament contains many messianic prophecies – predictions concerning the coming, the identity, the tasks, and other characteristics of the Messiah. Since these prophecies also assert the deity of the Messiah, whoever turns out to be the Messiah would also be God. Jesus fulfilled the messianic prophecies concerning the time and place of his birth, the nature of his ministry, the miracles that accompanied him, Israel's attitude toward him, the time, place, reason, and manner of his death, and his resurrection. There is no question but that Jesus perfectly resembles the messianic portrait

painted by the Old Testament. Since the Messiah is also said to be God, Jesus Christ was God in the flesh.

Here are some passages telling us that Jesus Christ was God manifested in human flesh: John 17:5; Mark 2:5-7; John 5:18; Matthew 14:33; Mark 5:6-7; John 9:35-38; Matthew 24:35; John 20:28; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:8; Phil 2:5-11; Hebrews 1:3; John 1:1-3; and Titus 2:13.

If Jesus Christ was God in the flesh, then whatever he said was true, and it would be no problem for him to identify the record of his own revelation. From the New Testament documents (which we have argued to be historically reliable, meaning that whatever it says that Jesus said, Jesus indeed said), we have an unmistakable confirmation that the Scriptures is the word of God. The apostles, whom he had commissioned, also affirmed both the Old and New Testaments as the word of God (Matt 5:17-19; John 10:35).

To summarize, we begin with the premise that the Bible is the reliable word of man, a claim that is verifiable and has indeed been vindicated numerous times. This first premise creates a common ground with the unbeliever based on objective historical facts, and it is a claim that the unbeliever must accept based on the evidence. Connected with the claim that the Bible is historically reliable is the claim that it contains many predictive prophecies that have been fulfilled. The events indicating their fulfillment are not only recorded in the Old and New Testaments, but also in extra-biblical documents and artifacts. This establishes the Bible as more than a natural book – it is also authoritative when it comes to divine and supernatural matters. Since it is authoritative concerning supernatural matters, it is speaking the truth when it identifies Jesus Christ as God incarnate. Jesus had fulfilled numerous messianic prophecies, which in turn also identify the Messiah as God. Therefore, there is no question as to deity of Christ. Then, Jesus as God incarnate affirmed the Scriptures as God's word, and his appointed apostles affirmed the divine authorship of both the Old and New Testaments.

We have thus established that the Bible comes from God himself, whose existence we have previously demonstrated. It follows that all statements contradictory to the Bible also contradict God himself, and therefore must be false. Since all authentic Christian beliefs come from Scripture, only Christianity is correct; all other religions are false, since they contradict Christianity on numerous significant issues. Their religious texts cannot be the revelation or word of God.

Since the Bible has never been proven wrong even after so many years of vigorous attacks from unbelievers, those who are still unconvinced must realize that the burden of proof is upon their shoulders to establish any alleged inaccuracies or contradictions in the Bible. Failing to do so, and given the positive evident for biblical inerrancy, the unbeliever's rejection of Christianity becomes dishonest and irrational.

6. THE DEITY AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

If the points made in the previous chapter are true, then we have already demonstrated the deity of Jesus Christ. If the Bible is historically accurate and authoritative concerning supernatural matters, then if it says that Jesus was God in the flesh, such a claim must be true. Since we have not yet examined biblical passages referring to Jesus as God, we will do so in this chapter. We will also make some observations regarding the historical, physical, and literal resurrection of Christ – a central claim of Christianity.

The Greek word *theos* usually refers to God the Father in the New Testament, but there are a number of instances when it is used of Christ. Probably the most well known example is John 1:1, where it reads, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The context dictates that the *Word* here refers to Jesus Christ. The apostle John, therefore, designates Jesus as the *Word* who had existed "in the beginning," and that this *Word* was God.

This verse so identifies Jesus as God that some cults find it necessary to distort and mistranslate this verse so that the Bible would appear to be in agreement with their denial of the deity of Christ. However, "the Word was God" is the correct translation based on the grammatical structure of the Greek text, and the next two verses erase any doubts as to whether John is referring to Jesus as God: "He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." John states that Jesus had existed at the time of creation (Genesis 1:1; John 8:58), and ascribes the act of creation itself to Jesus.

Here are several other passages referring to Jesus as God (*theos*): "Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised!" (Romans 9:5); "...while we wait for the blessed hope – the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13); "But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom" (Hebrews 1:8); "Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours" (2 Peter 1:1).

Another Greek word that often indicates a recognition of deity is *kurios*. This word is not always used to address deity alone, but is often used with a meaning similar to the English, "Sir." However, Septuagint uses *kurios* to translate YHWH, the word for God in the Old Testament. Therefore, depending on the context of a passage, the word *Lord* in the New Testament may or may not indicate a designation of deity when referring to Christ.

For example, when speaking of the birth of Jesus in Luke 2:11, the angel said, "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord." There is no

reason to interpret the word *Lord* in this verse as merely a polite designation, but rather a reference to his deity. Jesus here is identified as the Christ, who is "the Lord." Another clear reference to Jesus as "the Lord" comes from John the Baptist in Matthew 3:3: "Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him." Once again, using the word *Lord* in this place cannot be nothing more than a sign of respect, but a recognition of deity, since the word as used in the context of this passage, as John the Baptist quotes from Isaiah, refers to God.

We will end this part of the chapter with a verse that contains both *theos* and *kurios*. When Jesus was resurrected, his disciples had trouble believing that he was in fact raised from the dead, and when they were convinced upon seeing Jesus, Thomas was not with them. Later, when these disciples told Thomas that Jesus had risen, and that they had seen him, Thomas expressed his doubts in no uncertain terms: "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it" (John 20:25).

As a side note, this contradicts the picture that unbelievers try to paint concerning the early disciples, that they were gullible individuals whose groundless belief and expectation in Jesus was so strong that they had mass hallucinations of his resurrected state. The honest portrayal of skepticism in these disciples destroys this false impression, and shows that the resurrection of Jesus, although predicted by himself, was against the expectation of the disciples, which made it practically impossible for mass synchronized hallucinations in the minds of more than five hundred people to have happened. Upon seeing Jesus in his resurrected condition, Thomas exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!" (v. 28; Greek: "ho *kurios* mou kai ho *theos* mou").

Besides other instances of *kurios* and *theos* used in reference to Jesus, there are other arguments and biblical evidence for the deity of Christ, such as the record of his many miracles and his sinless life, but we need now to move on to a discussion on the subject of his resurrection.

We have already refuted the claim that the early disciples were prone to hallucinations due to their highly traumatic mental states in seeing their beloved teacher crucified and their strong expectation of his resurrection – they did not expect to see him raise from the dead. From Mary in the garden, the men on the road to Emmaus, Thomas and the other disciples, they were all surprised to know that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead. This may not be a good testimony in regards to their faith before the resurrection, but it shows that the charge of mass hallucinations is without warrant.

If the biblical documents are indeed historically reliable, then there is no reason to deny the resurrection of Jesus other than a presupposition against the existence of God and the possibility of miracles. The possibility of miracles is necessarily a philosophical question and not a scientific one. A naturalistic scientist believes that the physical universe is all that there is – if there exists things beyond this universe, such as God and spirits, this scientist does not believe in them, and his methodology of investigation cannot disprove their existence. The claim that only things which may be observed exist itself has not

been proven through observation. The scientist argues in a circle when he says that things that cannot be observed do not exist because they cannot be observed. Also, the cosmological argument suggests that there must be something beyond space and time.

The idea that only physical matter exists is not a scientific conclusion but a philosophical presupposition that governs scientific investigations. In classical or evidential apologetics, the cosmological argument shows that there must be a first cause for the universe that transcends space and time. If this first cause exists, who was able to create the entire universe, then miracles are possible. If miracles are possible, then the resurrection of the dead is possible.

Since the existence of God and the possibility of miracles cannot be denied philosophically or scientifically, but are rather affirmed, we must conclude that the resurrection is possible. Then, when the historically reliable New Testament claims that such an event had taken place, it is more rational to believe it than to reject it. The burden of proof rests on the unbeliever's shoulders to show that the resurrection had not occurred. Let us now examine several objections against the resurrection.

We have already rejected the mass hallucination theory. Another theory is that Jesus never died, but that he was in a swoon as a result of the physical ordeal he had endured. Afterward, he regained consciousness and left the tomb. However, the Roman soldiers responsible for crucifying their victims were trained to kill, and they were very experienced at performing crucifixions.

One soldier pierced the side of Jesus, causing "blood and water" to flow out. The Journal of the American Medical Society stated in a March 21, 1986 article that, "Clearly, the weight of historical and medical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead before the wound to his side was inflicted and supports the traditional view that the spear, thrust between his right rib, probably not only the right lung but also the pericardium and heart and thereby ensured his death. Accordingly, interpretations based on the assumption that Jesus did not die on the cross appear to be at odds with modern medical knowledge."

That the Roman soldiers did not break his legs is another indication that they were certain he was dead. Even if we assume that he was merely rendered unconscious for the sake of argument, we still know that he must have been severely weakened as a result of the crucifixion. And since it would be difficult enough for several men to roll away the boulder sealing the tomb, it would be even more difficult to accept that one man who was at best half-dead could have moved the it by himself, and then proceeded to subdue the soldiers or depart undetected.

The theory that the disciples stole away the body of Christ suffers similar criticisms, since they could never have bypassed or overcome the guards. Any variant of this theory is impossible seeing how the disciples were later willing to die for preaching the resurrection. People have died for falsehoods that they thought to be true, but it is unlikely for a large number of individuals to die for something that they knew for certain

to be false. This theory would not bear up under any court of law, since there was no motive to steal the body and then continue to affirm the lie under the threat of death.

Then, there is the theory that the Jews stole the body. This is also impossible since the Jews would have gladly produced it in front of everyone when the Christians began to preach the resurrection. To those who assert that the Jews had destroyed the body so that it was unavailable as evidence against the resurrection, we can say that since the Jews knew of Christ's prediction of his own resurrection, they would have kept the body intact as evidence if they had stolen it. However, the Jews did not even make the claim that they had destroyed the body when faced with the claim of Christ's resurrection. Further, the Jews could never have stolen the body from the heavily guarded tomb in the first place.

The unbeliever's objections against the resurrection are not intellectually honest ones, but stem from a desperate attempt to refute a claim that he does not wish to believe. If Jesus had indeed risen from the dead, then resurrection is possible. If resurrection is possible, then according to Scripture, all will rise one day – some to their eternal reward, and others to their eternal torment.

7. GOD AND EVIL

At this point, we have affirmed those claims of Christianity which are necessary to derive the other claims of Christianity. We have argued for the existence of God, the infallibility of the Bible, and the deity of Christ. Other Christian claims may be deduced from these truths. We may defend Christianity against a number of objections left unanswered by the previous chapters. Since "the problem of evil" is one of the more popular objections to the existence of God, we will devote an entire chapter to this issue.

Many arguments against Christianity based on the existence of evil commit the logical fallacy of appealing to pity. Although the existence of evil and suffering may stir up emotions, the existence of God is not a matter of feeling, but a matter of being; therefore, one may not say that since evil makes him feel bad, the existence of God must not be a fact. If one attempts to use the existence of evil as an argument against the existence of God, he must argue that the fact of evil, and not the feeling that results from it, somehow disproves God's existence.

Appeals to pity, although illogical, are often effective in debate since most audiences do not make conclusions only based on sound reasoning, but also how they feel about a position. If one relates horrible stories of evil and suffering, and shows pictures of starving children and poverty-stricken single mothers, an irrational audience may tend to become swayed by his arguments.

The Christian must bring the audience's attention back to reason and evidence. We must look at the logical implications of evil's existence, and not how it makes us feel. We should not be fooled by appeals to pity, and when speaking in front of an audience, we must prevent our opponent from deceiving the hearers by emotional arguments. The point of the argument is whether the existence of evil proves the non-existence of God. This is a logical and philosophical problem, not an emotional problem. Bringing the opponent and the audience to this understanding may be the more difficult part of defending Christianity against the argument of evil, since our society often honors rationality on paper only, while in reality it is very much emotionally driven.

Christians teach that God is all-powerful and all-loving; the unbeliever argues that given the existence of evil, God cannot be both. If God is all-powerful, then he is not all-loving in allowing his creatures to suffer evil; if he is all-loving, then he is not all-powerful in that he is manifestly unable to destroy evil. Therefore, God may be either all-powerful or all-loving, but not both. Since the Christians insist on both of these attributes in God, then the Christian God cannot exist.

Most Christians will not disagree with the unbeliever on the existence of evil, since this observation is consistent with biblical data. It is also true that Christians teach and insist on God being both all-powerful and all-loving. Keeping in mind that the argument from

evil is not merely an attempt to put the character or ability of God into question, but one that denies his very existence, our answer will address precisely this point. Although it is possible also to defend God's character, we will only take time to defend his existence in this chapter.

First, we need to understand the nature of a dilemma – something that the argument from evil attempts to create for the Christian. The first premise of a true dilemma states that either X is true or Y is true, but not both. The second premise denies either X or Y, which results in the conclusion affirming, as a logical necessity, the truth of the one not denied.

But let us now examine an example of a *false* dilemma. Imagine a student who had received a good grade on an exam. We are then given the first premise that either the student was intelligent, or he was a cheater. The second premise then denies the student as intelligent, which results in the apparently necessary conclusion of the student being a cheater.

What makes this dilemma false is that it ignores other factors, and thus eliminates other possible explanations for the student's achievement. It is possible that although the student lacked intelligence, he studied diligently for this exam, and was able to get a good grade as a result. The first premise ignores the factor of diligence, and creates a false dilemma.

Likewise, the unbeliever's argument from evil creates a false dilemma by pitting God's omnipotence against his omnibenevolence. If the argument were to be fair toward Christian beliefs, it must include the other attributes of God, such as, justice, knowledge, immutability, self-existence, and so on. Once this is done, no simple dilemma such as the above can be formed.

We may even argue that the existence of evil affirms the existence of God. By definition, good is an "ought," indicating things as they should be. Evil implies the existence of an "ought" because evil does what it ought not do. If an "ought" does not exist, then there cannot be an evil that is doing what it ought not. If evil is not doing what it ought not do, then it is not evil.

The "evil" of murder cannot exist if there is no such thing as life, or if life is not good; the "evil" of starvation cannot exist if there is no such thing as food, or the possibility of one needing and then being satisfied with food. Since evil is evil because it is a deviation from the good, its existence affirms the existence of the good. Therefore, the existence of evil is evidence for the existence of good, and not its non-existence.

Evil cannot exist without good. If there is no "ought," then there cannot be a deviation from it. However, it does not follow that if good exists, evil must exist. Good can exist without evil. Deviation of "ought" does not have to exist for "ought" to exist, but the existence of "ought" makes deviation from it possible. Some say that good cannot exist without evil. This is clearly false since it is the good that defines the category, and there needs not be any deviation within the standard of good within the category. On the other

hand, the existence of evil necessitates a good that defines the category and the "ought" within that category. Therefore, the existence of evil does not negate, but rather strongly affirms the existence of God, whose is the ultimate good.

A typical reply against the argument from evil proceeds from the alleged reality of human freedom. The "free will" given to us by God is genuine, and qualifies as the beginning of new chains of events, which may or may not lead to evil consequences. Without discussing the details of this theodicy, orthodox Christians must reject this answer to the argument from evil, seeing that the Bible denies the existence of human free will, but teaches that God retains absolute control over everything, including human decisions. As such, Christians affirm that God is the ultimate cause of evil – nothing can exist or happen unless God, not merely permits, but decrees it – yet he himself commits no evil.

For a more detailed discussion on the subject, please see my article, *The Problem of Evil*.

8. ANSWERING OBJECTIONS

We have outlined the evidential approach to apologetics. Although we have made no attempt to answer every attack against Christianity, we have presented the skeleton of a reasoning process leading to the conclusion of Christianity being objectively and universally true to the exclusion of all other options, such as atheism or non-Christian religions.

The following are examples of specific objections against Christianity that sometimes come up during discussions or evangelistic attempts, divided into several categories. Obviously, the nature of this book prevents us from answering every objection that may occur, but we trust that these chapters have increased the Christian's confidence in the body of truths to which they have committed themselves. Christians should never be ashamed of the gospel – it is the only truth, the only way to life, and the only way to God.

Since the previous chapters aim to construct a positive case for Christianity, we have not responded to many specific objections in order to avoid cluttering up the presentation. But now, we will give a number of examples as to what these objections may be, and how the believer may respond to them. Nevertheless, some of the objections listed below have already appeared in the previous chapters, they are presented here so that we may respond to them further, or from other perspectives.

The Nature of Truth

The following deals with the nature of truth, or issues related to it. The ideas often being attacked are the possibility of knowing truth and the objectivity of truth. Some of these objections are similar, but are phrased differently and come against Christianity from slightly different angles.

Objection #1: Human beings are prone to make mistakes; therefore, we should not claim certainty when it comes to truth. We should also be skeptical about claims to objective truth since there is always the possibility of error.

Reply: This is usually used only as an excuse to deny irrefutable arguments and evidences. How does one know that human beings have ever made mistakes except that for every perceived mistake, there is also an objective standard to which this error is measured against? Therefore, if human beings err, objective truth exists. However, if the objective truth is unknown, then how can we know something is an error? So, if the objector acknowledges the existence of even one error, made by him or another, he has admitted to the existence and knowability of some objective truth.

Objection #2: Truth is not knowable. Nobody can claim to know certain things to be true.

Reply: The statement, "Truth is not knowable," is self-refuting, since it attempts to convey a piece of information about truth, which cannot be obtained according to the statement itself. If truth is not knowable, then nobody can know that it is not knowable.

Objection #3: Truth is relative, and since this is so, one cannot claim knowledge of objective or exclusive truths.

Reply #1: The statement, "Truth is relative," is self-refuting – it proves itself wrong. It claims that it is objectively true that truth is relative, that it is true for everyone that truth is relative. Whatever is true for everyone is an objective truth, therefore objective truth exists and this statement self-destructs. On the other hand, if truth is relative, then the statement, "Truth is relative," is also only relatively true, and therefore is not binding on anyone.

Reply #2: If truth is indeed relative, then the Christian cannot be wrong in claiming anything to be true, including the statement that truth is absolute, objective, and exclusive, since these would only be false relative to the non-Christian. The objector is not practicing what he preaches; rather, he should remain silent.

Reply #3: Some truths may be described as subjective, but even the content of the subjective truth is an objective fact. For example, one's favorite color is subjective in that it is a matter of preference; however, it is objectively true that his preference is what it is. If his favorite color is blue, it is objectively true to everyone that his favorite color is blue. If another person claims that the former's color of choice is red, this latter speaker would be wrong. Even when it comes to truths that are subjective, they are objective facts. In the same way, if God exists, a person would be wrong to disbelieve in him. Whether a person chooses to accept him is subjectively decided, but whether he exists is an objective fact.

Reply #4: If person A is five feet tall and person B is six feet tall, it would be true that person B is relatively tall when compared to person A. Person B would be relatively short comparing to person C, who is seven feet tall. Some things may seem to be relatively true when one fact or measurement is being compared to another, but this would not be so when we are dealing with existence itself or an objective standard. It is objectively true that A, B, and C exist. It is objectively true that A is five feet tall – a truth obtained by the use of an objective standard of measurement.

Objection #4: Moral standards are relative. One cannot say that a certain moral standard should apply to everyone.

Reply #1: The statement, "Moral standards are relative," is self-refuting – it is a statement about moral standards that claims to be true for everyone. The speaker is claiming that his

view, that moral standards are relative, should apply to everyone, thus making it an objective statement about moral standards.

Reply #2: If moral standards are indeed relative, then no standard can be "wrong" – including one that espouses objective moral standards. The Christian's moral standard would only be wrong relative to the objector. In that case, the objector should not be interfering with our "relative" truth. The objector is not being consistent. On the other hand, since Christians acknowledge a universal moral standard, they are being consistent with their own claims when they challenge others to adhere to it.

Reply #3: If truth and moral standards are relative, then unbelievers cannot say that Christians are wrong in anything that they do or say. They can only endure our claims in silence and in the spirit of "tolerance" in order to be consistent.

Objection #5: One should not impose his moral standards on others, but this is what Christianity does.

Reply #1: If there are objective truths, and objective moral standards, then all should indeed be held accountable to them. If objective truths exist, then Christianity is doing the right thing in "imposing" these truths on others.

Reply #2: The statement, "One should not impose his moral standards on others," is self-refuting – it is a statement about moral standards that the speaker is attempting to impose on the hearer. The objection is hypocritical.

Reply #3: The question that should come prior to this is the existence of God and his revelation. If a God exists and he has revealed his requirements to us in the Bible, then the opinion of the objector is foolish and irrelevant. Besides fighting against the concept of objective moral standards, the unbeliever must also refute the existence of God and the infallibility of the Bible.

Reply #4: A relativist will often react negatively if his possessions are stolen from him, if one of his relatives is murdered, or if his child has been molested. As long as he is the one being stolen from, as long as it is his relative that has been murdered, and as long as it is his child who has been molested, he believes that it is wrong for anyone to steal, murder, or molest children. However, the relativist should not take action against the criminals if he were to be consistent with his own philosophy, especially if the criminals believe that their actions were moral. If the relativist were to take legal actions against the criminals, then according to his own philosophy he would be imposing his own moral standards on them.

Objection #6: Christianity teaches intolerance.

Reply #1: Christianity teaches truth, and is intolerant against falsehood and ignorance.

Reply #2: This objection is a cowardly way of rejecting the Christian faith after having lost the argument with a believer.

Reply #3: The objection presupposes the virtue of tolerance. The burden of proof is upon the unbeliever to define and defend his concept of tolerance; otherwise, the objection is unintelligible.

Objection #7: Claims of exclusive truths demonstrate close-mindedness. Christians are therefore close-minded.

Reply #1: The speaker needs to demonstrate that being close-minded is not a good trait. The burden of proof rests on the objector to show that close-mindedness is a character flaw instead of a loaded word for the rather positive characteristics of being resolute, decisive, and unwavering.

Reply #2: We have already shown that truth cannot be relative. If truth is absolute, it cannot be negotiated. It is not a matter of whether a statement or claim is close-minded, but whether it is true. If it is indeed true, then it should be accepted whether it sounds open-minded or close-minded.

Reply #3: The argument of close-mindedness is self-refuting since it is not open to the possibility that there are absolute truths that are universally applicable. The objection itself is close-minded.

Conclusion: Objective truths exist, meaning that some things are either true or false for everyone. Nothing can be both true and false at the same time and in the same sense. Christianity insists that the existence of God and all the doctrines found in the Bible (the resurrection of Christ, the final judgment, etc.) are absolutely, objectively, and exclusively true.

The Existence of God

There can be no Christianity if there is no God. The study of Christian apologetics shows that the positive evidence for God leads to a belief in his existence, and the alleged negative arguments for God are refuted. Once the existence of God has been established, Christian theism is possible.

Objection #1: Some people believe in God's existence because they are unable to deal with the realities of this world and must depend on an imagined deity for emotional support. That is, some people have a psychological need to believe in the existence of God.

Reply #1: A psychological need does not negate evidence. Whatever exists in reality remains in existence whether one has a psychological need to believe in its existence or

not. The theistic arguments demonstrate that God exists whether there is a psychological need to believe in his existence or not.

Reply #2: Some people do not believe in God's existence because they are unable to face the possibility of punishments for their misdeeds and must suppress the idea of God in their minds. That is, the atheist has a psychological need to resist belief in God's existence.

Objection #2: It is possible for God to have created the world and then ceased to exist. If that is true, then there is no God now.

Reply: This is impossible. Remember that there was a beginning to time and space. The creator must therefore exist outside of time and space, and is thus not subject to time and space. If so, then this being has never come to be, and therefore can never cease to be. In other words, something can only cease to be if it has existence before it ceases to be, but there is no "before" or "after" in God's existence, and therefore he can never cease to be. Therefore, if there was ever a God, he must still be in existence now.

Conclusion: We have strong arguments in support of the existence of God, and we are able to produce decisive refutations of all the arguments against it. We therefore assert that everyone must acknowledge the existence of God.

The Resurrection of Christ

The resurrection of Christ is essential to Christianity. Not only is the nature and supremacy of Jesus Christ the distinctive of the Christian faith, but we believe that the individual's eternal destiny rests on his attitudes and beliefs about him. To deny Christ is to deny God, and to deny God is to subject oneself under his eternal punishment.

Objection #1: Jesus was merely in a swoon. He was not truly dead, and therefore his apparent resurrection was false.

Reply #1: The Roman soldiers at the time were very proficient in their craft. They could not have failed in killing him in crucifixion.

Reply #2: The Roman soldiers did not break Jesus' legs, showing that they were sure he was already dead.

Reply #3: A Roman soldier pierced Jesus at his side with a spear – blood and water flowed out. This indicates that his lungs had collapsed. He could not have been alive.

Objection #2: The disciples invented the resurrection account.

Reply #1: The disciples were persecuted, some to the point of death, for their belief in the resurrection of Jesus. If the resurrection account were indeed invented, at least a certain

percentage of them would have recanted; however, the disciples insisted that Jesus had been raised from the dead.

Reply #2: The Jews or the Romans could have easily contradicted the resurrection account by producing the body of Jesus; however, no such attempt was made even though they were against the disciples' preaching on the resurrection.

Reply #3: There were at least five hundred eyewitnesses to the resurrection of Christ, some of which were still alive when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 15. If Paul had been in error, questioning these latter individuals would have refuted his resurrection account.

Objection #3: The eyewitness accounts were in fact mass hallucinations.

Reply #1: This is only likely if the witnesses had both wanted and expected Jesus to raise from the dead. However, many of them did not expect Jesus to rise, and were surprised when it happened. They were not gullible people, but many were skeptical until they were convinced by the actual evidence.

Reply #2: There were just too many witnesses to the resurrection. It is impossible for many different individuals to have hallucinated consistently about the same thing on different occasions.

Reply #3: Hallucinations usually last for a short period of time, from what seems like a flash to several minutes, and perhaps up to several hours under special situations. Jesus appeared to his disciples at various times after his resurrection for forty days.

Reply #4: Given the sensory experiences involved with the post-resurrection Jesus, the disciples could not have been hallucinating. The sensations included, touching, hearing, and eating. One who insists on this hallucination theory must eventually be pressed by the Christian to a point where he must question all reality. If what so many disciples had experienced for so many days were hallucinations, then the reality the objector experiences may also be illusory. This puts the mental stability of the objector in question, and not the claim of Christ's resurrection.

Reply #5: The alleged hallucinations would have been quickly discredited if the Jews or Romans had produced the body. Yet, no such attempt was made. The body was simply not available if Jesus had indeed risen and left the tomb. It would be ridiculous to think that the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus from the tomb when it was guarded by professional Roman soldiers.

Objection #4: The resurrection was merely a myth, and even probably simulated from Greek mythology.

Reply #1: The literary style of the gospels and the resurrection accounts is not consistent with the mythological stories of that time or the surrounding periods. They are clearly intended as straightforward, literal, historical accounts rather than mythological ones.

Reply #2: There was not enough time for myths concerning Jesus to develop. Typically, there needs to be at least two generations between the actual events and the originating date of the myths, since any witnesses could have protested against any mythological development or alterations to the actual historical events. The preaching of the apostles and the biblical writings occurred well within the first two generations after the actual events.

Reply #3: There are writings external to the Bible that verifies the New Testament documents as describing historical facts, even if the writers of these extra-biblical texts did not share in the biblical authors' theological beliefs.

Conclusion: The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a literal, physical, and historical fact. Jesus was indeed God in human flesh. He lived on this earth for a number of years as fully God and fully man. He died on the cross, and was buried in a tomb. Then, he rose from the dead with the same body. He now continues to retain both his deity and humanity. The Scripture teaches that believing in this historical fact and its implications concerning redemption is the only way to salvation. Objections to the resurrection of Jesus Christ originate from anti-supernatural and anti-Christian biases, not objective arguments or evidences.

The Problem of Evil

The argument from evil is a favorite among those who wish to deny God's existence. As mentioned in the chapter dealing with the issue, this argument has more of an emotional appeal rather than logical force.

Objection: The existence of evil proves the non-existence of God.

Reply #1: It does not. Rather, the existence of evil proves the existence of good. If good is an "ought," or a desirable condition, then there can be no evil unless there is first a good. If there is no "ought," there cannot be an "ought not." The existence of a speed limit makes violation of the same possible, but there cannot be a speed limit violation if there is no such thing as a speed limit. The existence of evil implies the necessary existence of good. Therefore, the existence of evil by no means eliminates the possibility of God's existence, but rather argues strongly that he indeed exists.

Reply #2: Most people who use this argument do very little to alleviate the problem that they seem to be so concerned about. One response, then, is to ask the speaker what he is doing about the problem of evil if the concern is not a mere pretense or excuse for disbelief in God. This does not answer the logical aspect of the argument from evil, and as such should not be considered a conclusive refutation against it. This response appeals to the objector's practicality and exposes his hypocrisy.

Conclusion: The existence of evil fails to demonstrate the non-existence of God, but rather serves to affirm his existence. The argument from evil is effective with many people since most are more influenced by emotional appeals than logical arguments and objective evidence. Whenever the latter elements are held in high-esteem, the argument from evil generates no impact.

The Doctrine of Hell

Arguing in the manner outlined in the previous chapters is sufficient to establish Christianity as exclusively true, and therefore any doctrine in Christianity not yet mentioned should also be accepted by extension. However, the doctrine of hell promises such terrible consequences for the unbelievers that it invites many objections, and so we will take a brief look at some of the arguments below. At this point the existence of God or the exclusive status of Christianity may or may not be in question – that depends on who is making the objections – but the target of assault is the integrity and coherence of the Christian belief system.

Objection #1: The Bible teaches that God is love, but hell seems to be contrary to the idea of love.

Reply #1: The Bible also teaches that God is just and that sin will lead to punishment; however, it is due to the love of God that he has sent his own Son, Jesus Christ, to provide us a way to escape hell and enter heaven. Failure to accept this love does not constitute a denial of its existence, but the sanity and intelligence of the unbeliever.

Reply #2: It is not loving to forgo punishing sins. It is not loving to allow those who have sinned against other human beings to do so with impunity. It is loving to vindicate the innocent against the guilty.

Reply #3: By what definition of love is God forbidden to punish sinners, and that to punish them forever? The Bible defines love in a way that God may send billions of sinners to hell to be tormented forever, but in this objection the unbeliever has imported a private definition of love to evaluate Christian doctrine, thus committing the fallacy of equivocation. The Bible may contradict the unbeliever's unjustified concept of love, but the doctrine of hell does not contradict Scripture's idea of love at all.

Objection #2: If God is just, then how come he punishes temporal sins with an eternal hell?

Reply: The period of punishment should not correspond to the time needed to commit the crime, but to the severity of the crime. It is not just to jail a murderer for five seconds, and a bank robber for thirty minutes because that is how much time they took to commit the crimes. We jail some criminals for many years, and murderers for life. Sin is extremely severe in the eyes of God, and here the punishment fits the crime perfectly.

Conclusion: These objections to the Christian's position originate from moral difficulties and intellectual incompetence on the part of the unbeliever. Rather than to escape hell through depending on God's mercy, many simply wish to deny hell's existence altogether. The Christian must not compromise on this issue, but realize that if God exists, and if Christianity is his exclusive revelation, and if the Bible teaches that there is a hell, then there must be one. The Bible, however, also commands us to believe in Christ so as to be saved from God's wrath.

Although the examples in this chapter are by no means exhaustive, perhaps they will offer the reader ideas as to how he may answer other objections as well. At any rate, the believer should be confident that the Christian faith is defensible and coherent, and should not be intimidated by the unbeliever's feeble objections.

9. APOLOGETICS AND EVANGELISM

Besides the general purpose of defending the credibility of Christianity, apologetics often has the specific end of evangelism. Presenting the message of salvation through Jesus Christ is done in conjunction with answering the questions and objections of the unbeliever. But detailed apologetics is not always necessary in evangelism – some come to faith with little persuasion, and others will believe the moment the Christian reveals the good news.

In other words, it is not always necessary for the presentation of the gospel message to be accompanied by many apologetic arguments. However, if such is needed, the Christian should be prepared to offer them (1 Peter 3:15). And Christian apologetics can at times stand independently for the purpose of maintaining the general credibility of the Christian faith without any explicit effort in evangelism.

This concluding chapter examines some of the items we should present to the unbeliever when our purpose is evangelism. As much as possible or needed, the Christian may engage and defeat the unbeliever's objections, as he informs the non-Christian of the claims of the gospel more thoroughly and presses for conversion to the Christian faith.

There is no such thing as a Christian who does not believe in God's existence (Hebrews 11:6). Christianity is not merely a system of thought geared toward enhancing a person's morality and to grant him peace of mind. It may do these things, but Christianity is primarily the revelation of a God who is self-existent, self-sufficient, omnipotent, omniscient, and perfect in every way. One who comes to God must believe that this is true.

Not only must a person believe in God's existence, but he must also agree that the other claims of Christianity are exclusively true. God has uniquely revealed himself through the Scripture. As the Bible declares, there is no other savior besides Jesus Christ. Christianity is not one option among many, but the only option if one desires to be saved from eternal punishment. Jesus must be confessed as God in the flesh, and one who had died for the individual's sins. He rose again after three days and is now seated at the right hand of God. One day, he will come again to judge every person. Only those who are in Christ will escape God's wrath.

The above truths are revealed to us through Bible, and there is no legitimate reason for rejecting these claims. The authority of the Bible gives us the basis and standard for all our beliefs and actions. The Bible is God's verbal revelation to us recorded by his chosen men. Therefore, it has the same authority as verbal commands that come directly from God. To disobey the Bible is to defy God. The right thing to do, then, is to diligently study the Bible and see to it that we are properly understanding God's requirements, then proceed to obey him, and to conform our thinking and behavior to his precepts.

Having been regenerated through Jesus Christ, obedience to God should not be considered difficult or burdensome (1 John 5:3), since we have been given a new nature (2 Corinthians 5:17), one that is not devilish or disobedient (Ephesians 2:1-10). We now share in his divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), and the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). Strong attraction to the things of God and obedience to him should come naturally to us.

Christianity is not an "inclusive" system that accommodates beliefs contradictory to itself. If there is only one God, and he has revealed himself only through the Christian worldview, then such a stance is inevitable; it should be this way and no other way. God himself is intolerant against falsehood. His great love means that he has done much to offer the truth to those whom he has chosen to be saved, but the reprobates – with his ungodly lifestyles, false beliefs, and blatant defiance – will be forever damned. As the apostle Paul said, God now "commands all people everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). There is no other way to salvation.

Since Christianity is exclusively true, and the only way to salvation, and the truth of this claim carries the greatest ramifications, Christians should never compromise their beliefs, but be willing to "contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude v.3). It is an act of great love and service to insist on the truth regardless of popular trends of thought and ideologies, even when facing persecution and ridicule, "so that by all possible means [we] might save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22). We should be confident that Christianity is exclusively true, and that the church is "the pillar and foundation of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15), without which truth and sanity have no representation on this planet.

Although we do not substitute the subjective influence of the Holy Spirit in evangelism with our arguments, we have the mandate to "demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). The reader can trust the Holy Spirit to provide him with some convincing arguments and methods of presentation that will effectively defend Christianity and lead others to belief in Christ.

If Christianity is indeed true and intellectually credible, then why do many still refuse to believe? The Bible answers that it is both an intellectual and moral problem. It is not because our arguments or claims are not credible, but that although unbelievers know that God exists due to their innate knowledge and external evidences, "they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools" (Romans 1:21-23).

They claim to be wise in their disbelief, but God calls them fools. Christians should never be intimidated by skeptical unbelievers, thinking that they are somehow more intelligent. How clever is it to go through life without a serious consideration of what comes after death? How clever is it to assume the non-existence of God? How clever is it to deny all

spiritual beliefs without thorough investigation? How clever is it to deny Christ in the face of overwhelming evidence?

Alas, their wickedness has made them fools! The Bible's answer to why many fail to believe is because non-Christians are stupid and wicked – a condition that only God, through regenerate can change, and he does it by means of the preaching of the gospel message. Paul reminds us that we were also in such a miserable state before God saves us from our sins (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Ephesians 2:1-3, 4:17-19).

The Scripture says, "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them" (Romans 1:18-19). God may have shown them the truth through nature, Scripture, and his people, but there is no hope for those who continue to "suppress the truth by their wickedness."

In Luke 14:16:24, the Bible says:

Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.' Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.' Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.' The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.' 'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.' Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.'"

On the day of judgment, God will accept no excuse for rejecting the saving grace made available through Jesus Christ.