

# Defending the Faith



# Defending the Faith

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# Defending the Faith

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## Summary of topics

- The Necessity of Biblical Faith (which is, by its nature, comprehensive).
- Loving God with the totality of your being.
- An Introduction to thinking Christianly.
- The Structure of a Biblical Defense of the Faith.
- Scriptural Model of Defense: Paul on Mars Hill (Acts 17).
- Practical guidelines.
- Examples of Defending the Faith.
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## The Necessity of a Biblical Faith (which is, by its nature, comprehensive)

- I. The kingdom of God and evangelism: Matthew 13:3-23 [word as seed in the hearts of men]; Matthew 13:24-33, 36-43 [children of kingdom as seed in the world, mustard seed and leavening influence]; Matthew 28:18-20 [Christ has all authority in heaven *and* earth]; Colossians 1:15-17 [universal and cosmic – all things – implications involved in redemption by the blood of Christ].
  - A. Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920).
    1. Who was he? Study his life (what one man, under grace, can do).
      - a) Renowned reformed theologian, newspaper editor, and politician (served as Prime Minister of the Netherlands in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century).
      - b) He also founded the Free University of Amsterdam, today a major university.
    2. How did he view the Christian faith? In an address given at Princeton University:
      - a) “There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over *all*, does not cry: ‘Mine!’”<sup>1</sup>
      - b) What is the central principle of the Reformed faith? “The dominating principle was not, soteriologically, justification by faith, but, in a wider sense, cosmologically, the sovereignty of the Triune God over the whole Cosmos, in all its spheres and kingdoms, visible and invisible.”
      - c) Kuyper saw the Reformed faith, not as just the best expression of one’s personal and individual salvation, but as a total world and life view. Man was to see and acknowledge the sovereignty of God in every area of human activity.
  - B. Howard Snyder, *The Community of the King*, “The redemption of persons is the *center* of God’s plan, but it is not the *circumference* of that plan.”
  - C. Frankfurt Declaration of 1970, “Missionary proclamation should lead everywhere to the establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ, which exhibits a new, defined reality as salt and light in its social environment ...”
  - D. Edward Dayton and David Fraser, in *Mission and the Church*, compare and contrast the absolutization of the “social gospel” with that of “individual salvation.”
    1. “The problems that exist within the new [social gospel – JN] as well as the traditional understanding of mission lie in the degree to which they truncate or lose contact with this dynamic reality [the kingdom of God – JN]. Those who have come to stress humanization as the encompassing image of mission have tended to eliminate the tension between the Kingdom as present and the Kingdom as coming. They have been prone to separate the gospel deed from its necessary proclamation in word, to confuse human political action with the acts of God in establishing His kingdom, to erase the

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<sup>1</sup> Abraham Kuyper, “Sphere Sovereignty,” in James D. Bratt, ed., *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader* (Grand Rapids, 1998), p. 488.

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line between the Church as the community of the subjects of that Kingdom and the world as those being called to enter the Kingdom, to neglect the importance of the call to explicit discipleship in a personal sense. The degree to which the political and social dimensions of the Kingdom are stressed to the exclusion of the other equally important dimensions is the measure to which humanization as an ideal narrows the nature of the Kingdom and makes it less than what Jesus proclaimed.”

2. “The traditionalists have also often narrowed the scope of the Kingdom. They too have tended to eliminate the tension between the Kingdom present and the Kingdom coming, only in the other direction. They have been prone to eliminate the political and social implications of the gospel, to stress the word over the deed, to offer a discipleship that is only personal and individualistic [pietistic – JN], to break the connection between the Church as participant in the Kingdom of God and God’s action in the world, and to identify the mission of the Church only with proclamation. The degree to which they have stressed a personal-spiritual salvation to the exclusion of the political-social dimensions of the Kingdom is the measure to which they have narrowed the nature of the Kingdom and made it less than what Jesus proclaimed.”

3. The Gospel of the kingdom is truth is word and deed (I John 3:16-18).

- E. Johannes Verkuyl, late Professor and Head of the Department of Missiology and Evangelism at the Free University of Amsterdam (founded by Abraham Kuyper), “The Kingdom to which the Bible testifies involves a proclamation and a realization of a total salvation, one which covers the whole range of human needs and destroys every pocket of evil and grief affecting mankind. Kingdom in the New Testament has a breadth and scope which is unsurpassed; it embraces heaven as well as earth, world history as well as the whole cosmos.”

## II. What is a world and life view? *Weltanschauung* (German for world view)

- A. It is the way one views the world and life as it exists in and around humanity.
1. It is the way a person views reality.
  2. Every person views reality with a pair of glasses.
  3. He may not be conscious that he is wearing a certain pair of glasses, but he acts in accordance with those glasses.
- B. Worldview choices (the two views are antithetical; both cannot be true at the same time).
1. God is sovereign (absolute).
  2. Man is sovereign (absolute). This is the current zeitgeist (i.e., German for spirit of the times).
- C. Sovereignty is inescapable: If God is not recognized as sovereign in all things, then man will assume that sovereignty to his own self-destruction.
- D. Worldview and its implications (ideas have consequences).
1. Suppose man is sovereign (called secular humanism today).
    - a) God’s authority is rejected.
    - b) Since authority is inescapable, then man sets up his own authority.
      - (1) Artificial (not permanent).
      - (2) Based upon the free, autonomous will of the individual (or group, as in democracy).

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- (3) It sees all that is as the product of blind, evolutionary (chance), and impersonal forces.
- (4) It views man as essentially good and ever evolving to a higher and better way of life.
- c) What are the causes of problems in the world today?
  - (1) Lack of knowledge (need more education).
  - (2) Environmental (need better housing, medical care, etc.).
  - (3) Man can solve all problems through environmental change, greater allocation of monetary funds, education, etc.
- d) Problem: problems do not go away.
  - (1) The solution to problems causes more problems.
  - (2) New man-made authority concepts constantly arise to try to fix problems caused by other man-made authority concepts.
  - (3) Rather than turn to acknowledge the authority of God and His law-word<sup>2</sup>, humanistic man continues to suppress the truth in unrighteousness.
- e) One illustration: The sexual revolution (not in the 60s, but in the late 40s and 50s).
  - (1) War cry: down with the Puritanical taboos (e.g., the Bible is not the standard for ethics); “do what feels good to do.”
  - (2) Problem: unwanted pregnancies (answer: back to God and His law-word? No! Introduce birth control measures).
  - (3) Enter “Planned Parenthood.” (contra God-planned parenthood).
  - (4) Problem: illegitimate pregnancies increased even more.
  - (5) Answer: Back to God and His law-word? No! Introduce abortion.
  - (6) Problem: With abortion came a total disrespect for life that produced irresponsible men who would not care for the women they impregnated nor the children they fathered.
  - (7) Answer: Women began to enter the work force in greater numbers in order to support the children they bore.
  - (8) Problem: Not getting paid the same amount as men.

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<sup>2</sup> What do I mean by law-word? The Bible, Old and New Testament, is above all, a law-word (command-word) of God (contra a devotional-word that gives me subjective “good feelings”). Remember, the command-word, to the believer, is a *grace-word*. God’s command-word is God’s enabling-word. Augustine, “Oh Lord, give what you command and command what You will.” The modern churchman errs when he reads the Bible only to find out what it says to men as individuals. In itself, there is nothing wrong with reading the Bible in this personal context (the Bible was written for me to read), but if this is the *only* way we read the Bible, then our view of the Bible will be a distorted one. The Bible, as God’s written revelation, is a regulatory handbook that speaks not only to us as individuals, but also about matters creational (i.e., cultural and cosmic issues). Why? Because the Bible, while it is *man-oriented*, is *God-centered*. In the Bible we find, beyond its valid devotional insights, God’s principled personal and cultural directives for and claims on this life. The Bible, in its essence, does not contain “deeper life” nuggets that will lift me up to some “higher, super spiritual” spirit world characterized by some subjective, existential peace or “ease of mind.” The Bible is a command book and its commands most definitely disturb my peaceful ease. Although the Bible disturbs my peace, it tells me that I can only find God-centered peace through obedience. The reading of Scripture under the illuminatory ministry of the Holy Spirit edifies the inner man, provides insightful wisdom, and confers the “pleasure of His presence.” But this edification, insight, and pleasure, to be Biblical, must be accompanied by a commitment to hear, believe, and obey the word of the sovereign and Almighty God. Why do we obey? To get peace? Peace, joy, and contentment should never be our ultimate goal (although we will experience these fruits as a by-product of obedience). Ultimately, *we obey God only because God requires it*. We glorify God in our bodies because we have been bought with a price (I Corinthians 6:20). We are His property, His absolute possession. *There can be nothing better than that.*

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- (9) Answer: back to God and His law-word? No! Band together and form the Feminist movement.
  - (10) Problem: The Feminist movement grew more radical and resulted in the emotional and cultural emasculation of the male in our society.
  - (11) Answer: Back to God and His law-word? No! The humanist male turns to homosexuality.
  - (12) Problem: AIDS.
  - (13) Answer: Back to God and His law-word? No! Safe sex.
  - (14) Problem: more AIDS and more illegitimate pregnancies (with attendant abortions).
2. A man-centered world and life view will not acknowledge the right of the Sovereign God to tell man how he is to live.
- E. What shapes the Biblical Christian world and life view?
1. II Corinthians 10:1-6 (v. 5).
    - a) Any and every thought that denies or excludes God is in disobedience to Him.
      - (1) Public (government) schools teach outright falsehoods.
        - (a) Man came from apes.
        - (b) The Puritans were nasty people.
      - (2) The most destructive things taught, by far, are subtle lies about the character of God.
        - (a) Daily, an overarching lesson is being reinforced.
        - (b) What is this lesson? That  $2 + 2 = 4$ , the process of photosynthesis, WWI began in 1914 *regardless of whether or not Jesus Christ is the Lord*.
    - b) We are commanded to cast down those arguments.
    - c) The knowledge (by implication, authority) of God must be brought into every area of thought and life.
    - d) Warning: Theft in progress! (Colossians 2:1-8): cheat = robbed or mugged.
    - e) Because Christians have allowed themselves to be robbed by philosophy “so-called,” our society is the way it is today (Matthew 5:13-16).
      - (1) Our society is a mirror-image of the Christian church.
      - (2) Modern society is a chastisement to the Church.
  2. Undergirding this verse, is the exhaustive and comprehensive sovereignty of God is the bedrock belief of the Biblical Christian (all the following issues in sovereignty connect; if there is a denial at one point, then the sovereignty of God is being rejected). *Jesus is Lord of all* (Acts 10:36).
    - a) Jesus Christ is Lord of salvation (Ephesians 1; Acts 16:14; Acts 18:9-10).
    - b) Jesus Christ is Lord of the nations (Revelation 1:5).
    - c) Jesus Christ is Lord of the universe (Colossians 1:15-19; Hebrews 1:3).
    - d) Jesus Christ is Lord of knowledge (Proverbs 1:7; 9:10; Psalm 36:9; Colossians 2:3).

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- e) Jesus Christ is Lord over ethics and morality (Romans 6:11).
- f) Jesus Christ is Lord of reality (Colossians 1:15f) and existence (Acts 17:28; Revelation 4:11).
- g) Jesus Christ is Lord over history (Psalm 115; Ephesians 1:9-14).
- 3. How can we make sense of the “tough events” of history? Job 38-42 (cf. 38:1-3; 42:1-6)
- 4. The trustworthiness of God’s word (Deuteronomy 29:29).
  - a) Speaks to all things explicitly or implicitly (Psalm 119:128; Psalm 36:9).
  - b) The Word of God is the adjudicator in all things; all aspects of creation are under His authority.
  - c) Man finds true liberty in obedience to the law-word of God as empowered by the Holy Spirit.
- F. Three common errors that have made “salt tasteless.”
  - 1. Sacred/secular dichotomy.
    - a) Examples.
      - (1) Church work is spiritual work (real holy); changing diapers is, well, dirty work (second rate work).
        - (a) This idea holds across the spectrum of differing faiths.
          - (i) Jewish faith: the ideal of being a rabbi.
          - (ii) Roman Catholics: the ideal of being a priest or nun.
          - (iii) Protestants: the ideal of being a pastor or missionary.
        - (b) In the early church there appeared the heresy of monastic asceticism: *far from the madding crowd of ignoble strife*.
      - (2) Christians are to be focused *only* upon preaching the Gospel (getting individuals saved).
      - (3) A classic example of a pietistic proponent of Lordship Salvation is A. W. Tozer, whose view of individual conversion as surrender to Christ’s absolute claims *is never accompanied by a recognition of Christ’s absolute claims in all areas of modern life*.
    - b) In contrast, all of life is sacred and is to be lived under the Lordship of Jesus Christ (a concept that secular humanism, inspired by Satan, hates and fears). See Colossians 3:17; I Corinthians 10:31.
      - (1) Redemption by grace through Christ is the key to the resolution of all political, social, and cultural problems of the day.
      - (2) All of God’s people are called to evangelism (in life and work) *and* all of God’s people are called to a vocation (whether as a homemaker, student [there is a time for everything], plumber, Prime Minister, Professor, Pastor).
        - (a) God’s people are not called to a Christian ghetto mentality (things are getting worse and worse; hold

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- the fort until Christ comes to takes us away from this mess).
- (b) Individuals are saved to serve God *both* in the local church and in the community around them (culture). In fact, it is in the Church, that God's people learn how to salt culture.
  - c) Christians are to be in the world, but not of the world.
    - (1) Not of the world: in terms of its ethical rebellion and source of power.
    - (2) In the world: in terms of stewardship of God's creational gifts.
  - d) Biblical Christianity demands our participation in the affairs of the world.
    - (1) Puritan Christopher Love, "God never did so order Religion that it should be a disadvantage to our particular callings in the world.
    - (2) Puritan Richard Baxter, "Must every man do his best to cast off worldly and external labours, and to retire himself to a contemplative life as the most excellent? No: no man should do so without a special necessity or call for there are general precepts on all that are able, that we live to the benefit of others, and prefer the common good, and as we have opportunity do good to all men ..."
    - (3) The Puritan (and Biblical/Reformational) emphasis on *justification by faith alone* (monergism) included the following addendum.
      - (a) The man that God justifies will produce works of faith (fruits)
      - (b) Cf. Roman Catholic emphasis on *justification by synergism* (works plus faith) = this view opens the door to mysticism and pietism.
2. Certain areas are neutral or amoral.
- a) We only learn spiritual truths in the Bible; everything else is in the "neutral zone" (issues in education, economics, politics, science, environment, war, etc.).
  - b) Facts are always interpreted facts; facts never stand alone because God is the creator and sustainer of all things (material, immaterial, or conceptual).
  - c) e.g.,  $2 + 2 = 4$ .
    - (1) Neutral perspective.
      - (a)  $2 + 2 = 4$  because this is just the way things are (the product of time [millions of years] + chance + matter).
      - (b) Therefore "math facts" (or math skills) are taught in a purely mechanical and ultimately meaningless way.
    - (2) God-centered perspective:  $2 + 2 = 4$  because this is the way the triune God has structured both creation to reflect and our

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minds to think; i.e., our minds and the physical world *resonate* because of a common Creator – this is why mathematics and science works.

- (3)  $2 + 2 = 4$  makes sense only if you can resolve some thorny philosophical issues; issues that *only* the revelation of the triune God resolves.

3. God's hand is in the supernatural, not in the natural occurrences of life.
- a) Who causes the snow to fall and the lightning to strike at a specific point? (Read Job for the answer).
- b) Who brings physical healing? God or the doctor?
- (1) Some think that God heals only when the healing occurs apart from medical technology.
- (2) Who taught the doctor his surgical skills and medical know how? God.
- (a) Historically, hospitals are a *Christian* invention (flowing out of the hospitality commands of Scripture).
- (b) The great medical advances have come in those places where Christianity has been the dominating thought
- (c) The same can be said of great advances in charitable activities, political freedom, economic prosperity, art, music, education improvement [the university is also a unique Christian invention]).
- (i) D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe, *What if Jesus Had Never Been Born?* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1994).
- (ii) Alvin J. Smith, *Under the Influence: How Christianity Transformed Civilization* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001).
- (3) Whether medical doctors acknowledge it or not, God has taught them their healing skills and God is the One who is to receive glory in their preventative and restorative service to mankind.

### III. How does one develop a Biblical Worldview?

- A. Every thought (assumption) must be held up to Scripture (explicitly or implicitly) – II Corinthians 10:5.
- B. One must know God's word (be immersed in it) and its impact in human history (for us to learn and emulate thereby).
1. Did you know that Genesis 1 forms the foundation of true science? Also, that most, if not all, of the founders of modern science believed in the truthfulness of the Genesis account? (Galileo, Kepler, Newton, Boyle, Faraday, Maxwell, to name only a few).
- a) "The work of the 16th-, 17th-, and most 18th-century mathematicians was ... a religious quest. The search for the

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- mathematical laws of nature was an act of devotion which would reveal the glory and grandeur of His handiwork.”<sup>3</sup>
- b) “Each of the great intellects possessed a combination of mathematical or scientific genius and religious orthodoxy which today are regarded as incompatible and possible only in a period of transition.”<sup>4</sup>
  - c) “Scientists today have kept apart from their professional work the religious convictions that formerly motivated some of the finest research in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. From the modern viewpoint, the inspiration that these mathematicians and scientists drew from religious beliefs seems strange.”<sup>5</sup>
2. Did you know that we owe an immeasurable debt to a multitude of unknown Christians who, during the Medieval era, developed (or invented or both) the mechanical clock, inexpensive paper, and the printing press [three items that are indispensable in the modern world]?
  3. Did you know that the inventions (the cam) of Christian monks during the so-called “Dark Ages” eventually led to the development of a binary coded system (initially punched cards and a principle essential in modern computers)?
  4. Kenneth Scott Latourette (1884-1968), eminent historian of Christianity, comments on the significance of the monastic orders, particularly the Benedictine order that began in the 6<sup>th</sup> century:
    - a) “It is clear that through monasticism Christianity did something to give dignity to labour and added greatly to agriculture and so to the increase in the supply of food. Under the Benedictine rule work was obligatory. Although in many of the Benedictine houses food and clothing came from estates cultivated by serfs and while in several monastic orders manual work in the fields was assigned to lay brothers and the choir monks gave themselves to prayer and study, in others all the monks, even those of aristocratic birth, toiled in their gardens or on the lands of the monastery. Whether by all members of the community or only by the lay brothers, monasteries did much to clear land, bring it under cultivation, and develop improved crops and methods of tillage. The first use of marl to enrich the soil is attributed to them and they were noted for their vineyards and their wines.”<sup>6</sup>
    - b) James Nickel, *Mathematics: Is God Silent?* (pp.77-78), “The dignity that the Benedictine monastic order (including the many derived from it) gave to labor, particularly manual labor in the fields, stood in striking contrast to the aristocratic conviction of the servile status of manual work (illiberal) which prevailed in much of ancient society. This same menial attitude toward manual work was also prevalent among the warriors (knights) and the non-monastic ecclesiastics who constituted

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<sup>3</sup> Morris Kline, *Mathematics: The Loss of Certainty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 34-35.

<sup>4</sup> Morris Kline, *Mathematics in Western Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 259.

<sup>5</sup> Morris Kline, *Mathematics and the Physical World*, p. 441.

<sup>6</sup> Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Harper & Row, [1953] 1975), 1:556-557.

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the upper middle classes of the Middle Ages. As Latourette notes, the monasteries were responsible for the clearing of land (and a concomitant reduction in the number of wild animals) and improvement in methods of agriculture. In the midst of the chaos of barbarism, the monasteries were centers of orderly and settled life. The monks were responsible for road building and road repair. Until the rise of the towns in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, they were pioneers in industry and commerce. The shops of the monasteries preserved the industries of Roman times. The French Cistercian monastic orders of the 11<sup>th</sup> through the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries led the way in the agricultural colonization of Western Europe. The Cistercian monasteries made their houses centers of agriculture and contributed to improvements in that occupation. With their lay brothers and their hired laborers, they became great landed proprietors. German monasteries also set advanced standards in agriculture and produced many artisans and craftsmen. Some serious doctrinal flaws did exist in monastic theology (e.g., advocacy of celibacy, the calling of God to the ecclesiastical life is the highest and holiest of callings). In spite of this shortcoming, Western civilization should thank the monasteries for leaving a preponderant inheritance. They were the precursors of hospitals, hotels, publishing houses, libraries, law courts, art academies, music conservatories, places of refuge, markets for barter and exchange, centers of culture, newspaper offices, orphan asylums, general stores, and, ultimately, through their educational endeavors, the university.”

5. Did you know that the first Christian churches were built as palaces (with gold and precious stones) to symbolize to the worshippers the reality and victory of the resurrection world?
6. Did you know, in the medieval era, that entire generations planned and began building massive cathedrals that they knew they would not live to see completed? Did you also know that in these cathedrals that the builders decorated areas with magnificent carvings (works of art) that no human would ever see (high in the sky or underneath chairs)?
7. Did you know that Christians applying the truths of I Corinthians 6 led to pagan Romans running to Church leaders for, believe it or not, *civil* justice?
8. Did you know that Deuteronomy 28 and the entire book of Revelation form the basis for understanding God’s hand in the rise and fall of nations?
9. Did you know that orphanages and the care of widows were first practiced in Christian lands?
10. Did you know that our calendar (BC/AD – *anno domini* [the year of our Lord]) is founded upon the Incarnation of Christ (cf. Luke 4:19)
11. Did you that 100,000 Christians in Constantinople (late 4<sup>th</sup> century) took care of the needs of 50,000 poor people in the city (and 3,000 widows and virgins) who depended upon the Church for their means of sustenance (1/4 of the income of the church went to support these people)?
12. When Henry VIII (1547) seized the monasteries and many of the charitable foundations of the Roman Catholic Church, a tremendous social problem

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was created in England (homeless, hungry, beggars, etc.). After Henry's death, Labor (a Puritan pastor) preached two sermons at St. Paul's Cathedral calling what Henry VIII did a sacrilege, "God is going to judge us because it was a theft of what belonged to God. If it was misused it could have been properly used because it was for the Lord's work because it was the Lord's treasury. Unless we make restitution to God, we the people of England, there will be a judgment upon us from the Almighty." Do you know that the result was one of the greatest outpourings of giving in Christian history from which foundations, schools, and charities were set up? The effect of these has remained to this day.

13. Did you know that local churches used to consider themselves as meeting the practical and spiritual needs of parishes; i.e. local communities? That is, did you know that every local church felt responsible for the geographic region around their physical locale (regardless of the affiliation, my church denomination, some other denomination or unchurched) of the people in this locale?
14. Did you know that, in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Christian churches led the way in providing both literacy and job training for immigrants coming to America? Cf. Frank Laubach (1884-?), missionary of literacy.
15. Did you know that, for centuries in the Christian west, the principle of "gleaning the fields" provided for all the needs of the poor? Also, did you know that in early America there were "tithe barns" specifically set aside for meeting the needs of the poor?
16. Did you know the hospitals and universities were a unique Christian invention?
17. Did you know, until about 150 years ago, that most Christians believed, knowing that only God's grace can *redeem*, that God's law *preserves* national liberty by its external *restraint* on evil actions? In this light, did you know that the first civil constitution in America (called the Massachusetts Body of Liberties) substantiated every law statute with quotes from the Pentateuch?
18. Did you know that the word "law" used in the courtroom phrase "ignorance of the law is no excuse" meant God's law? Also, did you know that the phrase "liberty in law" originally meant "national freedom finds its basis in laws that are built upon God's law?"
19. Did you know that the average age of a criminal behind bars in the United States in 1860 was 45; in 1960, it was 18?
20. Did you know that the literacy rate in 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century America was virtually 100%? And, did you know that government sponsored public schools did *not* exist then?
21. Did you know that *The Federalist Papers* (explaining the Constitution) first appeared as newspaper editorials? Did you also know that these papers are required reading for doctoral candidates in political science? (Read these essays and compare them with today's newspaper editorials)
22. Did you know that when Admiral David Glasgow Farragut (1801-1870), renowned for rallying his men with the battle cry of "Damn the torpedoes! Full speed ahead!" in the Battle of Mobile Bay (1864), was 59 years old that he celebrated *50 years* of service in the United States Navy? Did you also

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- know that he first captained a ship *at age 12* and at age 20 he was an accomplished and veteran ship's officer? Did you know that it was not uncommon, in the past in the Christian west, for men to graduate from college at age 14 and to command leadership positions in society by their late teens?
23. Did you know that both Proverbs and Isaiah speak about the causes, effects, and solutions of monetary inflation? Did you know that the United States Constitution providing for a monetary system that would not allow for inflation?
  24. Did you know that in early America, because of the impact of Christian giving and a concomitant small federal government, there was no such thing as property taxes, inheritance taxes, or income taxes? In fact, did you know that these taxes are prohibited by the United States Constitution (and still is; see Article I, Section 9, paragraph 4)?
  25. Did you know that, if all professing Christians in America would tithes 10% of their income (gross or net), the accumulated amount would come very close to the federal budget for health, education, and welfare? In this context, why do you think the Mormon Church, a heterodox (i.e., heretical) faith, is so wealthy and has such a capacity to meet the needs of its people (and others)?
  26. Did you know that the Wycliffe Bible translators have always been on the "leading edge" in linguistic analysis and theory?
  27. Did you know that when pagan tribes embrace the Gospel and the Bible is translated for them to read, they *invariably* confess, "We speak a new language now?" Do you know that the Bible and the Christian faith has informed and structured the English language in like manner?
  28. Did you know that church deacons stopped the practice of abortion in the Roman Empire by retrieving babies left to die of exposure and giving them to individual Christian families to nurture in the Lord?
  29. Kenneth Scott Latourette, *By Way of Inclusive Retrospect* (p. 165-166):
    - a) "Through Christ there has come into being the Church. The Church is never fully identical with ecclesiastical organizations. It is to be found in them, but not all of their members belong to it and it is greater than the sum of them all. Yet, though never fully visible as an institution, the Church has been and is a reality, more potent than any one or all of the churches. 'The blessed company of all faithful people,' it constitutes a fellowship which has been both aided and hampered by the churches, and is both in them and transcends them."
    - b) "From individuals who have been inspired by Christ and from the Church has issued movement after movement for attaining the Christian ideal. That ideal has centered around the kingdom of God, an order in which God's will is done. It sets infinite value upon the individual. Its goal for the individual is to become a child of God, to 'know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge' and to 'be filled unto all the fulness of God' – God Who is Creator and Father, Who revealed His true nature, self-giving love, by becoming incarnate in

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Jesus Christ, and permitting the seeming defeat and frustration of the cross, and Who is ever active in history in individuals and the collective life of mankind. Its goal for the individual cannot be completely attained this side of the grave, but is so breath-taking that within history only a beginning is possible. Nor can it be reached in isolation, but only in community. In Christ's teaching, love for God, as the duty and privilege of man, is inseparably joined with love for one's neighbour."

c) "The ideal and the goal have determined the character of the movements which have been the fruits of Christianity. Although men can use and often have used knowledge and education to seeming defeat of the ideal, across the centuries Christianity has been the means of reducing more languages to writing than have all other factors combined. It has created more schools, more theories of education, and more systems than has any other one force. More than any other power in history it has impelled men to fight suffering, whether that suffering has come from disease, war, or natural disasters. It has built thousands of hospitals, inspired the emergence of nursing and medical professions, and furthered movements for public health and the relief and prevention of famine. Although explorations and conquests which were in part its outgrowth led to the enslavement of Africans for the plantations of the Americas, men and women whose consciences were awakened by Christianity and whose wills it nerved brought about the abolition of Negro slavery [e.g., the political statesman William Wilberforce in England - JN]. Men and women similarly moved and sustained, wrote into the laws of Spain and Portugal provisions to alleviate the ruthless exploitations of the Indians of the New World. Wars have often been waged in the name of Christianity. They have attained their most colossal dimensions through weapons and large scale organization initiated by Christianity. Yet from no other source have there come as many and as strong movements to eliminate or regulate war and to ease the suffering brought by war ... by its name and symbol the most extensive organization ever created for the relief of the suffering caused by war, the Red Cross, bears witness to its Christian origin. The list might go on indefinitely. It includes many other humanitarian projects and movements, ideals in government, the reform of prisons and the emergence of criminology, great art and architecture, [I might add, some of the best music in the history of the world - JN] and outstanding literature."

30. Did you know that *one* man (and his three friends), a politician named Daniel, was responsible for causing two powerful Kings (namely Nebuchadnezzar and Darius) to publish the truths of the power of God's kingdom to all peoples, nations, and languages?
31. Did you know that one man, a vice-ruler in ancient Egypt (namely Joseph), was heralded to all by Pharaoh as "God speaks or He lives." Did you know that this *one* man saved an entire empire from starvation?

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32. Did you know that both Daniel and Joseph were living under the “weak and beggarly elements” of the Old Covenant? Did you know that, in Hebrews, the New Covenant is depicted as much more powerful and effective than the Old?
- C. Do you think that we have some “rethinking” (maybe some repenting too) to do about the Christian faith?
1. J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937), who stood virtually alone in the 1920s against the rising tide of liberalism and modernism in the Presbyterian Church (founded Westminster Theological Seminary where Francis Schaeffer received theological instruction), wrote in *Christianity and Culture*, “The field of Christianity is the world. The Christian cannot be satisfied so long as any human activity is either opposed to Christianity or out of all connection with Christianity. Christianity must pervade not merely all nations, but also all of human thought. The Christian, therefore, cannot be indifferent to any branch of human endeavor ... The kingdom must be advanced not merely extensively, but also intensively. The Church must seek to conquer not merely every man for Christ, but also the whole of man.”
  2. He also emphasized the importance of challenging unbelief at its roots, “False ideas are the greatest obstacles to the reception of the gospel. We may preach with all the fervor of a reformer and yet succeed only in winning a straggler here and there, if we permit the whole collective thought of the nation or of the world to be controlled by ideas which, by the resistless force of logic, prevent Christianity from being regarded as anything more than a harmless delusion. Under such circumstances, what God desires us to do is to destroy the obstacle at its root.”

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## Loving God with the totality of your being

- I. Introduction (read Psalm 19).
  - A. Headline, “Rampant immorality sweeps the church.”
    1. Sexual.
    2. Financial.
    3. Gossip.
    4. Or, minds unrenewed; i.e. the way Christians think and reason?
  - B. Harry Blamires, *The Christian Mind* (pp. 3-4), “There is no longer a Christian mind. It is commonplace that the mind of modern man has been secularized. For instance, it has been deprived of any orientation towards the supernatural. Tragic as this fact is, it would not be so desperately tragic had the Christian mind held out against the secular drift. But unfortunately the Christian mind has succumbed to the secular drift with a degree of weakness and nervelessness unmatched in Christian history. It is difficult to do justice in words to the complete loss of intellectual morale in the twentieth-century Church. One cannot characterize it without having recourse to language which will sound hysterical and melodramatic. There is no longer a Christian mind. There is still, of course, a Christian ethic, a Christian practice, and a Christian spirituality. As a moral being, the modern Christian subscribes to a code other than that of the non-Christian. As a member of the Church, he undertakes obligations and observations ignored by the non-Christian. As a spiritual being, in prayer and meditation, he strives to cultivate a dimension of life unexplored by the non-Christian. But as a *thinking* being, the modern Christian has succumbed to secularization. He accepts religion – its morality, its worship, its spiritual culture; but he rejects the religious view of life, the view which sets all earthly issues within the context of the eternal, the view which relates all human problems – social, political, cultural – to the doctrinal foundations of the Christian Faith, the view which sees all things here below in terms of God’s supremacy and earth’s transitoriness, in terms of Heaven and Hell .... Except for a very narrow field of thinking, chiefly touching questions of strictly personal conduct, we Christians in the modern world accept, for the purpose of mental activity, a frame of reference constructed by the secular mind and a set of criteria reflecting secular evaluations. There is no Christian mind; there is no shared field of discourse in which we can move at ease as thinking Christians by trodden ways and past established landmarks.”
  - C. How do we use our minds? In what way are Christians supposed to think? Do we need to repent of our sinful *thinking* (not just sinful *thoughts*)?
  - D. The Christian faith is not *just* an emotion (unfortunate fruit of the revivalism mentality engendered by the teachings of the 19<sup>th</sup> century “evangelist” Charles Grandison Finney).
    1. John 8:31-32 – Demands of discipleship.
      - a) False and true discipleship.
      - b) Abide (continue, remain, context of our lives, grid through which we evaluate the world) in God’s Word ⇒ know truth ⇒ true liberty.
    2. Matt. 22:34-38 – Love God with all your heart, your soul, your mind, and your strength.

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- a) Do not try to understand this verse as a technical definition; i.e. this is a list of the separate aspects of man.
- b) Man is to love God with the totality (or fullness) of his being = with all your heart.

## II. What it means to love God with the totality of your being.

### A. Heart and mind connection.

- 1. Proverbs 23:7.
- 2. Psalm 19:14. "If it were just a matter of the mouth, I wouldn't have so much trouble, but it isn't and I do."

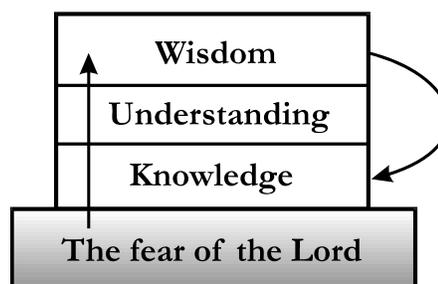
### B. What happens in the invisible and private (disciplined heart and mind) has an impact on the visible and public. E.g., *Reader's Digest*.

### C. The pursuit of Godly wisdom is a priority.

- 1. If you had *one* wish, what would you ask for? cf. Solomon (I Kings 3-4).
- 2. Message of Proverbs: wisdom is to be desired more than riches, fame or power.

#### a) Knowledge, understanding, and wisdom.

- (1) Exodus 35:30-33.
- (2) Proverbs 1:7.
- (3) Proverbs 2:6-7.
- (4) Proverbs 9:10.
- (5) Proverbs 10:14.
- (6) Daniel 2:20-21.



#### b) The path to knowledge, understanding, and wisdom commences with the fear of the Lord.

- (1) The foundation of a genuine knowledge of anything is a humble and worshipful acknowledgement of God as the creative and sustaining bedrock of every aspect of each particular fact of the universe and human existence.
- (2) The learning process builds upon this bedrock.
  - (a) Knowledge = learning the rudiments or particulars of any subject.
  - (b) Understanding.
    - (i) Discern truth from error (see Hebrews 5:11-14 below).
    - (ii) Relate one aspect of knowledge to another aspect; discerning general or universal principles.
  - (c) Wisdom.
    - (i) Effectively arrange and articulate knowledge and understanding (see the coherence).
    - (ii) Apply knowledge and understanding to a new situation.
    - (iii) Reposit (store up) more knowledge and understanding
- 3. Colossians 2:3 – wisdom is deposited in Christ.

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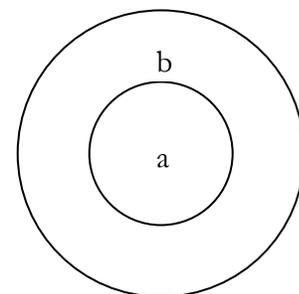
- D. It is transformed thinking (Romans 12:1-2; I Peter 1:13).
    - 1. Renewed mind takes *work*.
    - 2. Sacrifice: the life of the mind.
  - E. Take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (II Corinthians 10:4-5).
    - 1. Every  $\Rightarrow$  not just listening to sermons; includes *every* line of reasoning about *every* aspect of life.
    - 2. Jesus does not accept “discounted” discipleship (part time thinking).
  - F. Exercised at discerning good from evil (Hebrews 5:11-14).
    - 1. NB. This is not what people want to hear today; they want their ears tickled, not their minds stretched.
    - 2. The application of Scripture (exercising) brings maturity.
  - G. Having the mind of Christ (I Corinthians 2:16) is a product of the Spirit-filled life.
- III. Are we interested in this pursuit of wisdom? Do the Christians we know pursue this? Do we desire a disciplined thought life? Have we wondered and do we have uncontrolled minds?  
Pray Psalm 19:14
- A. I John 2:15-16 – Love of the world deals with ethical issues (lust of flesh, lust of eyes, pride of life).
    - 1. Think as world thinks.
    - 2. Run with the crowd.
    - 3. Seeking vain things.
  - B. James 4:4 – spiritual adultery.
    - 1. Friendship with the world is enmity with God.
    - 2. Love world ethically? Not a believer; you are God’s enemy.
- IV. Obstacles to loving God with the totality of your being.
- A. Ignorance of God’s word (Matthew 22:29).
    - 1. Rampant in the Church, including pastors!
    - 2. You cannot live what you do not know.
  - B. Immaturity in the use of Scripture (Hebrews 5:14).
    - 1. Not obeying what you know.
    - 2. Obedience brings more light and results in maturity (meat of the Word).
  - C. Anti-intellectual bias that is in the church today.
    - 1. Compare with emotional fervency.
    - 2. Biblically, you think in your heart (Proverbs 23:7).
    - 3. To love God is to know God; to love God is to obey God; you obey what you know.
      - a) Philippians 1:9.
      - b) John 17:3.
  - D. The myth of neutrality (II Corinthians 10:3-5).
    - 1. Are there areas of neutrality? No (Matthew 12:30; 6:24).
    - 2. To attempt to be neutral in the mind is to be disloyal to Jesus Christ.
    - 3. John 17:17 – set apart by truth, Thy word is truth (all our thinking is to be set apart by the truth of God’s word).
    - 4. Ephesians 4:17-20 – two ways of thinking.
      - a) v. 17 – vanity of the mind.
      - b) v. 20 – you have learned of Christ differently.
    - 5. Those who are not with Christ in their thinking are against Christ.

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6. The Christian faith is not a *slice of life* (like the religion page in *Time* magazine); it embraces and speaks to *all* of life.
- E. Slothfulness – the mark of a fool.
1. We do not study and meditate on God’s word.
    - a) Proverbs 10:4.
    - b) Proverbs 13:4.
    - c) Proverbs 20:4.
    - d) Proverbs 26:16 – the fool comes up with excuses for doing what he should do.
  2. The fool is full of excuses like “If I had more time.”
  3. We all have enough time; the problem is that we do not redeem (buy it) the time (a sin to be repented of).
  4. We must carve out the time; make it a priority.
- F. Don’t have the critical tools that we need to reason as Christians.
1. What is a formal logical fallacy?
  2. What is an informal logical fallacy?
  3. What is an *ad hominem* argument? (against the man)
  4. What is *reductio ad absurdum*? (disproof of a proposition by showing the absurdity of its inevitable conclusion)
  5. What is the fallacy of asserting the consequent? If  $a \Rightarrow b$ , then  $b \Rightarrow a$
  6. What is the fallacy of denying the antecedent? If  $a \Rightarrow b$ , then  $\sim a \Rightarrow \sim b$
  7. What is the logical law of contraposition? If  $a \Rightarrow b$ , then  $\sim b \Rightarrow \sim a$
- G. Thinking about the wrong subject matter (Philippians 4:8-9).
1. Vs. bitterness, sinful things, things that waste our time.
  2. Keep your mind on a channel that is pleasing to God.
  3. We can do this; we have the channel changer.
- H. Captivity to the philosophy of the world (Colossians 2:8).
1. Beware of being robbed philosophically.
  2. Robbed of what? Of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge deposited in Christ (Colossians 2:3).

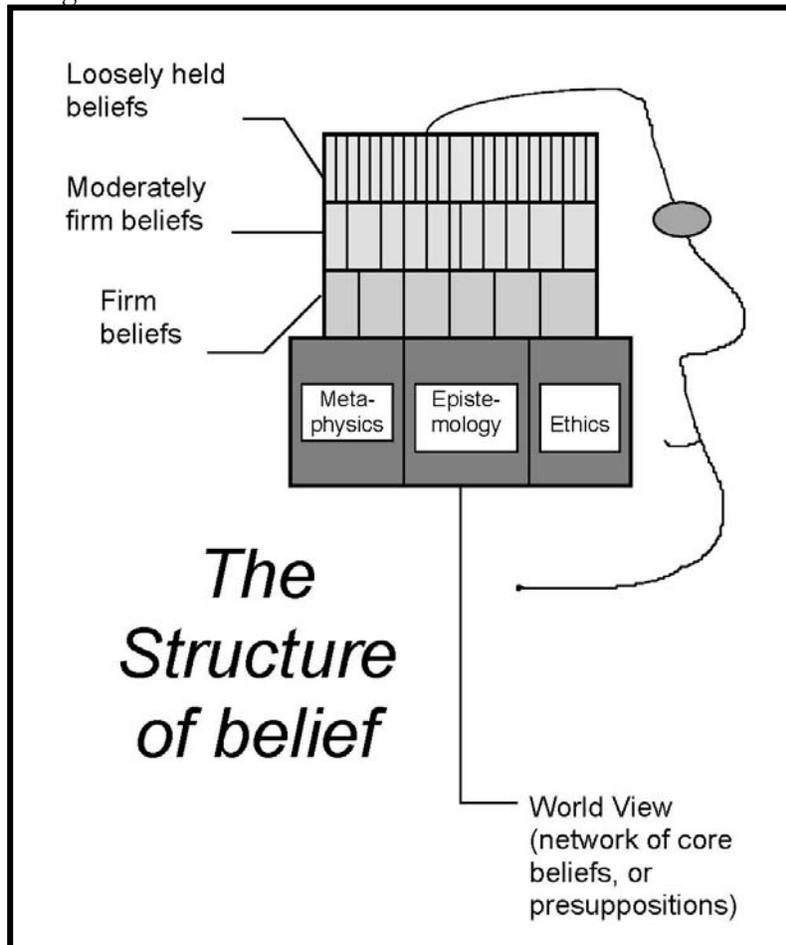


# Defending the Faith

## An Introduction to thinking Christianly

### I. The Structure of Human Thought.

- A. Beliefs are interconnected. e.g., the terrorist *modus operandi* – blend in (make people believe that you are someone who you are really not).
  - 1. Beliefs are always held in clusters.
    - a) Beliefs relate to each other.
    - b) Beliefs connect with each other.
    - c) Beliefs are networked.
  - 2. The human mind catalogues information brought to it.
    - a) New information is added to old information.
    - b) Sometimes new information causes some of the old information to be discarded, adjusted, or thrown out. Why? In conflict or inconsistent.
    - c) Sometimes new information forces us to completely “change our mind” (repent) about a previously held opinion.
    - d) What determines *how* these adjustments are made?
- B. Ranking beliefs.



- 1. Loosely (weakly) held beliefs: *it does not take much for you to give up your conviction.*
  - a) What time is it now?

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- b) What kind of car is that?
  - c) My team is going to win tomorrow.
  - 2. Moderately firm beliefs: *Can be changed if evidence proves otherwise.*
    - a) The New York Giants baseball team won the World Series in 1951 when they played the New York Yankees.
    - b) John Adams, the second president of the United States, was the father of John Quincy Adams, the sixth president of the United States.
  - 3. Firmly held beliefs are governed by basic presuppositions.
    - a) John Quincy Adams had no biological father at all.
      - (1) You immediately dismiss this statement. Why?
      - (2) As a biological fact, everyone has a father.
      - (3) You will not accept any historical evidence to prove this statement (but you will accept historical evidence proving that John Adams was the father of John Quincy Adams)
      - (4) Why are you so closed minded on this issue? To change your mind about that belief that everyone has a father would force you to make numerous, radical adjustments to other things that you believe.
    - b) You carry the belief that everyone has a biological father with you when you consider scientific issues and other sorts of issues.
      - (1) You will not test this belief historically.
      - (2) Rather, this is a belief *that conditions how historical data is tested* (it will test the historical evidence that John Quincy Adams did not have a biological father).
      - (3) This belief is what we call a *presupposition*; a presupposition is a belief that places conditions or limitations upon other, less essential beliefs (*the primary commitments of the heart*).
      - (4) When making an assumption before approaching an investigation that limits the possible outcomes of the investigation, that assumption is a presupposition – its truth is *supposed prior* to engaging in the investigation at hand.
        - (a) When lawyers on both sides of a murder case argue over whether or not the defendant is guilty, they both presuppose that authority of laws against murder.
        - (b) When botanists in a laboratory debate a question about the cellular structure of a particular plant cell, they both presuppose that plant cells exist and that the scientific method informs them about plant cells.
- C. More on presuppositions.
- 1. They are very powerful because they condition how we approach or think about certain topics. e.g., Mr. Smith believes he is dead. Mr. Jones says, “A dead person will not bleed when cut because he has no blood pressure because his heart is not beating.” Mr. Smith says, “Okay, I am convinced; a dead person does not bleed.” Mr. Jones pricks Mr. Smith’s finger and blood flows out. Mr. Smith responds, “Dead men bleed after all!” He would rather believe that he was dead over the fact the dead men do not bleed

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2. All investigations are conditioned by certain presuppositions. e.g., Geocentricity and heliocentricity. During the 16<sup>th</sup> century, scientists looked at the same facts through different lenses (presuppositions).
3. Every mind is guided by its presuppositions.
  - a) For example, Christians presuppose the truth of Scripture; this presupposition conditions how Christians view certain natural phenomena.
  - b) Along with most unbelievers, Christians presuppose that everyone has a biological father, thus both non-Christians and Christians would reject the statement that John Quincy Adams had no biological father.
  - c) But, what about Jesus Christ? Did *He* have a biological father?
    - (1) If we say no, and affirm His virgin birth, non-Christians will charge us with inconsistency.
    - (2) This charge, however, fails to take into account the priority of our belief in Scripture.
  - d) While Christians presuppose biological order, *that presupposition is not as basic as the presupposition of Scriptural authority.*
  - e) Because the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin, *Christians believe it no matter what they believe about biology* (note the power of presuppositions).
    - (1) A consistent and faithful Christian will subject scientific assertions to the test of Scripture (iron floats in water and men are raised from the dead in God's power and purpose).
    - (2) Many non-Christians subject Scripture to the test of science.
4. There is indeed a priority (or rank) to our beliefs.
  - a) We hold on to some beliefs with a far greater tenacity than we do others.
  - b) A serious challenge to one of our beliefs may be rather unimportant, while a serious challenge to another may subvert our entire outlook on life.
  - c) Oftentimes, disagreements between two people (e.g., Christian and non-Christian) may not be brought about merely by conflicting facts or figures; many disagreements *are rooted in conflicting priorities in belief or a clash in presuppositions.*

## D. Worldviews.

1. Some beliefs are prerequisites to others.
  - a) Examples.
    - (1) For the scientist, his belief in the uniformity of nature is a prerequisite to his belief in Newton's Second Law of Motion ( $F = ma$ ).
    - (2) Newton's second law of motion is a prerequisite to belief in jet propulsion.
  - b) Every belief has an antecedent belief. How far back can we go? Is there a point at which we reach foundational (or core) beliefs? These beliefs condition everything else that we believe.
2. What are these core beliefs (presuppositions)?

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- a) Contents and structure of reality (**metaphysics**).
  - (1) Basic positions.
    - (a) Monism: the belief that all that is; i.e., all reality, is one; there is only one reality (distinctions are an illusion).
    - (b) Pluralism: the belief that all that is; i.e., all reality, is many; corollary: the belief in a diversity of ideas all of equal importance, one no better than the other.
  - (2) Basic problems with non-Biblical starting points.
    - (a) Materialist (reality is comprised of nothing but matter and its physical properties) denies the existence of angels, souls, and the Biblical God. If you believe in such, then you are having some sort of hallucination created in the chemical activity of the brain.
    - (b) Solipsist (reality is confined to one's own mind) will deny the existence of other people (if he is consistent).
    - (c) Hindu monism (reality is essentially one; distinctions are not real; they are illusions) will deny key distinctions such as true and false, valid and invalid, universal and particular.
    - (d) Nihilism (skepticism): denial of all existence.
- b) Nature and limits of human knowledge (**epistemology**).
  - (1) Important questions: What can be known? How is knowledge attained? How can knowledge claims be defended? What are the limits to knowledge?
  - (2) Basic positions.
    - (a) *a priori* (from the previous): the truth about what we know can be substantiated in a way that does not depend upon, or is prior to observation or experience.
      - (i) "Stop and think" approach.
      - (ii) Intuitionism.
      - (iii) Rationalism.
      - (iv) Subjectivism.
      - (v) Basic problem of absolutizing this approach: man's mind or man's intuition is the determiner of all things (The 18<sup>th</sup> century German philosopher Immanuel Kant's basic position).
      - (vi) Subjectivism leads to skepticism and, ultimately nihilism: nothing can be known or communicated.
    - (b) *a posteriori* (from the subsequent): the truth about what we know is derived from experience; it comes after observation.
      - (i) "Look and see" approach.

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- (ii) Empiricism/Positivism (knowledge is fundamentally gained through the senses).
    - (iii) Objectivism.
    - (iv) Basic issue concerning God's existence for the empiricist/positivist: God cannot exist because His existence cannot be tested "through the five senses" (i.e., the scientific method does not apply).
  - c) Moral claims and their justification (**ethics**).
    - (1) Important questions: What is good? What is right? What is just? By what methods are such questions to be approached? How are moral claims justified?
    - (2) Utilitarianism (an action is proper if it gives utility, i.e., happiness or pleasure, in a given situation): human utility is a fundamental ethical standard.
    - (3) Utilitarianism leads to hedonism: pleasure is the fundamental ethical standard.
    - (4) Positivism (no ethical claims are *objectively verifiable* [relativism]; they are nothing more than the opinions of the one making the claim): To say that murder is wrong is only making a "self report"; i.e., "I don't like murder."
    - (5) Nihilism: all values are baseless.
- 3. Each basic presuppositional starting point (core area of belief) impacts the other areas.
  - a) Note the "web" of nihilism.
  - b) Ethics of hedonism: whatever behavior feels good to me is right.
    - (1) Metaphysics: Whatever seems true to me is real.
    - (2) Epistemology: Whatever conclusion derived from my senses and my reasoning faculties is known as certain.
  - c) One's presuppositions comport with each other; they form a network (called a *worldview*).
    - (1) You will never encounter a person expresses a consistent God-centered metaphysic and a man-centered ethic.
    - (2) A materialist would not believe that true knowledge comes through channeling ancient spirits.
  - d) The biblical Christian must contend for the faith at the presuppositional level and when an unbeliever repents he is essentially changing his mind about all three areas (even if he is not aware of these areas).
    - (1) This repentance will generally start at the ethical level (due to conviction of sin).
    - (2) Example.
      - (a) A materialist denies sin (Why? immaterial).
      - (b) A materialist denies the Bible's definition of sin.
      - (c) When a materialist repents in the ethical dimension, he is changing his metaphysic (sin is immaterial and sin is an offense to the immaterial, yet personal God)

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and his epistemology (sin is a transgression of the revealed law of God).

- E. How reasoning takes place.
1. How does one defend one's presuppositions?
    - a) If I give a reason in defense of my standard, then that reason must be *more* ultimate than the standard  $\Rightarrow$  the standard is not an ultimate standard.
    - b) If I appeal to the standard itself in my defense of it, then anyone can dismiss my appeal because he does not submit to my standard.
  2. No one is capable of appealing beyond his ultimate presupposition (a final reference-point); i.e., *one can only vindicate his beliefs using his beliefs* (this is called circular reasoning and *it is inescapable*: both Christians and non-Christians use it).
  3. Example: Empiricist (knowledge is gained only by the senses) vs. the skeptic.
    - a) Empiricist, "Knowledge is only gained by the five senses."
    - b) Skeptic, "Why?"
    - c) Empiricist, "Scientists do this in the lab, we make observations everyday of our lives; we can communicate with each other only through our senses."
    - d) Skeptic, "I have a problem with this. We all know that our senses can fool us at times. For example, a mirage on the desert really looks like water, but it is not really water. How do you know that our conversation isn't merely a mirage? Why are you so confident that knowledge can only be gained through the senses?"

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## **Circular reasoning:**

It is justifiable only at one point: *in an argument for the ultimate criterion of a belief system*. Not, for example, in this way: The Apostle Paul wrote the epistle to Titus because the Apostle Paul wrote the epistle to Titus.

1. A rationalist can only prove the *primacy* of reason by using a rational argument.
2. An empiricist can only prove the *primacy* of sense-experience by some kind of appeal to sense-experience.
3. A Muslim can only prove the *primacy* of the Koran by appealing to the Koran.

Point: *do not be on the defensive when you, as a Christian, are accused of reasoning in circles by the unbeliever* (everyone reasons in circles when it comes to justifying ultimate criterion of their belief system).

## **Do not justify biblical Christianity by the use of narrow circularity:**

The Bible is the Word of God because it says it is the Word of God.

## **Develop a “broad” circularity approach:**

The Bible is the Word of God *because* in Exodus, Deuteronomy, and elsewhere, God indicates His desire to rule His people by a written text. The New Testament (II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:21) confirms this by identifying the Scriptures (i.e., the Old Testament) with that covenantal constitution. Jesus also appointed the twelve apostles to write authoritative words. Note also that history, archaeology, and philosophy verify the message of Scripture.

- e) Empiricist, “If I perceive something (like a mirage) and I later discover that my perception is wrong (it is not water), then the later discovery would be a discovery of the senses, would it not? So we see that the only test to which the senses submit is a test of themselves. Thus the senses are ultimate in gaining knowledge.”
- f) Skeptic, “You are reasoning *from* empiricism *to* empiricism. You are reasoning in a circle. The only support you give in defense of empiricism is empirical evidence. Such an argument is compelling only to a fellow-empiricist. I am not an empiricist; I am not swayed by your argument.”
- g) Empiricist, “You are a skeptic. Therefore you double the reliability of your sense perceptions. You have said that your senses can be mistaken. I grant that point. But how does one come to know that which he had once thought to be real was just a mirage? You know this through your senses!”
- h) Skeptic, “You fail to understand my position because you are still reasoning in a circle. Let me explain. Suppose I make two sensory observations and it turns out that the second observation reveals that the first observation is wrong. Isn’t it possible that my second observation was also mistaken thus revealing that the first observation was correct after all? Now, do I need to make a third observation to set things straight? But, that observation could also be

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wrong. I need to make a fourth observation, then a fifth observation, *ad infinitum*. I hope you get the point.”

- i) Empiricist, “You are saying that all tests for proof are unreliable. If this is true, then how can we know anything?”
- j) Skeptic, “No, I have not argued that *all* test for proof are unreliable (at least not yet). So far I have just been arguing against *empirical* proofs.”
- k) Empiricist, “Don’t you know that an argument against empiric al proofs is ultimately an argument against all proofs?”
- l) Skeptic, “Is that so? *Prove* it.”
- m) Empiricist, “If I try to prove my last assertion empirically, then you would accuse me of circular reasoning again. You would not be convinced if I did that. If I used another sort of proof, then I would have to abandon empiricism. I think I’m stuck ... I’ll have to get back with you later.”

## F. Transcendentals.<sup>7</sup>

1. A transcendental is a basic and inescapable premise that is prerequisite to the coherence of all human experience.
  - a) Nature is uniform.
  - b) Language has objective meaning.
  - c) Laws of logic exist.
2. Let’s investigate the nature of “laws of logic.”
  - a) What do we mean?
    - (1) Law of non-contradiction: two contradictory claims cannot both be true.
    - (2) Law of identity: a thing is itself and not something else.
    - (3) Law of the excluded middle: Any given statement is either true or false.
  - b) Let’s try to prove that the “laws of logic” exist.
    - (1) Layout of the proof.
      - (a) Premise 1: Claims can be proven or disproven if and only if there are laws of logic.
      - (b) Premise 2: Claims can be proven or disproven.
      - (c) Conclusion: Therefore, there are laws of logic.
    - (2) This is a valid, dare I say – logical, argument: the conclusion follows from the premises (whether or not the premises are true).
    - (3) Note: *we have determined that this argument is valid by making use of a logical law.*
      - (a) We cannot prove the existence of logical laws without using logic in the makeup of the proof.
      - (b) The existence of the laws of logic was presupposed in the formation of the argument.

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<sup>7</sup> In modern dictionaries, a transcendental is defined as follows: (1) asserting a fundamental *irrationality* or supernatural element in experience (Note the connection between the supernatural and the irrational), or (2) beyond common thought or experience; i.e., mystical or supernatural (Again, note the connection between the supernatural and the mystical). At its etymological base, transcendent means “surpassing, to rise above, to stand beyond, to overpass, to surpass, to exceed, to be exalted above).

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- (c) In this sense, the laws of logic are transcendental.
  - c) Let's now try to prove that the "laws of logic" do *not* exist.
    - (1) Layout of the proof.
      - (a) Premise 1: Universal laws do not exist.
      - (b) Premise 2: Logical laws are universal laws.
      - (c) Conclusion: Therefore, logical laws do not exist.
    - (2) Again, this is a valid logical argument (if the premises are true then the conclusion must also be true).
    - (3) As with the previous argument, *logical analysis is necessary to see that this argument is valid.*
      - (a) We have used the laws of logic to prove that the laws of logic do not exist!
      - (b) The force of the argument depends upon the existence of the very laws that the argument denies.
      - (c) No laws of logic  $\Rightarrow$  no argument could be possible.
  - d) The claim that the "laws of logic exist" is a transcendental claim because *the truth of the claim must be assumed even in an attempt to disprove the claim.*
3. Let's investigate "language is objectively meaningful."
- a) Suppose someone wants to challenge or disprove this statement.
  - b) How, then, could the challenge be communicated?
  - c) How would one articulate an argument against this claim without some form of language serving as the basis for the articulation?
4. "Sensory perceptions can be reliable" is a transcendental claim.
- a) Sensory perceptions are necessary in order to make this claim.
  - b) If I deny sensory perceptions, then how do I know you exist?
5. "Nature is uniform" is another transcendental claim.
- a) If you posit that nature and its laws are in constant flux (the denial of this claim), then you cannot believe your own argument.
  - b) After you have stated your case, then you must admit that the nature of reality may have changed. Hence, your argument no longer holds.
  - c) If you maintain that your argument does hold, then you must admit that your argument must be uniform and orderly (a denial of your position).
6. Transcendentals deal with the *preconditions* of human thought and experience.
- a) They cannot be verified (proved) by logic, natural science, or any other means.
  - b) They serve as the very principles by which any sort of proof is possible.
7. Presuppositions and transcendentals are not equivalent.
- a) Presuppositions are claims that are believed (they can be incorrect).
  - b) Transcendentals may or may not be believed even though they are necessary to all belief systems (e.g., a person may not believe in the laws of logic, but he depends upon them nonetheless).
  - c) To illustrate the difference between transcendentals and presuppositions, let's listen into another conversation.

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- (1) Mr. Hindu (Mr. Mahatma Gandhi), “Reality is ultimately one; distinctions are illusory.”
  - (2) Mr. Westerner (Mr. John Wayne), “This is not true. Many distinctions are real. For example, the distinction between true and false.”
  - (3) Mr. Hindu, “Not true. The coherence of everything requires that all things be one. If not, chaos would reign in life.”
  - (4) Mr. Westerner, “Note what you are doing; you are drawing a *distinction* between order and chaos. If all distinctions are an illusion, then the distinction between order and chaos is an illusion. Yet, you entertain distinctions to argue your point. If there are no distinctions in reality, then why do you argue as though there are?”
  - (5) Mr. Hindu, “You are accusing me of contradiction. My viewpoint appears contradictory to you but it is contradictory according to a logic that I reject. You are trapped within Western logical categories. Hence, you cannot see the soundness of my viewpoint.”
  - (6) Mr. Westerner, “Yes, I am trapped within Western logic. But, are not you entrapped by Western logic as well?”
  - (7) Mr. Hindu, “No! Absolutely not!”
  - (8) Mr. Westerner, “Okay. You say that I am entrapped within Western logic while you are not entrapped within Western logic. But, if you and I are one, and if your opinion and my opinion are one (which is what you are claiming as a consistent Hindu), then how is it that I am entrapped by something that you are not? You say that there is a distinction or difference between us, while at the same time and in the same sense you say that there is no distinction or difference between us. You are talking nonsense!”
  - (9) Mr. Hindu, “It is nonsense to you because you are trapped within Western logic. You have charged me with contradiction. This charge only has force within the framework of Western logic. I deny that framework!”
  - (10) Mr. Westerner, “If you reject Western logic, then why are you trying to persuade me? Your language and your categories of thought are deliberately marshaled in defense of a position contrary to mine. You argue in favor of your view over against my view. *But in order to do so you have to first assume my view to be correct – that there is indeed a distinction between our opinions.* Your conversation with me has assumed this distinction. You are like the man who argues against the existence of air while he continues to breathe it.”
- d) In the above argument the presupposition that the Hindu believes is that reality is one.
- (1) Because of this belief, the Hindu rejects the laws of logic.

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- (2) The Westerner, on the other hand, presupposes the logical concepts of negation and non-contradiction.
- (3) As the discussion progresses, the inescapable nature of these laws soon becomes evident; the Hindu cannot get away from them.
- (4) Both the Hindu and the Westerner depend upon the transcendental nature of logic; the Westerner admits this while the Hindu does not.
- (5) Historically, modern science had a viable birth *only* in Western Culture.

## II. Distinctives of the Biblical Christian Worldview.

### A. The Biblical Christian View of Reality (**Metaphysics**)

#### 1. **Creation** (Genesis 1:1; Acts 17:22-25; Revelation 4:11; Romans 11:36).

##### a) God created the universe of His own free volition.

###### (1) Who is God?

- (a) Old grandfather?
- (b) Aladdin's lamp?
- (c) Needed only in times of disaster or personal trauma?
- (d) World out of His control?
- (e) Does He wish things would be different?
- (f) Is He surprised by the actions of men?

###### (2) God did not need to create; He was not lacking something or did He have a need that the creation filled.

###### (3) God is self-sufficient and autonomous.

###### (4) God is in no way dependent upon the created universe.

- (a) God is in no sense correlative to or dependent upon anything besides His own being.
- (b) God is the source of His own being; God is absolute; He is sufficient in Himself.
- (c) Theologically, this independent is termed the "aseity" (self-existence) of God.

##### b) The universe, by contrast, is utterly dependent upon God and distinct from Him.

###### (1) For its existence; it is separate from Him (contra pantheism that believes in the divinity of nature – the religion of native American cultures and practitioners of witchcraft); *without God, nothing would be*. We are *moved* by Him.

###### (2) For its structures and laws.

##### c) The "Creator-creature distinction" (independent God and dependent creation) is one of the *fundamental differences* between Christians and non-Christians.

###### (1) Christians view all of life in terms of the dependence scenario.

###### (2) Non-Christians view all of life in terms of the denial of creation's dependence upon its Creator.

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- (3) Every person outside of Christ assumes some degree of independence (Isaiah 53:6) thus implicitly denying the “Creator-creature distinction.”
- d) The makeup of the universe is patterned after its Creator; everywhere and everything bears His signature as its Creator and Owner (Psalm 19:1ff, Psalm 97:6; Isaiah 6:3; Romans 1:19-20).
  - (1) Every element of the world without exception discloses God and His will to man.
  - (2) All things exist and function by God’s creative decree (Colossians 1:15f, Hebrews 1:3).
    - (a) Material things (that can be perceived by the senses).
    - (b) Immaterial things (angels, souls, spirits). NB. contra materialism.
    - (c) Conceptual, abstract entities (laws, patterns, connections and categories).
  - (3) You cannot run away from God and His revelation (can you make your bed in hell? see Psalm 139).
  - (4) Examples.
    - (a) Fact: Cows eat grass. Interpretation: the providential power and care of God and man’s mandate to subdue the creation for God’s glory (cf. Genesis 1:28).
    - (b) Fact: Astronomical distances. Interpretation: the mere work of God’s fingers; displays to man his need for humility before God and thanksgiving for His grace (cf. Psalm 8:1-5).
    - (c) Fact:  $2 + 2 = 4$ . Interpretation: This is the way God has structured the world to reflect and man’s mind to think.
    - (d) Note: without Biblical interpretation, *no created fact is a true fact.*

## 2. **Providence.**

- a) Without the doctrine of Providence, we are left with Deism (creation is left to run on its own steam).
- b) The Biblical, Creator God governs everything that comes to pass.
- c) God’s decrees are irrevocable; He alone is in ultimate control.
- d) Even though He is over all things (transcendent) He is not aloof and uninvolved with His creation; His providential oversight is immanent and personal.

## 3. **The Creator-Creature relationship** (God and man).

- a) Man, made in God’s image, as the crown (apex) of creation.
  - (1) Task: Out from communion with the Living God, fill the earth, subdue it, have dominion over it (called the dominion mandate or the stewardship assignment).
  - (2) God gave man commands or statutes to guide man in godly stewardship.
    - (a) For acceptable worship.

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- (b) For just and equitable commerce.
    - (c) For family, civil, and church responsibilities.
    - (d) For personal piety.
  - b) Adam, the first man, did not follow God's prescriptions.
    - (1) All men since have followed in the steps of Adam, rebelliously presuming themselves to be the ultimate expressions of reality (they make their own rules independent in themselves – Genesis 3:5).
    - (2) Their stewardship of the Earth is now a stewardship of futility.
    - (3) Such rebellion justly warrants the wrath and condemnation of God.
  - c) In God's mercy, however, God the Father sent His Son (100% God and 100% man), Jesus Christ, to lawfully fulfill all righteousness as the Second Adam.
    - (1) Jesus Christ then endured the just sentence of death in the stead of rebellious men.
    - (2) According to this propitiation (turning away of God's wrath) and the related imputation (in a legal, forensic sense) of the Son's righteousness to these men, those for whom the Son died are redeemed from their curse and justified; they are restored to favor in the eyes of God.
    - (3) Out from this favor, man serves his Creator and Redeemer in the calling given to him to "guard and keep" the creation.
- 4. The doctrines of Creation and Providence are central to the Biblical Christian metaphysic.
  - a) God is the ultimate reality and the determiner of what is and what is not real.
  - b) A Biblical Christian will start with God, and reason *from* Him rather than starting elsewhere and reasoning *to* Him.
  - c) Bearing upon the Biblical Christian view of man (anthropology).
    - (1) Man is God's creature and is subject to and dependent upon God in all things.
    - (2) Every man is subject to God, regardless of whether he owns up to this fact or rebelliously denies it.
- B. The Biblical Christian View of Knowledge (**Epistemology**). Cornelius Van Til, "... all the facts of nature and of history are what they are, do what they do, and undergo what they undergo, in accord with the one comprehensive counsel of God. All that may be known by man is already known by God. And it is already known by God because it is controlled by God."
  - 1. God and knowledge (I Samuel 2:1-3; Psalm 147:5; Isaiah 40:28; Romans 11:33).
    - a) God has complete knowledge of Himself.
      - (1) He does not need to know Himself in relationship to anything else (like man does).

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- (2) He is *self-referential*. cf. gods of the ancient Greeks and Romans, and those of the Far East (Hinduism) which are not self-referential.
- b) God has exhaustive knowledge of creation.
  - (1) He does not discover things like man does.
  - (2) He created and governs all of creation; He knows all situations because He brings all situations about.
- 2. Because God's knowledge is infinite in scope, *then nothing is truly intelligible to men unless it is understood in reference to God*.
  - a) This concurs with the Biblical Christian metaphysics, in which God is the ultimate reality from whom every existing thing is derived, and that every existing thing testifies to His character.
  - b) *God is the ultimate truth to which all meaning is derived*.
  - c) A non-Christian will certainly challenge this thesis (unfortunately, many Christians would too); we will soon justify it.
- 3. How does man come to understand meaning and knowledge (of God, of creation, and of himself)?
  - a) Since man depends on God for everything, then he must depend upon God for the acquisition of knowledge.
    - (1) Man knows *only by revelation from God*.
    - (2) Man can know nothing that God did not reveal to him (Job 32:8-9; 38:36; Psalm 94:1-10; John 1:9).
    - (3) Man is made to "think God's thoughts after Him" (called *analogical* [by comparison] knowledge).
      - (a) Man must receive God's view on the facts before he can say that he knows anything rightly.
      - (b) God's knowledge is comprehensive and self-contained.
      - (c) Man's knowledge is derivative and re-interpretive (not exhaustive knowledge, but knowledge in truth).
    - (4) The unbeliever, in essence, rejects analogical knowledge when he rejects the Creator/creature distinction.
      - (a) The unbeliever knows (thinks) *as if he is god* (which is a lie).
      - (b) Based upon this pseudo-knowledge, the unbeliever determines for himself what is right and what is wrong (Genesis 3) – the realm of ethics.
      - (c) This is called *univocal* (having one meaning; my mind = God's mind) knowledge.
  - b) Knowledge is revealed to man through Christ (Isaiah 7:14; Colossians 2:9; John 1:14, 18; Hebrews 1:2-3; Colossians 2:3; John 1:9).
    - (1) Redemptive knowledge is revealed through Christ (John 17:2-3; Ephesians 4:20-24).
      - (a) In Christ, we are reinstated to true knowledge; we are creatures; we will never possess exhaustive knowledge.
      - (b) Christ is our wisdom.

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- (i) He tells us how to get to heaven.
  - (ii) He teaches us true knowledge about everything concerning which we shall have knowledge.
- (2) Non-redemptive knowledge is revealed through Christ as well (John 1:9).
  - (a) Since all things were created by Christ and for Christ (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16), this must include man's capacity to know by virtue of being created in God's image.
  - (b) God causes all men to know some things (Romans 1:19-20) and gives good gifts to men, even unbelievers (Matthew 5:45; Acts 14:17).
  - (c) Cornelius Van Til, "... every fact of the world is what it is as a revelation of the activity of the triune God. Man in the nature of the case, knows God, the world, and himself, in the very first and in every succeeding act of his consciousness ..."
  - (d) Every fact of the creation (physical world or man's conscious) bears the stamp of God's ownership and God's image.
- (3) Knowledge and wisdom are impossible apart from Christ (Colossians 2:3; 1:17).
  - (a) Therefore, Christ is Lord of everything, including knowledge (whether it be grammar, science, history, mathematics, economics, medicine, etc.).
  - (b) To ignore God anywhere is to insult the God who has told us that, whether we eat or drink or do anything else, we are to do all to His glory (I Corinthians 10:31).
  - (c) Remember this distinction: revelation is an act of God directed toward man; the unbeliever suppresses this revelation in unrighteousness and seeks to find "a god" in creation (i.e., in himself or the physical world); this is the essence of *natural theology*.
- (4) Implication: since God's revelation is in Christ, then the Biblical Christian epistemology *is incompatible with any form of theism* that is not Biblically Christian.
  - (a) Islamic theism.
    - (i) Allah is transcendent but not immanent (that Allah could become human is impossible).
    - (ii) Because Islam considers the doctrine of the Trinity to be heretical, then Islamic theology has no philosophical basis for connecting the universal with the particular (the one with the man), the eternal with the temporal, or the infinite with the finite.

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- (b) Judaism, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and United Pentecostalism suffer from the same fate.
- c) Scripture is the *only infallible testimony* of the truth that is in Christ.
  - (1) Though the revelation of creation (called natural or general revelation) is indeed genuine revelation, it is subject to obscurity by man's fallible and sinful mind.
  - (2) This is not the case with Scripture (II Peter 1:19-21): the testimony of Scripture comes altogether from God, including not only visions but also words used to describe and interpret them.
    - (a) Scripture (called special revelation) supplements general revelation (it is the eyeglasses through which general revelation is correctly understood; special revelation shows man the way back to God and how to view the world around him and work in it correctly).
      - (i) John 10:35, "Scripture cannot be broken."
      - (ii) Romans 3:4, "Let God be true and every man a liar" (cf. Matthew 5:17).
      - (iii) It is God's word that tests man, not vice versa.
    - (b) II Timothy 3:15-17.
      - (i) *All* Scripture is God-breathed.
      - (ii) Scripture *in its entirety* is the infallible word of God.
      - (iii) Scripture addresses *everything* for it equips man for *every* good work (good ethical work, good academic work, good civic work, good vocational work, etc.). See Psalm 119:105, 128.
      - (iv) The Bible does not contain *all* of God's revelation *directly* (e.g., the Pythagorean Theorem).
      - (v) But no true knowledge is gained by examining a right-angled triangle *apart from* considering the teaching of (i.e., Scriptural implications) the Scriptures about reality, knowledge, and ethics.
      - (vi) Without the revelation Scripture, the pursuit of mathematical knowledge (or any type of knowledge) *has no meaning whatsoever*.
    - (c) God's progressive special revelation in history.
      - (i) Adam: audible revelation.
      - (ii) Patriarchs: dreams, appearances, visions.
      - (iii) Moses: burning bush, stone tablets.
      - (iv) Apostles: Jesus Christ.

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- (v) Our time: Inspired Scriptures (our interpretation is not infallible; we grow in our understanding and interpretation individually and corporately – until we all attain to the unity of the Faith).
- (3) Note: The Bible is *both* the foundation upon which our defense is built and one of our beliefs that must be defended. e.g., Generals defend their King according to the commands of their King
- d) Unbelievers know by revelation of God just as believers do (Psalm 94:10; Job 38:36; 32:8; Ecclesiastes 2:26).
  - (1) The difference.
    - (a) Unbelievers deny that their knowledge was given to them by God
      - (i) They pursue the path of independence; they are the judge of the court of knowledge and action.
      - (ii) They attempt, foolishly and vainly, to be like God; i.e., they grope in the darkness.
    - (b) Believers recognize that their knowledge comes from God (Proverbs 1:7; Proverbs 3:5-6; Psalm 36:9).
      - (i) Scripture to the believer is like the sun in the light of which all things are seen and without the light of which nothing is seen for what it is.
      - (ii) Believers pursue the path of dependence (walk in the light); God is the judge of knowledge and action.
  - (2) Non-Christians may know some things that are true, but they come to such knowledge only because God has revealed it to them, though they will not admit this.
  - (3) Unbelievers know God and depend upon Him for everything, even for their arguments against Him (Romans 1:19, 21; Acts 17:28) – and, for their vain imaginations.
    - (a) When an unbeliever marshals logical and scientific arguments against God they are doing so with the intellectual capital that was given to them by God.
    - (b) *In order to slap God in the face, an unbeliever must sit on His lap.*
      - (i) In principle, sinners live by the suppression of the truth.
      - (ii) Luke 15:11-12. The unbeliever can continue in his rebellion and debauchery only as long as his father's resources would allow.
  - (4) Unbelievers rebel against God in their thinking by suppressing their knowledge of Him.

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- (a) Though their ability to think comes from God, their thoughts are perverse and used as tools of rebellion.
- (b) Their thinking is therefore futile (Romans 1:21; Job 28:12-14) and they suppress the truth (Romans 1:18).
- (c) In their unrighteousness, they are darkened in their understanding and ignorant (Ephesians 4:18).
- (d) They are bound in this dark futility unless the Holy Spirit regenerates them (I Corinthians 2:10; cf. John 6:45). Cornelius Van Til, “Natural revelation is perfectly clear. Men *ought* from it to know God and ought through it to see all other things as dependent upon God. But only he who looks at nature through the mirror of Scripture *does* understand natural revelation for what it is. Furthermore, no one can see Scripture for what it is unless he is given the ability to do so by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. Only those who are taught of God see the Scriptures for what they are and therefore see the revelation of God in nature for what it is ... The rest of mankind, not taking Scripture as the Word of God, in consequence also misinterpret [and misunderstand – JN] the natural revelation of God.”

#### 4. Summary.

- a) God is ultimate in the realm of knowledge.
  - (1) God determines what is true based upon His character.
  - (2) God sets the standards and parameters for any inquiry into what is true.
- b) All that man can possibly know to be true is nothing more than what God has revealed to him.

#### C. The Biblical Christian View of **Ethics**.

##### 1. God alone is the standard for ethics.

- a) God is good. What does that mean?
  - (1) God is good in Himself.
  - (2) There is no standard outside of God by which He can “measure up to.”
- b) God’s character defines what is good, what is beautiful, what is right, what is true.
- c) God does not have holiness; He *is* holiness (Exodus 15:11; I Samuel 2:2, Amos 4:2).
- d) God does not have the law; He is the law (the law reflects His holy character).

##### 2. God’s standard for ethics.

- a) God’s standards judge men, not vice versa.
- b) God’s ethical standards, as revealed in His Word, make ethical judgments possible for men.
- c) A good deed is “good” only if God declares it so in His Word (action and motive).

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3. Many well-meaning Christians abandon this point and adopt man-centered ethical standards when they confront the unbeliever; e.g., Homosexuality.
  - a) Homosexual argument: My sexual orientation is determined by “nature.” Since this orientation is natural, then it must be good.
  - b) Erroneous response: homosexuality is not natural.
    - (1) This response tacitly accepts the notion that *nature*, autonomously understood, determines what is and what is not evil.
    - (2) This argumentation denies the ultimacy of God in ethics. In stead, it affirms the ultimacy of nature (the creation has replaced the Creator).
  - c) Biblical response.
    - (1) To say that your sexual orientation is determined by “nature” is irrelevant.
    - (2) By the way, Scripture teaches that all sin is “natural” to fallen man.
    - (3) Nature does not establish standards of right or wrong; only God does and He condemns homosexuality in His Word.
- D. Christian Worldview summary.
  1. At the root is the metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical ultimacy of God.
  2. Metaphysically, God is the final and eternal Reality who created all that exists.
    - a) All reality is derived from Him.
    - b) In Him, all reality coheres.
    - c) In Him, the one and the many are equally ultimate (i.e., important).
  3. Epistemologically, God is the ultimate, independent standard of truth.
    - a) From Him, all reality derives its meaning; all relationships, whether cause-effect, chronological or categorical, are established by Him and are made known as He chooses to reveal them.
    - b) In Him, the *a priori* and the *a posteriori* cohere (i.e., connect in glorious tandem).
    - c) Included in these relationships are the ethical dimensions of good and evil, just and unjust, etc.
  4. Thus, as God is ultimate Reality and ultimate Truth, God is also ultimate ethical Good (John 14:6).
- E. Implications of the Biblical Christian Worldview.
  1. Science.
    - a) What is going on when we study physics?
      - (1) From a Christian standpoint, we are dealing with God’s revelation.
      - (2) We are trying to discern universal patterns (laws) in the particulars God’s creation (the wisdom of God).
      - (3) We can discern these patterns in the external world (created by God) *only because our minds have been created in the image of the same God* (Note the *a priori* and *a posteriori* connection).
    - b) God is a God of order.
      - (1) God does not change (Malachi 3:6); His character is always the same.

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- (2) Not one of His plans or attributes contradicts another, even over time.
- c) God providentially orders creation, thereby revealing Himself in it.
  - (1) The whole earth is full of His glory (Isaiah 6:3) and the heavens also proclaim His glory (Psalm 19:1).
  - (2) The order of the universe is revelatory of His character.
  - (3) The order of the universe is the result of the decrees and providence of God, the creator and sustainer of all things.
- d) Christianity provides the only coherent basis for science.
  - (1) Unless God has created the existence of the universe (the totality of the interconnectedness of all things), there would be no possibility of scientific thought; facts would be utterly unrelated (coherence would be impossible).
  - (2) We cannot even think of the categories of human thought as revealing aspects of reality without presupposes God.
  - (3) God must be taken as the presupposition of the possibility of human interpretation.
- e) Science *assumes* orderliness in the things observed.
  - (1) How do you know that, in the future, water will boil at 212° F.?
    - (a) Answer: Well, it has done so in the past of my experience.
    - (b) Why can you predict the future from the past?
    - (c) Answer: Because, in the past, the future has been predicted by the past.
    - (d) Why can you leap to the future on the basis of past leaps into the future?
    - (e) We can only justify the orderliness of nature by appealing to the One who knows everything and orders everything in terms of “seedtime and harvest.”
  - (2) Non-Christian investigators are successful as they are because they work with stolen capital.
    - (a) They are like the thief who, entering into your home and exploring all kinds of things within it, claims that the question of the ownership of the house is of no concern to him.
    - (b) They are like those who go hunting in a forest clearly marked “No Hunting without a permit from the owner.”
- f) Science assumes correspondence between inner thought and external reality.
  - (1) How can an unbelieving scientist trust his sense when he observes patterns in the external world? He may be hallucinating!
  - (2) How can an unbelieving scientist account for the correspondence between perceptions and reality?

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- (3) From the Christian perspective, it is God who brings the object of knowledge (part of His creation) to man in His providence. Hence man can account for having objective knowledge of reality.
2. Logic.
    - a) The character of the laws of logic.
      - (1) Universal: they apply everywhere.
      - (2) Abstract: cognitive (ratiocination) in nature.
        - (a) Immaterial.
        - (b) Non-personal (not living beings).
      - (3) Unchanging: do not vary over time.
    - b) How can we account for the laws of logic? How can finite, changing persons come to know of their existence?
      - (1) These are insurmountable questions to the unbeliever.
        - (a) John W. N. Sullivan (1886-1937), "Why the external should obey the laws of logic; why, in fact, science should be possible, is not at all an easy question to answer."<sup>8</sup>
        - (b) Morris Kline (1908-1992), "Finally, a study of mathematics and its contributions to the sciences exposes a deep question. Mathematics is man-made. The concepts, the broad ideas, the logical standards and methods of reasoning, and the ideals which have been steadfastly pursued for over two thousand years were fashioned by human beings. Yet with this product of his fallible mind man has surveyed spaces too vast for his imagination to encompass; he has predicted and shown how to control radio waves which none of our senses can perceive; and he has discovered particles too small to be seen with the most powerful microscope. Cold symbols and formulas completely at the disposition of man have enabled him to secure a portentous grip on the universe. Some explanation of this marvelous power is called for."<sup>9</sup>
        - (c) For Sullivan, "We are the law-givers of the universe; it is even possible that we can experience nothing but what we have created and that the greatest of our mathematical creations is the material universe itself."<sup>10</sup>
        - (d) The non-Christian may (and must) claim that his position is logical, but he cannot put any intelligible meaning into the claim.

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<sup>8</sup> John W. N. Sullivan, "Mathematics as an Art," *The World of Mathematics*, ed. James R. Newman (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956), 3:2020.

<sup>9</sup> Morris Kline, *Mathematics and the Physical World* (New York: Dover Publications, [1959] 1980), p. ix.

<sup>10</sup> Sullivan, 3:2021.

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- (i) Albert Einstein, “The eternal mystery of the world is its comprehensibility.”
  - (ii) If the non-Christian works according to his presupposition about the non-rationality of all things [generated by chance + time + matter], *then all logic operates in a void.*
- (2) The Laws of Logic have their ultimate basis in the orderly coherence of God’s divine counsel (e.g., the law of contradiction [P and ~P cannot be true at the same time], as we know it, is but the expression on a created level of the internal coherence of God’s triune nature).
- (a) This orderly coherence is reflected in creation whereby man can order (systematize or characterize or classify) the created realm.
    - (i) In man’s thinking.
    - (ii) In the orderliness of the physical world.
  - (b) Van Til, “The gift of logical reason was given by God to man in order that he might order the revelation of God for himself. It was not given him that he might by means of it legislate as to what is possible and what is actual. When man makes a ‘system’ for himself of the content of revelation given him in Scripture, this system is subject to, not independent of, Scripture. Thus the idea of system employed by the Christian is quite different from the idea of system employed by modern philosophy [autonomous determination].”
  - (c) Van Til, “On the basis of God’s counsel I can be a good physicist, a good biologist, a good psychologist, or a good philosopher. In all these fields I use my powers of logical arrangement in order to see as much order in God’s universe as it may be given a creature to see. The unities, or systems, that I make are true because they are genuine pointers toward the basic or original unity that is found in the counsel of God.”

### III. Justification of the Biblical Christian Worldview. *To state the Christian worldview is not enough; it must be defended against all opposition.*

#### A. Apologetics Defined and Explained.

- 1. Etymology (I Peter 3:8-16).
  - a) From the Greek, *apologia* [noun] (from reasoning).
  - b) The word occurs 8 times in the New Testament (Acts 22:1; Acts 25:16; II Corinthians 7:11; Philippians 1:7, 17 II Timothy 4:16; I Corinthians 9:3).
  - c) A related word, *apologenomai* [verb], occurs 10 times (Luke 21:14 [Luke 12:11]; Acts 25:8; Acts 26:1-2; Acts 26:24; Acts 24:10; Acts 19:33; II Corinthians 12:19; Romans 2:15).
  - d) Means verbal defense or a speech in defense (after an accusation has been made).

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2. Definition.
  - a) Apologetics is the defense of the Christian system of life and truth against various forms of non-Christian systems of life and truth.
    - (1) To vindicate Biblical faith against the many forms of non-biblical faith.
    - (2) To support or maintain the Biblical faith as true or correct against denial, censure, and objections.
  - b) There are really only two views of life (The Biblical Christian view and the non-Christian view).
  - c) A defense of the Biblical Christian view, of necessity, will confute (to prove wrong or in error) the non-Christian view.
2. What apologetics is not.
  - a) A Biblical apologetic is *not* any type of persuasion. We attempt to persuade men Biblically.
    - (1) Many people are persuaded to become Christians *by bad arguments* (weak foundation for the faith).
      - (a) Conversely, sinful men may not be persuaded by a Biblical argument.
        - (i) Regardless of results, a Biblical Christian must defend the faith biblically.
        - (ii) We must not resort to unbiblical argumentation even if it might achieve the desired result.
      - (b) We must defend the faith faithfully.
    - (2) You do not have to win the argument (convert a sinner to Christ in every conversation).
      - (a) We give an answer whether the unbeliever wants to accept it or not.
      - (b) You can *be faithful* in an argument even if you opponent does not “cry uncle.”
      - (c) To win is to give a reason that cannot be answered.
      - (d) We are called, not to change men’s hearts, but to close their mouths by effectively and faithfully proclaiming the truth.
      - (e) Only the Holy Spirit converts sinners.
  - b) A Biblical apologetic does *not* deal with mere probabilities.
    - (1) We do not mess with the truth that is in Christ (Psalm 19:1; Acts 2:36; Luke 1:4; Colossians 2:2).
    - (2) We do not “play dice” with the unbeliever.
      - (a) There is a chance you might be right but there is also a chance that you might be wrong.
      - (b) Pascal’s wager: If you cast your lot on the side of God, then you have nothing to lose in this life and everything to gain in the life to come. But, if you deny God’s existence, then you jeopardize yourself for all eternity should God actually exist. In essence, Pascal was challenging men to “gamble” their lives on a

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- fifty-fifty chance that Christianity might be true (not a very satisfactory argument for belief in God.
- (3) The biblical Christian knows that the nature of truth is absolutely certain; that Christianity is the only reasonable position to hold.
  - (4) By defending the faith *absolutely* we become the agents of the Spirit of God in pressing the claims of God upon men.
  - (5) The Christian faith is not a merely a tenable (defensible) *hypothesis*; it is accepted upon the authority of the self-attesting Christ of Scripture and at the same time it is the presupposition without which any assertion is unintelligible.
  - (6) Cornelius Van Til, “Here is thinking done on the basis of the self-authenticating revelation of God. Here is a theology in which the primacy of faith over reason means that reason or intellect is saved from the self-frustration involved in the denial, virtual or open, of such a God and of such a Christ. Only those who know that they are not infallible, but are, by virtue of ever present sin within them in spite of their regeneration by the Holy Spirit, inclined to suppress this revelation, also know that they need such a God, such a Christ and his infallible word to tell them the truth which alone can set them free. For theirs is the knowledge that only by having such a God as their personal God does their search for knowledge have any meaning.”<sup>11</sup>
- c) A Biblical apologetic does *not* contend for sub-Christian propositions.
- (1) Claims that are not distinctively Christian claims (unbelievers of all sorts can agree to them, yet be no closer to the kingdom of God than the one who denies them).
    - (a) The universe has an intelligent cause.
    - (b) Design points to a Designer.
    - (c) Miracles can happen.
    - (d) The Bible satisfies literary tests for reliability.
  - (2) Do not defend truncated truths (that even demons believe in; see James 2:19); we contend earnestly for the faith (Jude 3).
  - (3) We defend, not theism, but Biblical Christian theism.
  - (4) We do not add the Christian God to the pantheon of the gods, invoking His Name along with the others (pantheism, deism, Allah, mere theism – the god of “Touched by an Angel”).
- d) A Biblical apologetic is *not* pugnacious (Colossians 4:2-6; Ecclesiastes 10:12).
- (1) We do not go around looking for a fight.
  - (2) Someone else, not you, will ask a question or issue a challenge.
  - (3) That is the nature of the word *apologia*.

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<sup>11</sup>Cornelius Van Til, *The Case for Calvinism* (Nutley, NJ: The Craig Press, 1964), p. 24.

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- e) A Biblical apologetic is *not* contentious.
  - (1) We do not answer like fire breathing dragons.
  - (2) We answer with gentleness and respect and “close the unbelievers mouth.”
- B. The importance of apologetics.
  - 1. Why study? Matthew 10:19 – do not be anxious or worry.
    - a) The quickening work of the Holy Spirit is *not* a substitute for study and preparation.
    - b) cf. I Peter 3:15 (be prepared).
    - c) Matthew 6:25ff (cf. II Thessalonians 3:10).
  - 2. Who should do it and why?
    - a) Those “called” into the ministry? (cf. Ephesians 4:11-12; they equip the saints for the work of ministry).
    - b) NB. Philippians 1:7; Titus 1:9.
    - c) However, I Peter 3:15 and Jude 3 are written to all God’s people.
    - d) Why? It is a command of our God.
    - e) Remember, God does not need our defense, but He has chosen to use us to defend His word; to advance His kingdom through both our testimony and our apologetic.
  - 3. Benefits.
    - a) Make evangelism more effective.
    - b) No fear in bringing up the subject of Christianity if we are able to answer their questions.
    - c) No fear of “intellectual” unbelievers.
    - d) Strengthens our faith, confidence, zeal, and enthusiasm.
- C. The Biblical Christian Worldview and its rivals.
  - 1. Two claims of the Biblical Christian Worldview.
    - a) The Biblical Christian Worldview is *uniquely* true.
    - b) A denial of the truth of the Biblical Christian Worldview leads to futility.
  - 2. Claim #1 is dismissed by many as intolerant and unbending.
    - a) There is no need to object to this; the Biblical Christian Worldview *is* intolerant and unbending.
    - b) Why? The Biblical Christian God is jealous and will not share His glory with another (He alone determines what is real, what is truth, and what is good).
    - c) All worldviews make a self-attesting claim of ultimacy (Claim #1), so, in this respect, the Biblical Christian Worldview is no different than any other worldview.
  - 3. Claim #2.
    - a) Which worldview (claim to ultimacy) is to be believed? On this point, the Biblical Christian Worldview offers Claim #2 – *to reject the fundamental presuppositions of Biblical Christianity is to embrace futility.*
    - b) Biblical support for this claim.
      - (1) Psalm 14:1.
      - (2) Romans 1:21.
      - (3) Ephesians 4:17-18

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- (4) I Corinthians 1:20.
- c) There are many claims to ultimate truth, but the Bible teaches that to reject its claim results in absurdity.
  - (1) Such rejection abandons the principles that support the intelligibility and coherence of all human experience.
  - (2) The person who rejects what the Bible says about metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics has abandoned, *in principle*, the philosophical prerequisites for science, logic, and morality.
  - (3) This is what is behind the Bible's statement that the "thinking of the unbeliever is futile."
- 4. We are going to reduce the ultimacy claims down to two: Christian and non-Christian.
  - a) The non-Christian worldview (includes Islam, Eastern mysticism, atheistic materialism, etc.).
    - (1) Key principle in all: *Man seeks to discover truth (in all three realms—reality, knowledge, and ethics) on his own*, autonomously and independent of outside aid (whether theistic in form; e.g., Islam, or atheistic in form; e.g., materialism).
    - (2) Despite their differences, non-Christians share the view that "2 + 2 = 4", "the sun rises in the morning," or that any other claim could become *known apart from God*.
    - (3) They hold that man's independent discovery, a process beginning with his mind and sensory faculties, can lead to knowledge.
    - (4) Note that God is involved in the knowing process according to some versions of the non-Christian worldview (e.g., Islam).
      - (a) Note the key difference: God merely makes knowledge "possible" for man.
      - (b) Man is left alone, seeking on his own steam, what God makes possible for him.
      - (c) This view is contrary to Biblical teaching.
    - (5) In summary, the *key distinctive* of the non-Christian worldview is that man is epistemologically independent (he can garner knowledge all by himself; he can determine for himself good and evil).
  - b) The Biblical Christian Worldview (some branches of the Christian church are more consistent than others; some branches, sad to say, are totally ignorant of the issues).
    - (1) The notion of epistemological independence is not just rejected; it is considered *idolatry* (the very essence of sin; see Genesis 3:1f).
    - (2) *Man depends on God for the acquisition of knowledge.*
    - (3) *The Christian God brings knowledge to man*; man is not left alone to discover knowledge by himself.

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- (4) Man's perceptive and rational faculties, and everything in creation that can be known, are products of the creative and governing activity of God.
5. The Christian and the non-Christian worldviews are *antithetical* in nature.
  - a) The issue stated.
    - (1) Man depends wholly on the Christian God in his pursuit and acquisition of knowledge.
    - (2) It is not the case that man depends wholly on the Christian God in his pursuit and acquisition of knowledge.
  - b) It is not possible for both statements to be true or both statements to be false.
    - (1) According to the Law of Excluded Middle (a fundamental and transcendental law of logic), if a proposition P is true, then its negation, proposition  $\sim P$ , is false.
    - (2) One statement therefore, must be true while the other statement must be false.
    - (3) Which one is true and which one is false?
  - c) In deciding the issue at hand, *are we not pursuing or trying to acquire knowledge?*
    - (1) *This quest of knowledge is what the entire debate is about.*
    - (2) We, therefore, cannot even approach the question without presupposing the truth of one of the worldviews, and consequently, the falsehood of the other.
      - (a) Should we approach the question *independently* as a non-Christian would? If so, we make the non-Christian worldview out to be true *before* we ask ourselves whether or not it is true.
      - (b) Should we approach the question *dependently* as a Christian would? If so, we see that this approach to knowledge also assumes the truth of what needs to be proven.
    - (3) Let's repeat this apparent (on the surface) conundrum.
      - (a) We see that the Christian worldview is shown to be false if we assume a non-Christian commitment to epistemological independence.
      - (b) We see that the non-Christian worldview is shown to be false if we assume a Christian commitment to epistemological dependence.
  - d) Hence, we cannot *directly* settle this debate by evaluating the Christian worldview according to the standards set by the non-Christian worldview or the Christian worldview.
- D. Settling the issue.
  1. We must evaluate each worldview *indirectly* by testing them according to their own respective standards. In other words:
    - a) Does the Biblical Christian worldview authenticate (or verify) *itself* according to *its own* standards?

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- b) Does the non-Christian worldview authenticate (or verify) *itself* according to *its own* standards?
- 2. Consider any claim of knowledge to which the non-Christian attests.
  - a) Claim: The New York Yankees defeated the San Francisco Giants in the 1962 World Series.
  - b) In making this claim, the non-Christian attests to a relationship between the *knower* and the *known* or the *subject* and *object* of knowledge. In this case the *knower* is the non-Christian and the *known* is “Yankees defeat Giants in ‘62.”
    - (1) Question for the non-Christian: How can you begin with your mind and lead yourself to an awareness of something outside of your mind? Did you read this knowledge in a book? How do you know that the book, something else outside of your mind, is *real* in any meaningful, objective sense?
    - (2) Further queries: Perhaps your subjective notions that “Yankees defeat Giants” and “the book exists” are really no more than *subjective*; you *think* these notions are true but that does not make them *objectively* true.
    - (3) In fact, any proposition you make may be considered as nothing more than your psychological autobiography. Beginning only with your mind, how can you possibly *justify* an objective truth-claim that were there was a baseball team called the New York Yankees in 1962 or even that there is a book that informed you about the outcome of this World Series? Perhaps these teams and this World Series only exist in your thought and perception and *not* in reality!
  - c) Summary.
    - (1) The non-Christian worldview furnishes no basis for a relationship between the knower and that which he claims to know.
    - (2) What the non-Christian claims to be knowledge is not really knowledge, even by his own standard of knowledge (man’s independent discovery, a process beginning with his mind and sensory faculties, can lead to knowledge).
  - d) These examples can be magnified.
    - (1) How does the non-Christian know that  $2 + 2 = 4$ ? Or the Pythagorean Theorem?
    - (2) To him, these notions can be nothing more than mere subjective conventions, not objective reality.
    - (3) As subjective conventions, they cannot be applied outside his mind.
    - (4) He cannot defend these beliefs to a challenger, nor could he defend any other knowledge claim, *because a rational defense requires appeal to an arbitrator outside of his mind.*
  - e) Can the non-Christian appeal to logic to substantiate his knowledge?
    - (1) Before doing so, he must first justify his use of logic.

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- (2) Since he is bound by his worldview to his own mind, then he has no grounds to apply his logic *beyond* his mind.
    - (a) Thus, he has no basis for believing the laws of logic to be objective or universal.
    - (b) His non-Christian worldview *cannot make sense of his own argumentation*.
  - (3) The unbeliever is left with no justifiable method of proof, no way to validate any knowledge claim, and thus, no ground for even asserting that independence from God is possible.
  - (4) The believer is left in an epistemic state of futility, chaos, and confusion. John Frame, "... the result of this is that the mind turns out to know only itself or, more precisely, to know only its own thinking. Thought is thought of thinking. Only that can be known for certain. Once some more specific content is specified, certainty disappears."<sup>12</sup>
- f) Summary.
- (1) Assuming the non-Christian worldview to be true results in knowledge claims that are without meaning; thinking is futile; no objective knowledge is possible according to the standards of independence.
  - (2) On one level non-Christian worldview fails by its own criticism, and on another, it cannot justify any form of criticism at all. Why? Criticism *requires* standards; i.e., objective standards.
  - (3) The non-Christian worldview is self-refuting.
  - (4) This critique of the non-Christian worldview serves as a validation of its negative, the Christian worldview.
  - (5) We can demonstrate the truthfulness of the Christian worldview further by showing its *self-attesting coherence*.
3. Consider any claim of knowledge to which the Christian attests.
- a) For the Christian, the foundation (beginning) of knowledge rests in the fear of the omniscient God of Scripture.
    - (1) This God created all things and knows all things.
    - (2) This God interprets all facts and establishes the relationships between universal laws and particular, finite entities.
    - (3) This God created man with a mind and five senses (the knower or the subject).
      - (a) These senses receive the data (the known or the object) that they were created to receive.
      - (b) Man's God-given reasoning abilities order and catalogue this data according to a pattern framed after the immutable decree and character of God.
  - b) What man does know, in this light, he knows not through independent inquiry; he knows what God has him know.

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<sup>12</sup> John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1987), pp. 60-61. cf. Morris Kline, *Mathematics: The Loss of Certainty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

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- (1) Quoting Augustine, “Man thinks God’s thoughts after Him.”
  - (2) With the Biblical Christian God as ultimate, the Biblical Christian Worldview does indeed provide a basis for knowledge.
- E. Stating the obvious.
1. Non-Christians certainly know many things.
    - a) They experience great success in science and they produce arguments that are logically coherent.
    - b) As they do so, *they borrow from the Christian worldview*.
      - (1) Rousas J. Rushdoony, “The unbeliever is thus able to think and work only on the basis of a practical reason which presupposes the Christian frame of things.... On his own premises, he can know nothing; on borrowed premises, he is able to think and work, but for all his results, he remains in the paradoxical position of the cattle rustler.... He has no knowledge on the basis of his own principles, he has valid knowledge only as a thief possesses stolen goods.”<sup>13</sup>
      - (2) Cornelius Van Til, “Sinners use the principle of Chance back of all things and the idea of exhaustive rationalization as the legitimate aim of science. If the universe were actually what these men assume it to be according to their principle, there would be no science. Science is possible and actual only because the non-believer’s principle is not true and the believer’s principle is true. Only because God has created the universe and does control it by His providence, is there such a thing as science at all.”<sup>14</sup>
      - (3) Unbelievers, according to Romans 1, show that they know God in everything that they do; yet, they suppress this knowledge in their unrighteousness (rebellion) by embracing a worldview of futility – a worldview that cannot account for logic, science, beauty, or morals.
  2. Paul’s reflection: I Corinthians 1:20.
    - a) I hope that you now understand a little bit better the impact and meaning of Paul’s statements.
    - b) The non-Christian’s life and thinking is animated by God, yet they deny that this is the case.
      - (1) Even their denial, however compelling, depends upon the Christian God against whom they rebel.
      - (2) Non-Christian thinking is, in one word, futile.
      - (3) In this context, the Claim #2 of the Christian worldview is vindicated.
  3. As Christians, we can rationally demonstrate the truth of Christianity to a non-Christian.

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<sup>13</sup>Rushdoony, *By What Standard?* pp. 61-62.

<sup>14</sup>Cornelius Van Til, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1953), p. 193 and cited in Rushdoony, *The One and the Many: Studies in the Philosophy of Order and Ultimacy*, p. 15.

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- a) Why? We have confidence in the operation of God in the non-Christians own reasoning faculties.
- b) Because the Biblical Christian God is a *personal* or imminent God (unlike Islam), God deals with men as men.
  - (1) We know, as God knows, that God has revealed His attributes to the unbeliever and that the unbeliever has suppressed this truth in unrighteousness.
  - (2) Yet, the unbeliever is still shown truth by God (e.g.,  $2 + 2 = 4$ , “Yankees defeat Giants”, etc.)
  - (3) In this we see God at work in the unbeliever’s perceptions and in his reason.
  - (4) The unbeliever knows God as the God of knowledge, for God has revealed Himself to the unbeliever in everything the unbeliever knows (Romans 1:19).
  - (5) If the unbeliever knows anything, he knows God in this manner.
  - (6) By God’s Spirit, He uses the reason and perceptive ability that He gave to man to penetrate through his sinful, rebellious unbelief *when He so pleases* and *He graciously gives the rebel a new heart and a new mind.*

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## The Structure of a Biblical Defense of the Faith

- I. Evangelism and Apologetics.
  - A. Both linked together.
    - 1. Acts 26:2, 23.
    - 2. II Timothy 4:16-17.
  - B. Evangelism is the *proclamation* of the judgment to come and the good news of salvation in the death and resurrection of Christ (John 3:36).
  - C. Apologetics is concerned with the *justification* of these claims (I Peter 3:15).
- II. The transcendental defense of the Faith.
  - A. What it is (Proverbs 26:4-5).
    - 1. This is the only method of argumentation that can be legitimately employed in confrontations between ultimate presuppositions.
    - 2. We defend the Christian faith by demonstrating the *impossibility of the contrary*.
    - 3. Cornelius Van Til:
      - a) “Now that only argument for an absolute God that holds water is a transcendental argument. A deductive argument as such leads only from one spot in the universe to another spot in the universe. So also an inductive argument as such can never lead beyond the universe. In either case there is no more than an infinite regression. In both cases it is legitimate for a smart little girl to ask, “If God made the universe, then who mad God?” and no answer is forthcoming. The answer is, for instance, a favorite reply of the atheist debater, Clarence Darrow (1857-1938). But if it be said to such opponents of Christianity that, unless there were an absolute God their own questions and doubts would have no meaning at all, there is no argument in return. There lie the issues. It is the firm conviction of every epistemologically self-conscious Christian that no human being can utter a single syllable, whether in negation or affirmation, unless it were for God’s existence. Thus the transcendental argument seeks to discover what sort of foundations the house of human knowledge must have, in order to be what it is. It does not seek *whether* the house has a foundation, but it presupposes that it has one. We hold that the anti-Christian method, whether inductive or deductive, may be compared to a man who would first insist that the statue of William Penn on the city hall of Philadelphia can be intelligently conceived of without the foundation on which it stands, in order afterwards to investigate *whether* or not this statue really has a foundation.”
      - b) “The argument in favor of Christian theism must therefore seek to prove that if one is not a Christian theist he knows nothing at all as he ought to know anything. The difference is not that all men alike know certain things about the finite universe and that some claim some *additional* knowledge, while others do not. On the contrary, the Christian theist must claim that he alone has true knowledge about cows and chickens as well as about God. He does this in no spirit of conceit, because it is a gift of God’s grace. Nor does he deny that

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there is knowledge *after a fashion* that enables the non-theists to get along *after a fashion* in the world. This is the gift of God's common grace, and therefore does not change the absoluteness of the distinction made about the knowledge and the ignorance of the theist and the non-theist respectively."

- B. Constructive aspect (argument by truth): "*Do not answer a fool according to his own folly, or you will be like him yourself*" (Proverbs 26:4).
1. Demonstrate that *only* the Christian worldview accounts for reason, knowledge, and morality.
    - a) Remember that the unbeliever knows God but suppresses this knowledge.
    - b) It is often helpful to point out the unbeliever's dependence upon God, even as manifested in his argument against God.
  2. Only the Christian can obtain *real coherence* in his thinking.
    - a) Why? Colossians 1:15-17.
    - b) If we see God's creation in the light of His Word (if all of our thoughts about the facts of the universe are in correspondence with God's ideas of these facts), then our thinking will cohere in God's coherence (there will be true coherence in our thinking because there is total coherence in God's thinking).
- C. Destructive aspect (argument by folly): "*Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes*" (Proverbs 26:5).
1. Called *reductio ad absurdum* (reducing our opponent's position to absurdity).
  2. Why can we do this?
    - a) Since the unbeliever depends upon God in all that he does and yet he constructs a philosophy which denies that this is so, then his thinking will be rife with absurdities, inconsistencies, arbitrariness, and contradictions.
    - b) Without God, the unbeliever cannot intelligibly account for his human experience.
  3. In this aspect of argumentation, the Christian assumes the unbeliever's position is true. From this assumption, the Christian demonstrates the illogical and immoral consequences of unbelieving thought.
  4. Illustration.
    - a) Suppose we think of a man made of water in an infinitely extended ocean of water.
    - b) Desiring to get out of the water, he makes a ladder of water.
    - c) What happens? He climbs out of the water only to fall into the water.
    - d) Unbelieving man is in the same position as the man made of water when he posits that time or chance is ultimate  $\Rightarrow$  materialism (scientific naturalism).
      - (1) On this assumption, his rationality is a product of chance.

The unbeliever may state that the laws of logic are *material* in nature in that they are just some electrical-chemical interactions in the synapse region of the brain. In this case, logic is relative to someone's brain and all rational discourse between two people, therefore, is absurd.

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- (2) On this assumption, even the *immaterial* laws of logic that he employs are products of chance.
- (3) The rationality and purpose that he may be searching for are still bound to be products of chance.
- (4) So then the Christian apologist, whose position requires him to hold that Christian theism is really true and as such must be taken as the presupposition which alone makes the acquisition of knowledge in any field intelligible, must join his “friend” in his hopeless gyrations (trying to climb out of the water) so as to point out to him that his efforts are always in vain.

## D. Summary.

1. We contend that the argument for Christianity must be that of presupposition (not facts alone, but philosophy of the facts).
2. With Augustine, it must be maintained that God’s revelation is the sun from which all other light derives.
3. The best, the only, the absolutely certain proof of the truth of Christianity is that unless its truth be presupposed *there is no proof of anything*.

## III. Exposing the Folly of Unbelief.

### A. Preliminary considerations.

1. God has already exposed the folly of unbelief (I Corinthians 1:18-20).
  - a) God has made (past tense) foolish the wisdom of the world.
  - b) This gives confidence in our apologetic work.
  - c) We do not confute unbelief so much as to proclaim that *God has already done so*.
  - d) This should “keep us humble” by bearing in mind that it is God, not the apologist, who has borne the apologetic burden.
  - e) This, God, not the apologist, can take credit for any success.
2. Only the Holy Spirit can awaken the unbeliever’s understanding.
  - a) Our task: Take the tools of God’s word and expose the futility of unbelief.
  - b) As we argue the unbeliever to the position of “closing his mouth,” then we become tools for the Holy Spirit to convict the unbeliever of his sin and to regenerate him to a new mind in Christ.
  - c) We are called to defend the faith in a faithful manner so that God will be pleased to bless with fruit.

### B. Argument by truth/folly amplified.

1. Argument by truth (Proverbs 26:4, *Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself*).
  - a) Examples from Acts.
    - (1) Acts 17:23-24 - Paul began his defense by arguing from the Christian perspective for the true character of God.
    - (2) Acts 22 - Paul began his defense by presenting his conversion story from the Christian perspective.
    - (3) Acts 26:25, “I speak words of truth and reason.”
  - b) You cannot argue by truth if you do not know the truth (II Timothy 2:14-16).

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- c) Three steps.
- (1) Admit that your answer stems from your trust (dependence) in Christ as Lord and Savior.
  - (2) Two forms:
    - (a) Don't know biblical answer: dependent uncertainty.
      - (i) Ignorance due to finiteness.
      - (ii) Ignorance due to lack of understanding.
      - (iii) Answer to be found done by *dependence on the revelation of God*.
    - (b) Know biblical answer (I Corinthians 15:3-8): dependent certainty.
      - (i) Evidence from *Scripture* - more than just quoting Scripture; it is the ability to take an issue and reason about it from a biblical perspective.
      - (ii) Evidence from the *external world* (Acts 14:17; Acts 26:26; John 20:20-31) - all facts are God created facts and God interpreted facts.
      - (iii) Evidence from *personal experience* (Acts 26:12-20); e.g., conversion, your walk with God.
  - (3) In most cases, the unbeliever is not going to be satisfied with the justification given in step 2b above. If this is the case, the Christian must expose the fact that the non-Christian rejects the Christian evidence because of his *commitment to independence*.
    - (a) *Every thought contrary to Christianity which the unbeliever has results from his desire to set himself up as the independent judge of truth.*
    - (b) Ask questions (put the unbeliever on the defensive).
      - (i) *Why* do you believe that?
      - (ii) *How* do you know that?

Unbeliever, "God does not exist."  
Believer, "*Why?*"  
Unbeliever, "You have shown me no convincing evidence."  
Believer, "*Why is the evidence unconvincing?*"  
Unbeliever, "The evidence does not satisfy my independent criterion of truth."  
Believer, "*Why do you accept this criterion of truth?*"  
Unbeliever, "It is a result of my own independent decision to look at things without submission to the Bible and to God."

2. Argument by folly (Proverbs 26:5, *Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes*); i.e., demonstrate the foolishness of unbelieving thought.
- a) Use the evidences and arguments acceptable to the unbeliever's system in order to remove the non-Christian's self-confidence.

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- (1) In truth, the non-Christian has no wisdom and his self-confidence is mere deception.
    - (a) Show the unbeliever that his rejection of Christ is based on a self-contradicting and self-frustrating perspective which can never lead to true knowledge of himself, the world, and God.
    - (b) Jeremiah 2:19; Psalm 5:10; Psalm 9:15-16.
  - (2) By showing the internal inconsistencies within the unbeliever's frame of reference, we act as a messenger of judgment revealing to the unbeliever the hopelessness and futility of his rejection of Christ.
- b) Three steps.
- (1) Show the unbeliever the futility of his position by asking him to justify his allegiance to independence.
    - (a) *Unbeliever attempts justification* - Ask, "Why do you think this response is valid?" Answer will show how the unbeliever's allegiance to independence is all pervasive.
    - (b) *Unbeliever does not attempt to justify his position* - Ask, "Why do you then hold your position so dearly?"
    - (c) In both cases, the unbeliever has committed himself blindly to independence and has categorically denied Christianity with no justifiable reason.
  - (2) Two forms.
    - (a) *If the unbeliever makes a claim of **absolute certainty**, he should be shown the **total uncertainty** of his position* (the atheist).
      - (i) The non-Christian has not examined and cannot examine all of the evidence of the universe.
      - (ii) Finiteness makes a thorough examination impossible.
      - (iii) Since some unknown fact may prove his limited understanding to be mistaken, the non-Christian cannot be certain at all that the evidence is truly against the Christian position.
      - (iv) *Every non-Christian holds his unbelieving position, not because of the evidence, but by blindly choosing against Christ.*
    - (b) *If the unbeliever makes a claim of **total uncertainty**, he should be shown the **absolute certainty** of his position* (agnostic).
      - (i) "There is not enough evidence to be sure one way or another."
      - (ii) Biblical response, "You have not seen enough evidence to know for sure that you must be unsure."

The unbeliever is in the self-defeating position of being absolutely certain and totally uncertain *at the same time*.

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God's written revelation comes from One who is totally certain (i.e., omniscient). Most unbelievers are ignorant of the Bible; therefore, they cannot speak consistently about God and His revelation.

- (iii) "Well, then, I am not sure about my objection."
  - (iv) Biblical response, "You have no objection at all! Your thoughts are merely the expression of personal doubt, not the necessity of doubt."
  - (v) The non-Christian can neither argue that the evidence is against Christianity nor that there is not enough evidence because he cannot be sure of either statement.
  - (c) Objections regarding God and His revelation (general and special).
    - (i) Certainty is impossible because the unbeliever *cannot* know exhaustively all of creation, much less God Himself.
    - (ii) To be uncertain is to be *certainly uncertain*, e.g. "I just do not know"  $\Rightarrow$  an unbeliever cannot have such certain uncertainty (he is of "two contradictory minds").
    - (iii) Ignorance  $\Rightarrow$  totally uncertain position for the unbeliever.
  - (d) Objections regarding the world.
    - (i) The unbeliever cannot hold a position of absolute certainty because he is unable to account for all the factors and contingencies of the universe (e.g., at the formation of the Grand Canyon, were you there to observe what happened? All theories about the formation of the Grand Canyon start with conjectures that contravene the scientific method).
    - (ii) He cannot be uncertain either for such a position speaks with certainty about the character of the world.
  - (e) Objections regarding man.
    - (i) Every non-Christian position of certainty regarding man is totally uncertain.
    - (ii) Every position of uncertainty is absolutely certain.
- (3) Why is the unbeliever in this folly?
- (a) Commitment to independence.
  - (b) Denial of Creator-creature distinction.
  - (c) You are in rebellion; turn around and embrace the living Christ!
- C. The approach applied.
- 1. Rationalism and irrationalism.

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- a) For the non-Christian, every quest of knowledge begins with the autonomous human mind.
  - b) Two unbelieving conclusions follow:
    - (1) Rationalism: the unaided human mind is *able* to know some things. Objection:
      - (a) Let x = anything that is said to be known.
        - (i) If you do not know everything about x, then you cannot be assured of anything about x because of insufficient information.
        - (ii) Because it is impossible to know *everything* about x, then it is impossible to know *anything* about x.
        - (iii) Conclusion: rationalism leads directly to skepticism.
      - (b) For the rationalist, the human mind is the final criterion of knowledge.
        - (i) Hence, all that a rationalist can know is what his mind is producing at a given moment.
        - (ii) Laws, nature, and even his own existence are for him only ideas.
        - (iii) Given this presupposition, the human mind cannot know truth or reality; it can only know its own thinking (or so it thinks!).
        - (iv) Thus, the confident knowledge of which rationalism boasts is merely knowledge of nothing.
    - (2) Irrationalism: the unaided human mind is *unable* to know some things. Objection:
      - (a) If skepticism is true, then it is false, for its assertion is this: we know that we don't know anything.
      - (b) This conclusion is absurd. If the human mind is incapable of attaining knowledge, then how can it be trusted to formulate the principle of irrationalism?
      - (c) Irrationalism, by its very nature, refutes itself.
2. *Agnosticism*: there may or may not be a God; we do not know and cannot know.
- a) Note the self-contradictory claims
    - (1) *We don't know* anything about God (including whether or not a God exists).
    - (2) *We do know* that the Christian God cannot exist; i.e., we do know that there isn't a transcendent, immanent God who reveals His existence and character to men.
  - b) What is contradictory here? The second claim attests to knowledge of something of which the first claim admits ignorance.
    - (1) Agnosticism wants to hold that it is reasonable to refrain from thorough epistemological speculations because they cannot lead to anything.

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- (2) \*In order to assume this attitude, agnosticism has itself made the most tremendous intellectual assertion that could be made about ultimate things.
  - (3) Self-contradiction: The claim of agnosticism is to make no assertion about ultimate reality is, in itself, a most comprehensive assertion about ultimate reality.
3. *Atheism*: there is no God.
- a) The atheist fails because he makes a knowledge claim (there is no God) but cannot account for any knowledge outside of an appeal to God.
  - b) Show the unbeliever that he has not looked and cannot look *everywhere* for God.
  - c) The unbeliever must be shown that he cannot say with certainty “there is no god” because the convincing evidence for God may be in the place he has not looked for it.
4. The fallacy of naturalism (whatever is, is right).
- a) Naturalism fallacy defined.
    - (1) Determining that x is good or evil just because x occurs is fallacious.
    - (2) This is the “Is – ought” fallacy; you cannot validly derive an “ought” from an “is.”
  - b) Example of the naturalistic fallacy.
    - (1) “10% of the population is homosexual.”
    - (2) Conclusion: Because of this fact (this is the way it is), it is good that 10% of the population is homosexual.
  - c) The naturalistic fallacy implicates all non-Christian thought.
    - (1) Looks to creation (nature) as the basis for ethics (Romans 1:25).
    - (2) Futility: nature cannot declare itself to be good or evil.
      - (a) Everything (things and ideas; material and immaterial) just is, and nothing more (a jar is; it is neither good or bad in a moral sense).
      - (b) In the non-Christian scheme, there are no grounds to apply good/evil categories to anything.
  - d) Biblical Christian thought avoids the naturalistic fallacy.
    - (1) God interprets everything because He is the Creator of everything (things and ideas; material and immaterial).
    - (2) He is the basis (foundation) for ethical good and evil.
    - (3) People do not make these judgments themselves; these are God’s judgments that are revealed to man.

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## A Suggested Structure for Defending the Faith

Issue at hand: gives rise for a gospel presentation and defense of the faith.

Admit your faith commitment

*Argument by Truth*

### DEPENDENT CERTAINTY

*If answer is known, give biblical answer and biblical evidence for the particular issue in question.*

### DEPENDENT UNCERTAINTY

*If answer is not known, give justification of your ignorance and show why Christianity is no less certain.*

*If the unbeliever is not convinced, show him that his disbelief is founded on his commitment to independence.*

Show that commitment to independence cannot be justified.

*Argument by Folly*

### ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY

*If the unbeliever is certain that the evidence is against Christianity, show him that he has not and cannot know enough to be sure he understands his evidence correctly.*

### TOTAL UNCERTAINTY

*If the unbeliever is uncertain because there is not enough evidence to be sure, show him that he has not and cannot know enough to be sure that he must be uncertain.*

Challenge the unbeliever to recognize his commitment to independence as the source of his futility.

Present the gospel message of repentance and faith.

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## Scriptural Model of Defense: Paul on Mars Hill (Acts 17)

- I. Background to the background.
  - A. Tertullian, in *Prescriptions against Heresies*, “What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church? ... Our instructions come from the “porch of Solomon”.... Away with all attempts to produce a mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic, and dialectic composition! We want no curious disputation after possessing Christ Jesus...!”
  - B. What is the issue that Tertullian is addressing?
    1. How does secular commitment and thought (Athens) relate to Christian commitment and thought (Jerusalem)?
    2. How does the Biblical message relate to the teaching of the philosophical Academy; i.e., the wisdom of the world?
    3. How does faith and reason interact? Which has controlling authority?
    4. How should the believer respond to alleged conflicts between revealed truth and extrabiblical instruction (in any area)?
    5. What is the proper relation between reason and revelation, between secular opinion and faith, between what is taught outside the church and what is preached inside?
    6. We face “Jerusalem vs. Athens” every time we engage in a conversation with an unbeliever.
  - C. How have Christians answered this question?
    1. Some renounce extrabiblical learning in toto (Jerusalem vs. Athens).
    2. Others reject Biblical teaching when it conflicts with secular thought (Athens vs. Jerusalem).
    3. Some try to appease both sides saying that the Bible and reason have their own separate domains (Jerusalem segregated from Athens).
    4. Others attempt to mingle the two holding that we can find isolated elements of supportive truth in extrabiblical learning (Jerusalem integrated with Athens).
    5. Others maintain that extrabiblical reasoning can properly proceed only upon the foundation of Biblical truth (Jerusalem the capital of Athens).
  - D. The Bible does not leave us in doubt; the resolution is found in Acts 17 where Paul, the superb representative of Jerusalem, faces Athens “head on.”
- II. Background to Acts 17.
  - A. Luke is giving us a selected account of the impact of the Gospel in the first century under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
  - B. Although the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not a mirror image of the first century, we are given a *pattern* to follow with respect to both our *message* and *method*.
    1. Philosophers of Athens: did not profess submission to Scripture (ditto the unbeliever today).
    2. cf. I Thessalonians 1:1-10 (v. 9).
      - a) F. F. Bruce, in *The Defense of the Gospel in the New Testament*, “The apostolic preaching was obliged to include an apologetic element if the stumbling-block of the cross was to be overcome; the *kerygma* ... must in some degree be *apologia*. And the *apologia* was not the

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- invention of the apostles, they had all “received” it – received it from the Lord.”
- b) The Holy Spirit uses *apologia* to open eyes. cf. Acts 26:16-18.
3. Apart from the brief summary of the discourse at Lystra (Acts 14), the address at Athens is the *only account of Gospel proclamation to a pagan audience* in Acts.
- C. Intellectual backgrounds.
1. Who was Paul?
- a) Citizen of Tarsus (Acts 21:39), a leading city of region of Cilicia and famed as a *city of learning*.
- (1) Noted for its schools devoted to rhetoric and philosophy.
- (2) Many renowned Greek philosophers came from this city.
- (3) Paul had a mastery of Greek literature, culture, and philosophy.
- b) Also educated in the Hebrew Scriptures (Acts 22:3; Galatians 1:14).
- c) God used Paul’s background and forged him into a mighty instrument of Gospel proclamation “to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” *Before your conversion, God was preparing you for unique service in His kingdom.*
2. Athens.
- a) Four major schools of thought.
- (1) The Academy of Plato (founded ca. 287 BC).
- (a) Despair sequence: Rationalism (stop and think) to skepticism to probabilism.
- (b) “god is an impenetrable mystery.”
- (c) Platonic tradition, “Man’s soul is imprisoned in the body; at death man is healed and his soul is released from its tomb.”
- (d) Against matter; i.e., the “sanctification of the sepulcher.”
- (2) The Lyceum of Aristotle (335 BC).
- (a) Denied the possibility of immortality.
- (b) Focused upon empiricism (look and see).
- (c) By the first century, this school’s influence was greatly weakened.
- (d) Its materialistic proclivity was paralleled in the atomism of Epicureanism.
- (3) The Garden of Epicurus (306 BC).
- (a) Democritus.
- (i) Universe consists of eternal atoms of matter, ever falling through space (metaphysic).
- (ii) All that is has come to be by chance happenings of these atoms (a “swerve”).
- (b) This metaphysic, in combination with an empiricist epistemology, led the Epicurean followers of atomism to believe that a *naturalistic explanation of all events could and should be given.*

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- (c) They denied immortality and declared that there was not need to fear death, “I was not, I was, I am not, I do not care.”
- (d) If gods existed, they made no difference to the affairs of men (merely superstitions).
- (e) Long-lasting “refined” pleasure in the “now” was the goal of man (eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die).
- (4) The Painted Porch of Zeno, the Stoic (300 BC).
  - (a) Sensation was the sole origin of knowledge.
  - (b) The mind of man was a *tabula rasa* (blank tablet) at birth.
  - (c) Man’s reason (*logos*) was seen as being a piece of the ever-living fire which permeated the world order.
  - (d) The *logos* was the unchanging rational plan of historical change (historical determinism).
  - (e) Nature’s highest expression was reason, a god called the “world soul” (immanent force).
  - (f) Man’s goal was to live in “harmony with nature or reason.”
  - (g) Rational element is superior to emotion; from which comes the “stoic” response of resignation in suffering, stern individualism, and social self-sufficiency; in one word – pride.
- b) All Greek thought was permeated:
  - (1) “Cyclical view of history.”
    - (a) Repeating Conflagration-regeneration sequences.
    - (b) Made individual immortality impossible.
    - (c) Primary cause of the stagnation of Greek science (straight-line view of history is essential for scientific progress).
  - (2) Neo-Pythagoreanism.
    - (a) What Pythagoras taught (6<sup>th</sup> century BC).
      - (i) Mathematical basis for the cosmos, “Number rules the universe” and “number generates all things.”
      - (ii) Transmigration of souls (reincarnation).
      - (iii) Intellectual purity (snobbery), “We do not eat beans!”
    - (b) By Paul’s time:
      - (i) Esoteric (gnostic) and mystical theology.
      - (ii) Numerology.
      - (iii) Astrology.
- c) What Paul faced in 50 AD.
  - (1) Athenian intellectual life characterized by turmoil and uncertainty.

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- (2) Skepticism had made heavy inroads, which fostered a variety of responses.
    - (a) Widespread eclecticism (pick up truth from “here and there”).
    - (b) Nostalgic interest in the past.
    - (c) Religious mysticism.
    - (d) Resignation to hedonism (both refined and physical).
  - (3) 400 years of philosophical dispute with its conflicts, repetitions, and inadequacies left many Athenian philosophers bored and thirsty for “new things” (Acts 17:21).
- D. Historical background to altar inscription “to the unknown god.” See *The Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (1:110) and Aristotle’s *The Art of Rhetoric* (book 3, 17:10). cf. Acts 14:15-17.
1. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, a deadly plague had hit the people of Athens.
  2. The leaders of the city were looking for ways to “appease the gods” and stop the plague.
  3. A priestess, a Pythian oracle, informed the leaders that not all gods had been appeased by their sacrifices.
    - a) Go to the island of Crete and find Epimenides.
    - b) He is a prophet and he will tell us what to do.
  4. The solution of Epimenides.
    - a) He noted a city full of gods (graven altars everywhere), “gods must be easier to find here than men!” Athens had more idols than all of Greece combined.
      - (1) At sunrise tomorrow, bring a flock of sheep and a band of stonemasons (along with a large supply of stones and mortar) to a grassy slope.
      - (2) The sheep must all be healthy and of different colors (some black and some white).
      - (3) I’ll see you tomorrow morning.
    - b) He came to the council chamber on Mars Hill (where Paul would stand 600 years later) and gave these instructions.
      - (1) At sunrise tomorrow, bring a flock of sheep and a band of stonemasons (along with a large supply of stones and mortar) to a grassy slope.
      - (2) The sheep must all be healthy and of different colors (some black and some white).
      - (3) I’ll see you tomorrow morning.
    - c) Events of the next morning.
      - (1) Testimony of Epimenides.
        - (a) There is still another god concerned in the matter of this plague, a god whose name is unknown to us and who is therefore not represented by any idol in your city.
        - (b) This god is great enough (and good enough) to do something about this plague, if we only invoke his help. The Athenians responded, “It is impossible to invoke a god whose name we do not know.”
        - (c) Any god great enough and good enough to do something about the plague is probably also great enough and good enough to smile upon us in our ignorance – if we *acknowledge* our ignorance and call upon him!

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- (2) Instructions.
    - (a) Release the sheep upon the slope.
    - (b) Permit them to graze at will.
    - (c) Have men follow each sheep and watch it closely.
    - (d) “O thou unknown god! Behold the plague afflicting this city! And if indeed you feel compassion to forgive and help us, behold this flock of sheep! Reveal your willingness to respond, I plead, by causing any sheep that pleases you to lie down upon the grass instead of grazing. Choose white if white pleases; black if black delights. And those you choose we sacrifice to you – acknowledge our pitiful ignorance of your name!”
  - (3) What happened?
    - (a) The sheep were all hungry (at the break of dawn).
    - (b) Yet, some of the sheep mysteriously buckled their knees and settled into the grass to the utter amazement of the Athenian onlookers.
    - (c) They marked each place of grazing, sacrificed the sheep and built an altar at the spot of sacrifice to *agnosto theo* (an unknown god).
    - (d) By dawn of the next day, the plague had abated and within a week all the stricken had recovered fully.
5. In time, the Athenians forgot the mercy and kindness of this “unknown god.”
- a) The Epicurean school denied any need for an appeal to an “unknown god” in order to explain the plague or its alleviation.
  - b) Athens returned to its unabated idolatry.
  - c) The altars were neglected and vandals destroyed many of them.
  - d) Grass and moss encroached upon the remaining altars until ...
- III. Paul comes to Athens.
- A. Immediate context (Acts 17:1-15; I Thessalonians 2:17-3:2).
    1. Gospel preaching.
      - a) Thessalonica.
      - b) Berea.
    2. Hounded by Jews.
      - a) Paul driven out of Berea and taken to Athens.
      - b) Silas and Timothy remain in Berea.
    3. Paul sends for them and waits for them to come to him in Athens ...
  - B. Paul *tours* Athens and notices ...
    1. A people given wholly to idolatry (Acts 17:16; Romans 1:20-25).
      - a) This stirred Paul’s spirit; provoked<sup>15</sup> = same Greek word used in the Septuagint for God’s anger at Israel’s idolatry (Deuteronomy 9:18).
        - (1) The Mosaic Law’s prohibition against idolatry was *binding* outside of Old Testament Israel (and is still *binding* today on all men).

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<sup>15</sup> stirred, to make sharp (cf. Deuteronomy 32:41); to rouse to anger; to exasperate.

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- (2) There was no excuse for this rebellion (Romans 1:20).
  - b) Paul was jealous for the honor of the name of the one, true God (Exodus 20:4-6).
    - (1) This is the motivation of a man whose heart of stone had been turned into a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26).
    - (2) How? By the unmerited sanctifying grace of God – by God’s Holy Spirit inscribing the Law of God on Paul’s regenerated heart (Hebrews 8:7-12).
  - 2. The artifacts noted by *tourists* today in the city of Athens as a “fertile field of aesthetic appreciation” represented to Paul, not art, but despicable and crude religion.
  - 3. Is our hearts stirred by the idolatry around us? Money, status, power, position, sex, greed, covetousness (which is idolatry: Colossians 3:5). If not, ask God to inscribe His righteous character afresh on our hearts.
- IV. Paul could not keep silent ... (cf. I Thessalonians 1:9-10).
  - A. He began to reason daily.
    - 1. Synagogues (Jews and Gentile worshippers).
    - 2. Whoever happened to be in the marketplace
      - a) Agora; at the bottom of the Acropolis, a massive limestone hill where the Parthenon stood.
      - b) The center of Athenian life and business.
      - c) Socrates, at this very place, had met men with whom he discussed philosophical issues.
    - 3. Reason.
      - a) Paul did not simply announce the Gospel or hand out papyrus tracts to the passersby.<sup>16</sup>
      - b) He discussed the Gospel openly and gave it a reasonable defense; He aimed to educate his audience in the truth, not to make common cause with their sinful ignorance.
  - B. The Stoic and Epicurean philosophers, upon encountering him called Paul a “seed picker.”
    - 1. Slang term imaging gutter-sparrows; a peddler of second-hand bits of pseudo-philosophy (an intellectual scavenger).
      - a) What Paul was saying was totally foreign to them.
      - b) They could not discern a single echo (not one) of their own thinking in Paul’s argumentation.
    - 2. The “Word of the Cross” was to them foolishness (I Corinthians 1:18) and in their pseudo-wisdom they knew not God (I Corinthians 1:20-21).
      - a) Paul did not attempt to use the premises of these philosophers in his arguments.
      - b) To Paul, the Gospel could not be debated on “neutral” grounds lest the Cross of Christ be made void (I Corinthians 1:17).

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<sup>16</sup> There is a place for tracts (especially in the past). It is my opinion that tracts, like the monasteries of the Middle Ages, have seen their day. Many people use tracts to “gain acceptance before God” (I’ve done my duty). Others use them as a front for cowardice. If you want to use them, use wisdom in your selections and placement (you are trying to gain contact and friendship with a goal toward interaction). Make sure that the recipient has a means to contact you.

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3. Because of this conflict in worldviews, these philosophers viewed Paul as bringing *strange, new* teaching to them (Acts 17:18-20).
  - a) The Gospel seemed to them to be about foreign gods: a new divine couple called Jesus and the Resurrection.
    - (1) Jesus (masculine form in the Greek – sounds like *iasis*): power of healing.
    - (2) Resurrection (feminine form – *anastasis*): power of restoration (Romans 4:25; Romans 1:4).
  - b) Socrates was accused of doing a similar thing 450 years earlier.
  - c) This was to them a menacing proposition, a threat to Athenian well-being – this is precisely why Paul ended up before the Areopagus council.
- V. Paul before the council to make a defense of the hope within him (I Peter 1:3; 3:15).
  - A. Areopagus (literally “hill of Mars”): The name of both a low, rocky hill west of the Acropolis in Athens and an ancient court that convened on the hill. The court, consisting of a council of nobles, met in the open; the accuser and accused stood on platforms cut from the rock.
    1. Again, Socrates stood there to make a defense for corrupting the youth of Athens with foreign deities (cf. Acts 17:18-20).
    2. In Paul’s day the Council convened on Mar’s Hill to try homicide cases only.
    3. Paul, therefore, was not on the Hill but stood only before the council (Acts 17:22, 33).
  - B. The Council.
    1. Small, powerful body (about 30 members).
    2. Aristocratic “politicians.”
    3. Exercised jurisdiction over the religion, morals, and civic order of the city.
    4. Paul’s message was obviously creating a disturbance in the city.
      - a) Was he formally charged with disorder? (Acts 17:19 indicates the possibility of arrest; cf. Acts 16:19; 18:17; 21:30, though not always as in Acts 9:27, 23:19).
      - b) Or, was he merely asked to explain his views more clearly? (Acts 17:21 might indicate this).
      - c) Paul’s appearance before the Council is best understood as an informal exploratory hearing for the purpose of determining whether formal charges ought to be formulated and pressed against him (eventually, none were).
- VI. Paul’s defense of the Gospel.
  - A. What was he trying to do?
    1. He knew that up to this point his arguments had *not made sense* to the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers.
    2. He recognized that the *fact* of the resurrection need to be accepted and interpreted in a *wider philosophical* context and that the unregenerate’s *system* of thought had to be placed in *antithetical contrast* with that of the Christian.
    3. As Paul stood in the midst of the prestigious Council of Areopagus, with a large audience gathered around from the marketplace, he set himself for a defense of the faith (Acts 17:22-31).
  - B. His apologetic procedure.

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1. Manner of address: respectful and gentle.
  - a) Boldness ≠ arrogance.
  - b) He stood as was customary.
  - c) Formal introductory, “You men of Athens.”
  - d) I Peter 3:15, “... with meekness and respect.”
  - e) Ridicule, anger, sarcasm, and name-calling are inappropriate weapons of apologetic defense.
  - f) A Spirit-filled apologist will always manifest the fruits of the Spirit in his approach to others.
2. He spoke in terms of *basic philosophical perspective*.
  - a) He did not provide a list of “evidences for the resurrection” or did he dispel alternate resurrection theories (e.g., swoon theory, disciples stool the body, etc.) in order to conclude that Jesus “probably” rose from the dead.
  - b) Paul, instead, laid the presuppositional groundwork (the framework) for accepting the authoritative word from God, which was the source and content of the good news about Christ’s resurrection (the reality).
    - (1) Without this context, the resurrection would simply be a monstrosity or freak of nature, a surd resuscitation of a corpse (such an interpretation would be the *best* that the Athenian philosophers could make of the fact).
    - (2) Given their monism, or determinism, or materialism, or philosophy of history, they could find sufficient grounds, if they wised, to dispute the *fact* of the resurrection.
    - (3) It would have been futile, then, for Paul to argue for the *fact* of the resurrection without challenging the unbelievers’ *philosophy of fact*.
  - c) Therefore, Paul had to do two things (two worldviews were in collision).
    - (1) Critique their philosophy (argument by folly).
    - (2) Defend his philosophy (argument by truth).
  - d) Goal: to bring the unbeliever to repentance at the roots of his unbelief (outlook on life, man, the world, and God).
3. Summary of Paul’s thinking that will guide us in understanding this passage.
  - a) The two mindsets (believer and unbeliever) represent in *principle a clash of total attitude and basic presuppositions*.
    - (1) Ephesians 4:17-24.
    - (2) I Corinthians 1:17-25; 3:18-20.
  - b) The ignorance of the *unbeliever’s presuppositions should and must be exposed*.
    - (1) I Timothy 6:20.
    - (2) I Corinthians 1:20, 27.
    - (3) Romans 1:21, 22.
  - c) In contrast, the believer takes *revelational authority* as his *starting point* and controlling factor in all reasoning.
    - (1) Colossians 2:3, 8.
    - (2) Proverbs 1:7.
    - (3) II Corinthians 10:5; cf. Colossians 1:18.

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- d) The unbeliever's suppression of the truth results in *culpable ignorance* (Romans 1:18-21).
  - e) The biblical apologist must set his worldview with its Scriptural presuppositions and authority in *antithetical* contrast to the unbeliever's worldview.
    - (1) The unbeliever's principle destroys the possibility of knowledge (his system of thinking must be critiqued in order to expose its foolishness and ignorance).
    - (2) The believer's principle accounts for the knowledge that the unbeliever sinfully uses.
    - (3) By so doing, the Biblical apologist calls the unbeliever to repentance (you need to change your mind *radically*).
      - (a) II Corinthians 11:3 (neutrality corrupts).
      - (b) II Timothy 2:25.
- C. The unbeliever's ignorance.
- 1. Paul first draws attention to the nature of man – "I perceive that in all things you are very *religious*" (Acts 17:22; cf. Romans 1:19; 2:15).
    - a) Religious – Paul choose this word carefully.
      - (1) Vague term then as it is today: "fearers of the supernatural spirits" or "somewhat superstitious."
      - (2) Piety to the Greeks was superstition to Paul.
    - b) This is not a complement to get in the Council's good graces; it was forbidden to use complimentary exordia [introduction] when addressing them with the purpose of securing their good will.
    - c) Men cannot eradicate a religious impulse within themselves (worship is endemic to the human race), but this good impulse has been suppressed by unrighteousness (Romans 1:18, 21-22).
  - 2. Paul illustrates the religious nature of the Athenians by next referring to the altar he observed, "for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD."
    - a) Considering: systematic inspection and purposeful scrutiny.
    - b) Paul wants to make three points here.
      - (1) Their ignorance of the one, true God (they have no valid epistemological starting point).
      - (2) Eye-opener (Acts 26:18): to jog the memory of the Athenians of a time in their history when the one, true God revealed His goodness to them.
      - (3) Lead entry to reveal to them the true object of worship: the Biblical God.
    - c) Note the schizophrenia in unbelieving thought (cf. Romans 1:18-25).
      - (1) Awareness of God (Acts 17:22).
      - (2) Ignorance of God (Acts 17:23).
  - 3. What follows reveals that God was unknown only because the Athenians *had not wanted to know Him*.
    - a) Paul, therefore, was not introducing some foreign gods.

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- b) Paul was introducing the God who was both known (as the altar suggests), yet unknown (as the altar suggests).
- D. Authority of Revelation (i.e., Scripture).
  - 1. Paul identifies the true nature and name of the UNKNOWN GOD, “Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I *proclaim* to you.”
  - 2. Note Paul’s antithetical apologetic approach.
    - a) The unbeliever is *ignorant* of the truth (I Corinthians 1:20; Galatians 4:8; Ephesians 4:18; I Thessalonians 4:5; II Thessalonians 1:8).
    - b) There is an *authoritative* basis for truth.
      - (1) Proclaim: to set forth with solemn declaration of authority (cf. Acts 3:18; I Corinthians 9:14; Galatians 1:11-12).
      - (2) Paul set forth the Christian faith as *alone* reasonable, true and authoritative.
      - (3) Paul’s *ultimate starting point* was the authority of revelation (whether speaking to Jew or Greek).
      - (4) The believer possesses true knowledge of God (Galatians 4:9; Ephesians 4:20).
  - 3. This ignorance of God cannot now be tolerated.
- E. Culpable suppression of the truth: “God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, *in the hope that they might grope for Him* and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us, for ...”
  - 1. Paul first speaks of the revelation of God as creator and sustainer of all things.
    - a) Men should have known Him from His works (external and internal).
    - b) Yet, every man has handled the natural revelation of God improperly (Romans 1:18f); man is guilty of rejecting the clear revelation of the God in creation and in conscience (Romans 2:15).
  - 2. Paul next shows the Athenians that God’s providential government of history was calculated to bring men to Him.
    - a) Acts 14:17 (cf. Romans 2:4): goodness of God leads men to repentance.
    - b) ... in the hope that they might grope for Him.
      - (1) The subordinate clause, *in the hope*, indicates an unlikely contingency (An event that may occur but that is not likely or intended; a possibility).
      - (2) cf. Psalm 14:2-3 (Romans 3:11-12): natural man’s seeking and finding God cannot be taken for granted.
      - (3) At best, the unregenerate man “gropes for God.”
        - (a) Grope.
          - (i) Homer groping about of the blinded Cyclops.

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- (ii) Plato used the word for “amateur guess at the truth.”
    - (b) The eyes of the unregenerate had been blinded to the light of God’s revelation.
      - (i) The unbeliever in whatever state they are in do not interpret natural revelation correctly; they grope about in the darkness.
      - (ii) Hence, Paul viewed man as blameworthy for not holding fast to the knowledge of God which came to them in creation and in providence.
      - (iii) The rebellious are left without excuse due to God’s general revelation (Romans 1:19-23).
  - c) The point in Paul’s appeal to general revelation.
    - (1) To indicate the guilt of the unbeliever as he mishandles the truth of God.
      - (a) The unbeliever is *responsible* because he possesses the truth of God.
      - (b) The unbeliever is *guilty* for what he does to the truth.
    - (2) General revelation can only be understood rightly through the “glasses” of special revelation.
3. Note what Paul does next; he substantiates the biblical thesis by quoting from pagan poets – “... in Him we live and move and have our being, for as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’”
- a) Why?
    - (1) Paul is quoting from these poets (he knew Greek poetry thoroughly) to manifest their guilt.
    - (2) They cannot escape God even in their writings.
  - b) “in Him we live and move and have our being” is taken from Epimenides the Cretan in a quatrain that he addresses to Zeus.<sup>17</sup>
    - (1) Paul quotes from Epimenides again in Titus 1:12.
    - (2) “in Him” = in His power or by Him (cf. Colossians 1:15-17).
    - (3) The context of the poem of Epimenides: Zeus was not dead based upon the fact that *men* live.
    - (4) Contrast that thought with Paul: men live because *God* lives.
  - c) “For we are His offspring.”
    - (1) From fellow-Cilician Aratus’ poem *Natural Phenomena*.<sup>18</sup>
    - (2) Cleanthes echoes the same thought in his *Hymn to Zeus*.
    - (3) Both poets understood nature (including men) in a pantheistic context.

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<sup>17</sup> “They fashioned a tomb for thee, O holy and high one  
The Cretans, always liars, evil beasts, idle bellies!  
But thou art not dead; thou livest and abidest for ever;  
For in thee we live and move and have our being.”

<sup>18</sup> “Never, O men, let us leave him unmentioned, all ways are full of Zeus and all meeting-places of men; the sea and the harbors are full of him. In every direction we all have to do with Zeus; for we are also his offspring.”

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- (4) In contrast, Paul understood this phrase in the context that all men are from Adam and that Adam was created in the image of God, not in the context of John 1:12.
  - (5) All men in Adam are children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3).
  - d) We see that Paul *did not agree with the intended meaning of these poets*.
    - (1) G. C. Berkouwer, in *General Revelation* (p. 144), “This is to be explained only in connection with the fact that the heathen poets have distorted the truth of God... Without this truth there would be no false religiousness. This should not be confused with the idea that false religion contains *elements* of the truth and gets its strength from those elements. This kind of quantitative analysis neglects the nature of the distortion carried on by false religion. Pseudo-religion witnesses to the truth of God in its apostasy.”
    - (2) Certain expressions of the unbeliever will manifest the knowledge of God as *suppressed* knowledge; the truth about God will be put to a false use or understood in a false context.
    - (3) Only by God’s special revelation do we see these expressions in their proper context.
    - (4) Paul used pagan expressions to demonstrate that ungodly thinkers have not eradicated all idea, albeit suppressed and distorted, of the living and true God.
    - (5) Ned Stonehouse, “The apostle Paul, reflecting upon their creaturehood, and upon their religious faith and practice, could discover within their pagan religiosity evidences that the pagan poets in the very act of suppressing and perverting the truth presupposed a measure of awareness of it.”
    - (6) Van Til, “They could say this adventitiously [not inherent, accidentally] only. That is, it would be in accord with what they deep down in their hearts knew to be true in spite of their systems. It was that truth which they sought to cover up by means of their professed systems, which enabled them to discover truth as philosophers and scientists.”
- F. Scriptural presuppositions.
- 1. The whole of this speech is permeated with Scriptural (Old Testament) perspectives (i.e., a typical Jewish polemic!).
    - a) Acts 17:24-25 (cf. Isaiah 42:5).
    - b) Acts 17:27 (cf. Isaiah 42:7) – groping in the darkness.
    - c) Acts 17:29 (cf. Isaiah 42:8) – graven images.
  - 2. Note Old Testament (i.e., Biblical) theology.
    - a) God is the Creator, a Spirit who does not reside in man-made dwellings (Acts 17:24; cf. Acts 7:48, Isaiah 42:5, Isaiah 66:1).
    - b) God is self-sufficient and all men are dependent upon Him (Acts 17:25; cf. Psalm 50:12-13).

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- c) God created all men from a common ancestor and He is the Lord of history (Acts 17:26; cf. Acts 14:17, Psalm 74:17; Daniel 2:36-45, Genesis 8:22).
  - d) God hates idolatry (Acts 17:29; cf. Isaiah 40:18-20; Exodus 20:4).
  - e) God demands repentance (Acts 17:30).
  - f) God has appointed a final day of judgment (Acts 17:31).
- G. Pressing the antithesis.
- 1. Reviewing the themes that Paul addresses.
    - a) Creation.
    - b) Providence.
    - c) Man's dependence.
    - d) Man's sin.
    - e) Future judgment.
  - 2. All these themes are antithetical to Greek philosophy; Biblical theology is an offense to the natural mind.
    - a) Monism vs. God is the creator of all things (Acts 17:24).
      - (1) Nullifies the *materialism* of the Epicureans and the *pantheism* of the Stoics.
      - (2) God's transcendence refutes the Greek *naturalism* and immanentism views.
      - (3) With the Parthenon in the background, Paul declared that the Creator God does not dwell in temples made with hands.
    - b) *Human autonomy* vs. man's dependence upon God for all things (Acts 17:25).
    - c) *National (racial) pride* vs. unity of the human race (Acts 17:26a).
      - (1) Athenians prided themselves in being indigenous to the soil of Attica (region of Greece).
      - (2) Assaulted the Athenian abhorrence of the "barbarians."
    - d) *Elitist (gnostic) knowledge* of God vs. God is not far from anyone (Acts 17:27b).
    - e) *Fate* vs. God's providence (Acts 17:26b; cf. Deuteronomy 32:8): God is not remote from or indifferent to the world of men.
    - f) *No resurrection* vs. resurrection (Acts 17:31).
      - (1) Upon the legendary founding by Athena of the Areopagus court, Apollo had declared (as per Aeschylus – pronounced *s-cullus*), "When the dust drinks up a man's blood, once he has died, there is no resurrection."
      - (2) Contravened the Greek cyclic and eternal view of history and time (and laid the groundwork for the blossoming of modern science).
      - (3) Refuted two Greek views of the body:
        - (a) Epicurean: the body merely decomposes at death – that's it.
        - (b) Body is a disdainful prison and the soul is free from it at death.
    - g) *Skepticism* vs. certainty of truth.
- H. Calling for repentance.

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1. Paul challenged every point of pagan philosophy and called the Athenians to full repentance (Acts 17:30).
  2. Advent of Christ has introduced a new era (cf. Acts 14:16).
    - a) The coming of Christ has put an end to God's historical overlooking of nations which lived in unbelief (cf. Romans 3:25).
    - b) With the Advent of Christ there is a new beginning (He "overlooked the former times of ignorance").
      - (1) Sins once committed in culpable ignorance have been made even *less* excusable by the redemptive realities of the Gospel (even in the past era God's forbearance ought to have led men to repentance as per Romans 2:4).
      - (2) How much more, then, should men *now* repent before God for their sins!
      - (3) The lenience of God demonstrates that His concentration of effort is toward the salvation rather than judgment of men (John 3:17).
      - (4) This mercy and patience must not be spurned; men everywhere are now *required* to repent; *now is the acceptable time* (II Corinthians 6:2).
      - (5) If they would not repent, it would be an indication of their love for *ignorance* and hatred of true knowledge (they are now doubly condemned).
        - (a) For their culpable ignorance of general revelation.
        - (b) For their rejection of special revelation (redemptive knowledge).
  3. Grounds for the call to repentance.
    - a) Not autonomous argumentation, but the authority of God's Son (Acts 17:31).
    - b) Repent, for God has appointed His Son as final judge (Daniel 7:13; John 5:27; Acts 10:42).
  4. Grounds for Final Judgement.
    - a) The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.
    - b) **Paul is arguing, *not* for the resurrection, but for final judgment by Christ** (many Christians misinterpret this passage as Paul attempting to prove the resurrection).
    - c) Paul proclaimed that Christ had been appointed the final Judge of mankind, as His resurrection from the dead evidenced.
      - (1) Paul did not try to prove the resurrection *empirically*.
      - (2) Paul argued *theologically* from the fact of the resurrection to the final judgment.
      - (3) *As Paul reasoned with unbelievers, there was no authority more ultimate than that of Christ.*
- VII. The outcome of Paul's apologetic (Acts 17:32-34).
- A. The idea of a resuscitated corpse was an offense to some of the Athenian philosophers (produced a response of mockery).
    1. Why? It did not fit in with their presuppositions (John 3:19-20).

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- a) Paul began his apologetic with God and His revelation and he ended his apologetic with God and His revelation.
  - b) The Athenian philosophers began their dispute with Paul in an attitude of cynical unbelief about Christ's resurrection; they concluded the dispute in cynical unbelief about Christ's resurrection.
  - c) But Paul had demonstrated that their belief system was founded upon pseudo-wisdom and ignorance (and its concomitant internal tension or schizophrenia: illogical patterns in thinking).
    - (1) Their view that God dwelt in impenetrable mystery undermined their detailed teaching about Him (e.g., all men are made in His image; God's providence in history).
    - (2) Their view that the events of history were a matter of irrational fate was contravened by their conviction that all things are mechanistically determined.
    - (3) In their "wisdom" they had become utterly ignorant of the ultimate truth.
2. Until the Holy Spirit regenerates the sinner and brings him to repentance, his presuppositions remain unaltered.
- B. Others said they wanted to "hear more on this matter."
1. Was this procrastination or a "brush off"?
  2. Or, was it indicative that some wistfully hoped that Paul's proclamation might be true? J. T. Stewart, *A Faith to Proclaim* (p. 117), "I used to think this was just polite evasion, the eternal refuge of the procrastinating spirit. I am not so sure of it now. I think they were rally touched and moved by the dramatic *kyrygma*. The Resurrection message – they wanted to believe it. For that pagan world was in the grip of fear. Neither philosophy nor mythology, neither astrology nor mystery cult, had been able to roll back the dark shadow of irrevocable fate. The race was in bondage to a destiny decreed and fixed for ever in the unfriendly stars, and the terror of a hostile cosmos held the human spirit in thrall. So these men at Athens resolved to hear the apostle again; for wistfully they hoped his message might be true."
- C. A few, by God's grace, turned around in their thinking (cf. II Timothy 2:25).
1. Dionysius the Areopagite (a member of the Council). Tradition states that he became the first elder in the Athenian church (that started some time after Paul's exit from the city).
  2. A woman named Damaris.
  3. And others ... praise be to God.
- VIII. Summary.
- A. Paul's address is a classic and exemplary encounter between Christian commitment and secular thinking (Jerusalem and Athens).
1. It serves as a viable pattern for us today
  2. I will demonstrate with a few examples of how it can be applied today.
- B. Paul and secular learning.
1. He knew what the Greeks believed and did not dismiss it.
  2. Neither would he let it exercise control over his Christian thinking.

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3. Paul did not integrate the two perspectives (Jerusalem is the Capital of Athens!): all reasoning must be placed within the presuppositional context of revelational truth and Christian commitment.
- C. Paul's apologetic approach was antithetical in nature.
  1. He never assumed a neutral stance in his argumentation.
  2. Athenian thought to him was idolatrous.
  3. He countered false philosophy with the Truth in Christ at every juncture.
- D. Paul did not try to prove the resurrection of Christ.
  1. The resurrection of Christ was a key factor in his argument.
  2. But, Paul did not argue for it independently on empirical grounds as a brute historical (yet miraculous) event.
  3. Proofs of the resurrection will not force a shift in the unbeliever's presuppositional framework of thought.
  4. Knowing this, Paul focused upon the basic and controlling perspectives (the web of central convictions) by which the resurrection of Christ is weighed and interpreted.
- E. Paul took as his ultimate authority in his defense of the faith Christ and God's Word.
  1. Not:
    - a) Independent speculation and reasoning (rationalism).
    - b) Allegedly indisputable eyeball facts of experience (empiricism).
    - c) Satisfaction or peace felt within his heart (subjectivism).
  2. God's revelational truth – learned through his senses, understood with his mind, comforting his heart, and providing the context for all life and thought – was his self-evidencing starting point.
  3. Christ and God's Word was the presuppositional platform for authoritatively declaring the truth and Paul presented it as the sole reasonable option for men to choose.
- F. Paul appealed to the inescapable knowledge of God that all men had by virtue of (1) being created in God's image and in virtue of (2) His revelation in creation and history.
  1. Paul even noted this "point of contact" in pagan poets.
  2. Even so, Paul also noted that unbelievers are guilty for distorting and suppressing the truth of God.
- G. Paul argued with unbelievers at the root level: he dealt with presuppositions.
  1. He set two fundamental worldviews in contrast.
    - a) He exhibited the ignorance the results from the unbeliever's commitments.
    - b) He presented the precondition of knowledge, i.e., God's revelation, as the only reasonable alternative.
  2. His aim was to effect an overall (root and branch) change in outlook and mindset; he called the unbeliever to repentance by following a two-fold procedure.
    - a) Internal critique of the unbeliever's position.
    - b) Presenting the necessity of the truth of Scripture.
  3. Paul remained earnest, with humble boldness, through it all.

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## Practical guidelines

- I. How to test whether an argument against Biblical Christianity “flies.” Four-point check list (Master technique by internalizing this). Four intellectual sins of the unbeliever (four ways an unbeliever “escapes” from responsibility to his Creator).
  - A. *Is this argument arbitrary?* (NB. Points 1 and 2 summarize about 80% of unbelieving arguments).
    1. *Opinion.*
      - a) “You believe that but I don’t.”
      - b) It is my opinion that ...
      - c) What is wrong?
        - (1) Opinions do not cost anything and they are worth nothing.
        - (2) Opinions are not the basis of objective truth.
        - (3) Your opinion has no weight.
      - d) Response: Please offer me an argument for your opinion.
    2. *Relativism.*
      - a) How it is presented.
        - (1) “Different strokes for different folks.”
        - (2) “No culture is better or worse than another.”
        - (3) “If it feels right, do it.”
        - (4) “Anything goes.”
        - (5) “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.”
        - (6) “No one really knows anything for sure. Therefore, you create your own reality.”
        - (7) “That’s true for you, but not true for me.”
      - b) Response.
        - (1) If everyone creates his own reality, then Hitler was right in killing the Jews.
        - (2) If everyone is right, *then no one is wrong.*
        - (3) *Truth is not person relative.*
          - (a) A doctor tells you that you have diabetes.
          - (b) Your response, “That’s true for you, but not for me.”
        - (4) If someone says, “truth is relative,” your response, “Is that absolutely true?” *Horns of a dilemma.*
          - (a) No?
          - (b) Yes?
        - (5) In this context, most college professors and graduates do not know how to think critically.
    3. *Ignorant (prejudicial) conjecture.*
      - a) Definition: An inference or judgment based on inconclusive or incomplete evidence; i.e., guesswork.
      - b) Response: *substantiate* your conjecture! Provide *evidence* for what you are saying!
      - c) Examples.
        - (1) Argument: You cannot trust the text of the Bible.

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- (a) The Bible has a supernatural origin and a supernatural preservation; *it is not like any other book!* The text of the Bible is not equivalent to “playing telephone.”
  - (b) The earliest extant manuscripts of Plato can be dated 900 AD (Oxford B manuscript): about 1,250 years (*over 12 centuries*) after Plato lived. Is Plato’s *Republic* a reliable text?
  - (c) The first manuscripts of the New Testament that we have can be dated to within 50 or so years after the events of the first century. Note also how the Dead Sea Scrolls confirm the text of the Old Testament.
- (2) Argument: Jesus is not a historical figure. Bertrand Russell, “Historically it is quite doubtful whether Christ ever existed at all, and if He did we do not know anything about Him ...”<sup>19</sup>
- (a) The Bible is historically trustworthy with regards to the history of the ancient Near East (as archaeology has demonstrated).
    - (i) There once was a time (19<sup>th</sup> century) when the Bible was ridiculed for mentioning a people called the Hittites (unknown outside of the Bible).
    - (ii) In 1871, archaeologists discovered Hittite documents and artifacts.
  - (b) Roman historian Tacitus, *Annals* 15:44-2-8, “To get rid of the report [that he had set fire to Rome], Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from who the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate ...”
  - (c) Jewish historian Josephus, *Antiquities*, Book 20, Section 9, “... James, the brother of Jesus who is called the Christ.”
4. *Unargued bias.*
- a) Examples.
    - (1) “We know that miracles are impossible.”
      - (a) “We know that axe heads do not float.”
      - (b) “We know that someone cannot rise from the dead.”
      - (c) “We know that someone cannot walk on water?”
    - (2) The unbeliever thinks the Bible is like supermarket tabloids, “Girl gives birth to her own father.”

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<sup>19</sup> Bertrand Russell, *Why I am not a Christian* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), p. 16.

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- (3) Bertrand Russell, “You know, of course, that the Catholic Church has laid it down as a dogma that the existence of God can be proved by the unaided reason.”<sup>20</sup>
  - (4) Bertrand Russell, “. . . it [Christianity] is in its major part an opponent still of progress and of improvement in all the ways that diminish suffering in the world, because it has chosen to label as morality a certain narrow set of rules of conduct which have nothing to do with human happiness; and when you say that this or that ought to be done because it would make for human happiness, they think that has nothing to do with the matter at all.”<sup>21</sup>
- b) Response.
- (1) You *know* that? Is this a mere opinion? Is this arbitrary?
  - (2) How much would you have to know about the natural world in order to dismiss miracles? *You would have to know everything.*
  - (3) Bias: Take for granted that miracles do not happen.
    - (a) Unbeliever, “All of nature operates in a predictable, law-like fashion” (called the principle of causality).
    - (b) Believer, “How do you know that all of nature does this?”
    - (c) Unbeliever, “The portion of nature that I’m familiar with does.”
    - (d) Believer, “Not all of nature is contained in your experience.”
    - (e) In logic, this is an example of hasty generalization (induction: reasoning from a small sample to a general conclusion).
  - (4) The Christian worldview defines miracles as an *extraordinary* event (or display of God’s power for a purpose).
    - (a) Believer, “Why is causal analysis valid?”
    - (b) Unbeliever, “I’ve noticed it in the past.”
    - (c) Believer, “How can you be sure that the causal analysis that applies to the past can be applied to the future? How can you reason from the past to the future?”
    - (d) Unbeliever, “Because it’s been predicable in the past.”
    - (e) Believer, “How do you know that the future will be like the past in the future?”
    - (f) The Christian worldview states that we have a sovereign God who created the universe and controls it sovereignly that “seedtime and harvest” will follow each other (Noahic covenant).
      - (i) That everything runs in a law-like fashion is the fruit of a Christian worldview.

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<sup>20</sup> Russell, p. 5.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21-22.

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- (ii) Therefore, an unbeliever must use the Christian worldview (everything runs in a law-like fashion) to argue against the Christian worldview that miracles do happen.
  - (iii) You have to believe in the Christian view of the world to argue against the Christian view of the world.
- B. *Is this argument inconsistent?* From P and  $\sim P$  (an inconsistency), I can prove *anything*.
1. Logical fallacies.
    - a) Informal.
      - (1) *ad hominem* (arguing against the man, not against what he believes).
        - (a) Christianity is not true because of the Inquisition.
        - (b) That cannot be true because that man is a Marxist.
        - (c) Bertrand Russell, in *Why I am not a Christian*, argues against a truth claim on the basis of personal dislike and applying his form of psychological analysis to those who profess this claim.
      - (2) Resting a conclusion based upon an appeal to popular sentiment.
      - (3) Resting a conclusion based upon an appeal to emotion (pity, fear, etc.).
    - b) Formal.
      - (1) Affirming the consequent ( $P \Rightarrow Q \neq Q \Rightarrow P$ ): Converse. e.g., If a Church believes in orthodox theology, then it will have many members. Church X down the street has 10,000 members. Therefore, Church X believes in orthodox theology.
      - (2) Denying the antecedent ( $P \Rightarrow Q \neq \sim P \Rightarrow \sim Q$ ): Inverse. e.g., If a Church believes in orthodox theology, then it will have many members. Church Y down the street has 70 members. Therefore, Church Y does not believe in orthodox theology.
  2. *Reductio ad absurdum* (reduce to absurdity).
    - a) Contrapositive: ( $P \Rightarrow Q = \sim Q \Rightarrow \sim P$ ). e.g., If a person is a Christian, then he will bear the fruit of Christian graces in his life. In his life, John has never borne the fruit of Christian graces. Therefore, John is not a Christian.
      - (1) Whatever implies that which is false is itself false.
      - (2) You take what a person believes and reason from these beliefs to a logical contradiction.
    - b) Example.
      - (1) If there are no universal moral principles (as a moral relativist maintains), then it is invalid for one cultured to condemn the activities of another culture ( $P \Rightarrow Q$ ).
      - (2) Believer, "It is therefore wrong to condemn Hitler's atrocities against the Jews."

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- (3) Unbeliever, “No! Hitler was wrong!”
  - (4) Believer, “If you say Hitler was wrong, then your premise is wrong. You are being inconsistent.”
3. Actions speak louder than words.
- a) It is not rational (and moral hypocrisy) to assert one thing and live contrary to what you assert.
  - b) Look at the fruits of an unbeliever’s life.
  - c) Examples.
    - (1) An unbeliever will presuppose human dignity and attend the funeral of a relative or good friend. But, isn’t man (simply advanced protoplasm), in principle, no different than a horse or a dog or a cockroach?
    - (2) Man is nothing more than biochemical reactions controlled by the laws of physics. Then, why do you kiss your wife? Love your kids?
    - (3) In sexual relations, anything goes (there are no moral absolutes – a big phrase in the 1960s). The same people who said this condemn the Vietnam War as a moral atrocity. Excuse me? Once you say “anything goes,” then *anything goes*.
4. Presuppositional tension.
- a) What are the unbeliever’s controlling assumptions about the nature of reality (one or many, material or immaterial), knowledge (reason or senses), and behavior (right and wrong)? You need to be able to characterize their thinking in order to expose the futility of unbelief.
    - (1) Bertrand Russell, “... where you get down any knowledge of what atoms actually do, you will find they are much less subject to law than people thought, and that the laws at which you arrive are statistical averages of just the sort that would emerge from chance.”<sup>22</sup>
    - (2) Bertrand Russell, “Moreover, if you accept the ordinary laws of science, you have to suppose that human life and life in general on this planet will die out in due course: it is a stage in the decay of the solar system; at a certain stage of decay you get the sort of conditions of temperature and so forth which are suitable to protoplasm, and there is life for a short time in the life of the whole solar system.”<sup>23</sup>
  - b) You will find that the unbeliever’s presuppositions do not comport with each other (they are in contradiction or in tension).
  - c) Ethics.
    - (1) Hedonism: pleasure is the leading value in life and there is no accountability for our conduct in the afterlife.
    - (2) Tension: a hedonist will express indignation over some behavior (e.g., police brutality, Osama Bin Laden, pedophiles)

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<sup>22</sup> Russell, p. 8.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* p. 10.

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– but, for some people, nightsticks, terrorist attacks, and children give me them pleasure!

- d) Knowledge.
  - (1) Christians are superstitious and gullible.
    - (a) You cannot believe anything that is not verifiable by observation.
    - (b) You Christians believe something simply on the basis of the authority of the Bible! Aghast!
  - (2) Tension.
    - (a) Believer, “Explain to me please, how do you come to know that the only thing that you can know is what you observe?”
    - (b) Unbeliever, “Well, I read a book on the subject. A professor explained that to me.”
    - (c) Believer, “Did you observe this to be true? Do you have some sense experience that all knowledge comes from observation? No one has observed a universal negative (or positive) because no one is omniscient (abstract entities? laws of logic?). You cannot observe the truth that knowledge is restricted to observation.”
- e) Reality.
  - (1) Behaviorism: every event is, in theory, predicable if you know those things that cause it (there is no free will): stimulus/response conditioning (a common parlay of University Professors of Psychology).
    - (a) Human free will is an illusion.
    - (b) Our environment and heredity conditions us to do what we do.
  - (2) Tension.
    - (a) Believer, “I’m going to cheat on Professor Bernard Havior’s exam.”
    - (b) Professor B. Havior, “You need to be punished.”
    - (c) Believer, “Why should I be punished? My environment and heredity conditioned me to cheat! Therefore, you cannot punish me for cheating.”
- f) Knowledge/Reality.
  - (1) There is no God and no spiritual reality; reality is only material (materialism).
  - (2) Christianity is not true because of its many logical contradictions (e.g., the Trinity; evil in the world governed by an all-powerful and all-good God).
  - (3) Tension exposed by believer, “You cannot appeal to Christianity as being illogical. You cannot appeal to the laws of logic while at the same time presupposing that reality is only physical in nature. Why? The laws of logic are not physical in nature. You cannot experience the laws of logic; they are abstract in nature; i.e., immaterial.”

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- C. *What are the consequences of this argument?*
1. Jesus, "You can judge a tree by its fruit."
  2. What has the unbelieving approach to the world spawned?
    - a) News media bias. e.g., David Koresh and his "Christian" fundamentalist perspectives are always highlighted.
    - b) Christians who do wrong things are especially highlighted in the press as the "fruits of absolutist religion."
    - c) "What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander."
      - (1) Play it in *both* directions (let's have *full* disclosure).
      - (2) What has unbelieving thought produced?
      - (3) When unbeliever's act in abhorrent ways, we are never told about their religious beliefs!
  3. Fruits of unbelief (in academics).
    - a) Read Paul Johnson, *The Intellectuals*.
      - (1) Exposes the hypocrisy of unbelief.
      - (2) From Rousseau to Russell (philosophers highly regarded by the academic community).
    - b) Sociology.
      - (1) Cultural and ethical relativism.
      - (2) Margaret Mead said basically, "People live different ways. Therefore, people ought to live different ways."
      - (3) Is math relative? Different answers for the same problem?
      - (4) If everything is culturally relative, then we cannot violate the norms of a culture or say any aspect of culture is wrong (Dr. Martin Luther King's thrust to stop racism is therefore wrong).
    - c) Law.
      - (1) Plato's *Republic*, "Justice is what is in the interests of the stronger" (i.e., "might makes right").
      - (2) Law is the positive declaration of the stronger in the society.
      - (3) Yet, Lawyers still appeal to "right and wrong" when they argue cases.
    - d) Political science.
      - (1) We want "free elections." Why? "Political order should not be imposed on a nation. People should get the political order they vote for." Why?
      - (2) When people say that free elections are a necessity for fairness and justice in society, they are appealing to some form of law or right that goes before and beyond power in a culture.
    - e) Psychology.
      - (1) Man does not have any spiritual dimension; he is just material tissue.
      - (2) What should we trust what you are saying? It just comes from some chemical reaction in your cranium.
      - (3) What is true? beautiful? self-consciousness? dignity?
    - f) Economics.

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- (1) Now a division of Political Science.
- (2) What is the justification for private property if you are not a Christian (Thou shalt not steal)?
- g) Physics: What is the justification for believing in the regularity of the universe?
- h) Environmental studies.
  - (1) Why is it that human beings should not abuse animals?
  - (2) Why should we be held responsible for the environment?
- i) Biology.
  - (1) What is the essence of life?
  - (2) What does man have any special dignity? You will be sent to the Psychology Professor and the Psychology Professor will send you back to the Biology Professor.
  - (3) They will be send you to the Political Science Department for a justification of man's dignity.
- j) Mathematics.
  - (1) Why are the laws of mathematics applicable to the world in which we live?
  - (2) Albert Einstein, "The eternal mystery of the world is its comprehensibility."
  - (3) What are we studying? Numbers and relationships. Are numbers physical? Are relationships physical? No. Therefore you disagree with the Psychology, Biology, and Political Science Departments.
- k) History.
  - (1) Is there meaning in history?
  - (2) If there is no meaning in history, then why study it at all?
  - (3) Upon what basis do we determine whether an event in history is relevant or not?
  - (4) What is the nature of historical causality?
- l) Literature.
  - (1) Deconstructionism: we will have no semblance of a Christian understanding of life, literature, and meaning; i.e., it is "up for grabs."
  - (2) There can be no objective meaning for any text of literature.
  - (3) If a text of literature has a coherent, set meaning, then that would run counter to what deconstructionists want us to believe about the world.
  - (4) Hence, literary criticism is destroyed; you cannot read meaning into a text.
- m) The University as a whole has no center.
  - (1) *Uni* – unity or coherence of knowledge.
    - (a) Originally, the university was founded upon God and His revelation.
    - (b) There is no unity to the modern university.
  - (2) *versity* – diversity of departments and areas of study.
    - (a) Diversity focused in God and His revelation.

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- (b) Today, modern universities teach “masses of detail without focus” – it is a multiversity.
- 4. Fruits of unbelief (in culture).
  - a) Artistic.
    - (1) Consider musical composition (classical or “rock and roll”) – defiance of order, harmony, and resolution; creates a “law unto itself” mentality (artistic elitism).
    - (2) Visual art can offend all reasonable sensibilities in the name of “art” and “personal or social liberation.”
      - (a) Crucifix submerged in a jar of urine.
      - (b) Homo-erotic art.
      - (c) Why not, then, sadomasochistic (sadism: sexual pleasure from inflicting pain; masochism: deriving sexual pleasure from being physically or emotionally abused) art in the name of liberation? Why not snuff films?
    - (3) What is the boundary between decency and indecency, beauty and ugliness, art and non-art?
    - (4) In our culture, no one can determine these boundaries anymore? Isn’t that a wonderful fruit of unbelief?
  - b) Political.
    - (1) We are inundated with self-serving politicians in our day.
      - (a) Pork-barrel legislation.
      - (b) Congress exempts itself from laws it imposes on others (e.g. social security).
    - (2) As the state controls, so grows crime.
    - (3) Wise statesmen no longer exist; what are the objective limits to the authority of the state?
    - (4) But, isn’t this what we can expect from unbelief?
  - c) Economics.
    - (1) Fiat money = manipulation of value
      - (a) Determined by political whim.
      - (b) Who gets hurt? Those most in need of economic help and stability (the aged and the poor).
    - (2) Closed shop unions and minimum wage laws.
      - (a) Excludes those who need gainful employment from entering into the work place and competing for the jobs that are available.
      - (b) For example (at the low end of the spectrum), there are people who are willing to work for a below-minimum wage (they are the most in need) but they cannot find jobs because many employers can’t employ them at the minimum wage.
    - (3) Legalized theft through taxation and inflation.
    - (4) Debt is a way of life in the personal lives of the populace (never known previously).
    - (5) Multiple scandals (e.g., Savings and Loan, Enron).

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- d) Intellectual.
    - (1) Read Paul Johnson's *The Intellectuals* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988).
    - (2) Hypocrisy rampant.
    - (3) Tampered findings in the scientific and business community in order to gain research grants, scientific prizes, or entrance into the market (e.g., the Ford Explorer).
    - (4) Poor schools, high drop out rate, illiteracy, drugs, sex, violence, rubber-stamping, and bureaucracy "gone to seed."
  - e) Family.
    - (1) Personal freedom, selfishness, and hedonism.
    - (2) More than 50% of marriages end in divorce.
    - (3) Sexual infidelity (although glamorized in movies) produces personal anguish, pain, and despair.
    - (4) Broken homes lead to instability and personal bitterness.
    - (5) Increase in child molestation, abortion, etc. (25 million since 1973 and we have the audacity to condemn Hitler and his "final solution").
    - (6) AIDS epidemic is another fruit of unbelief.
- D. *What are the preconditions of intelligibility for this argument?* What sorts of things (reality, knowledge, and ethics) would have to be true in order for what this person is saying to make sense?
- 1. Unless Christianity is true, a person would not be able to make sense out of what he is saying.
    - a) Review the section on miracles.
      - (1) The unbeliever denies miracles based upon the uniformity of nature.
      - (2) But, what are the preconditions of the intelligibility of the uniformity of nature?
    - b) In order to enter into a debate to prove whether or not God exists, you must first submit the laws of logic (or else the debate will be nonsensical).
      - (1) What is the basis of the laws of logic? What are the preconditions of the intelligibility of the laws of logic?
      - (2) Are the laws of logic material (matter or motion) or immaterial?
      - (3) The laws of logic are immaterial; therefore, a consistent materialist cannot account for the immaterial laws of logic; it cannot check the way you reason.
      - (4) The precondition of the intelligibility of a debate is that you accept the truth of the Christian worldview.
        - (a) Yet, an unbeliever comes to a debate to argue (using logic) against the Christian worldview.
        - (b) In order for the unbeliever to generate his argument, he must first be wrong about what he is trying to prove (The Christian worldview is false) to get

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anywhere in proving it (The Christian worldview is false).

2. This is a powerful argument: The proof of God's existence is that without Him you cannot prove anything.
  - a) God is the precondition of intelligibility of all lines of proof
  - b) Proof requires the existence of God to be intelligible.
  - c) You cannot even make sense of "balancing your checkbook" if you are not a Christian.
    - (1) Assumes the laws of mathematics.
      - (a) Are they arbitrary? If so, then you can overdraw your account without penalty with this substantiation to the bank, "I use different laws of mathematics."
      - (b) Balancing a checkout assumes the objective, universality, and abstract nature of the laws of mathematics.
    - (2) The unbeliever cannot account for the objective, universality, and abstract (immaterial) nature of the laws of logic and the laws of mathematics.
      - (a) Yet, the unbeliever does balance his checkbook (hopefully).
      - (b) Yes, he does balance his checkbook but he cannot make sense out of balancing his checkbook unless he submits to God and His revelation (suppresses the truth of God in creation and conscience).
    - (3) Van Til, "We are not saying the unbeliever's do not account; we are saying that the unbeliever cannot account for counting." Ditto laws of logic, moral judgments (e.g., pedophilia is wrong), etc.

II. An argument for the proof of God's existence illustrating point D above.

A. Preparatory remarks.

1. *Time* magazine, April 7, 1980, "In a quiet revolution of thought and argument that hardly anyone would have foreseen two decades ago, God is making a comeback in the crisp intellectual circles of academic philosophers."
  - a) Does this surprise you? Theism and Christianity has been, in the past, regulated to the nursery rhymes of children and the delusions of old ladies.
  - b) God is not making a compact; He has always been here and no one could have argued or, for that matter, existed without Him.
2. Sigmund Freud, "The existence of God is the greatest of all illusions."
  - a) If there is no God, then believers in God are living in an illusion.
  - b) If God does exist, then atheists are living like a child who denies his parent's existence; hence, atheism is the greatest of all illusions.
  - c) Who, therefore, is living in the world of illusion and insanity?
3. I believe in God's existence, I believe that the existence of God is objectively true and that the existence of God is objectively provable (what follows is not the only approach, but it is a very important approach).

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4. The question of the proof of God's existence has nothing to do with the character or the psychology of the one arguing for or against.
- a) The question is concerned with objective truth; is biblical Christianity true?
  - b) The question is not concerned with Christianity is not true because Joe Christian is a fraud or that atheism is not true because Frank Disbelief is a communist.
  - c) Genetic fallacy in logic: to refute something based upon its genetic origin and not upon the objective merits of the case itself.
  - d) We must eschew the *ad hominem* argument: Argument against the man rather than against what he believes.
  - e) Common charges against theism.
    - (1) A mere projection of "a father image."
    - (2) Originates in fear.
    - (3) Originates in "wishful thinking."
    - (4) Arose out of an infantile dependency.
    - (5) Distracts from living a pleasurable life.
    - (6) Look at the Crusades! The Spanish Inquisition! The witch trials in Salem! Jim Baker! Jimmy Swagger!
    - (7) A ploy of hypocritical preachers who are just out to fleece the flock.
    - (8) A tool for suppressing the manliness of men and their independence.
    - (9) Agency for suppressing the poor, the minorities, and women.
  - f) All the above charges are reversible and equally subjective; they do not deal with the objective merits of the case. Atheism is false because:
    - (1) Arises out of a fear of judgment.
    - (2) Originates in "wishful thinking" about one's personal independence.
    - (3) Arises from a Freudian rejection of your earthly father.
    - (4) It prevents living life to its fullest because its angst with regard to the lack of meaning in life.
    - (5) Spawns misery and confusion.
    - (6) Look at the brutality that atheism engenders.
    - (7) Look at the French Revolution! Cambodia! The Gulags of Communism! Marquis de Sade! Shelly, Bryan, Marx, Bertrand Russell, Ernest Hemingway, Jean Paul Satre!
    - (8) Just a tool for justifying statism.
    - (9) Tool for justifying oppression (Marx, Engels, and Lenin).
  - g) The existence of God is a very personal issue, but it does not depend upon personal feelings, taste, or subjectivism.
  - h) Proving the existence of God is not addressed to the "tender minded"; i.e., people who are persuaded by personal and subjective factors or who look at the utility that a position brings them (happiness, peace of mind, comfort, satisfaction, etc.).

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- (1) I am appealing to those who believe in God, not because such a faith comforts them, but rather because such a faith is unavoidable as a necessity for all of life.
  - (2) If God is a delusion, then it is no comfort to believe in Him.
  - (3) The existence of an all-knowing God was disgusting to Jean Paul Satre; the argument for the existence of God has no appeal to those who base God's existence on liking it or not liking it.
  - (4) My argument will not appeal to personal character, psychology, or subjectivism; my argument will appeal to the objective truth of God's existence as an unavoidable precondition for the intelligibility of us proving anything at all.
- B. Argument proper.
1. An argument need not be accepted by everyone in order for it to be conclusive.
    - a) There is a difference between proof and persuasion.
    - b) You can prove something even though you have not persuaded your opponent.
    - c) The unbeliever does not have to "cry uncle" to your arguments. Why? Believe it or not, people are not completely rational (some people just do not want to see the truth). They are spiritually blind and of hard hearts (according to Scripture).
    - d) God must change the hearts of the unbeliever (our job is to close their mouths and the Holy Spirit's job, in His Sovereign disposition, is to open their hearts).
      - (1) It is God's grace that changes hearts; it is God that gives new life.
      - (2) This is why the true biblical defender of the faith is humble in his approach (we've been in the same position of unbelief; i.e., fools, and God turned us around).
  2. The argument in essence is: in order to prove anything you must first believe in the Christian view of God.
    - a) What do we mean by proof?
      - (1) *Rationalist* approach (stop and think): something is proven when it uses clear and distinct (or self-evident) ideas in a logical fashion.
        - (a) The key: self-evident.
        - (b) From different self-evident truths (subjectively determined), you can come to radically different logical conclusions.
      - (2) *Empiricist* approach (look and see): something is proven through our senses or by observation; i.e., seeing is believing.
        - (a) Problem: in cognitive psychology.
        - (b) If all I know is my sensations, then how do I know there is an external world (independent of me)? I

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- never know the external world, only my sensations of it.
- (c) Leads to David Hume's skepticism: we cannot know anything at all.
- (3) *Pragmatist* (utilitarian) approach: the only thing that matters is adjusting to your environment and being successful at life.
- (a) Truth has nothing to do with being rational (logical) or having enough evidence; *truth is what works*.
  - (b) If it doesn't work, then it isn't true.
  - (c) What is *it* that works? What is success? What is the proper adjustment to your environment? What is the proper end in life?
  - (d) You can make arbitrary (short term) pragmatic judgments, but you cannot make pragmatic judgments without these questions being answered
    - (i) This means that you have to revert to steps 1 or 2 to answer them.
    - (ii) A utilitarian approach, of necessity, must revert to either rationalism or empiricism.
  - (e) Pragmatism is a refusal to take a tough look at the answers to these questions (intellectual adolescence).
- (4) The only way you can prove something, like the existence of God, is *transcendentally*.
- (a) A transcendental proof asks, "What are the preconditions of intelligibility?" "What are the transcendentals?"
  - (b) Transcendental proof argues from the impossibility of the contrary.
    - (i) You have an ultimate presupposition.
    - (ii) I have an ultimate presupposition.
    - (iii) The problem with yours (or the contrary of mine) is that if what you say is true, then you could not prove anything (i.e., nothing would be intelligible, nothing would make sense on your presupposition).
    - (iv) You prove your presupposition by the impossibility of the contrary.
    - (v) My presupposition provides the preconditions of intelligibility.
3. Preconditions.
- a) Laws of logic: abstract, universal, and absolute entities (non-material). NB. Numbers are also non-material.
  - b) Moral absolutes.
  - c) Dignity for man.
  - d) Freedom of the mind.
  - e) We can know nothing from our experience unless we assume the uniformity of nature; the world that we experience demonstrates

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continuity or uniformity (causal or inductive [you can induce – to lead – from particular data or experiences a generalization, or law-like expectations, about nature] principle).

- (1) Examples.
  - (a) Sun rises and sets.
  - (b) Water freezes at 32 degrees F.
  - (c) Eggs fry when the griddle is hot.
  - (d) Stub your toe and it hurts; it happened in the past and the “hurt” will occur in the future if I do it again.
- (2) *Everything you know assumes the uniformity of nature.* Bill, your name, which has indexed you in the past, still indexes you today and it will index you in the future.
  - (a) Using language assumes this uniformity (spinach retains its meaning past, present, and future).
  - (b) Laws of mathematics assume this uniformity (recipes in past will reproduce themselves, if followed, in the present and in the future).
  - (c) The intelligibility of scientific endeavor assumes this world is uniform (or else the launching of a rocket into space is a cosmic crapshoot; i.e., a risky enterprise).
- (3) What is causation?
  - (a) Causation is not mere succession of events.
  - (b) Do eggs fry because the alarm clock went off in the morning? This is a part of a *succession* of events (one precedes the other).
  - (c) Causation is a *necessary* succession of events (cracking of eggs, hot griddle, eggs fry).
  - (d) Bertrand Russell, in an essay entitled *On Induction*, “The inductive principle is incapable of being proved by an appeal to experience. Experience might conceivably confirm the inductive principle as regards to the cases that have been already examined. As regards unexamined cases, it is the inductive principle alone that can justify any inference from what has been examined to what has not been examined. Experience does not justify the inductive principle; it is the inductive principle that allows you to use experience and draw conclusions about unexamined cases. All arguments which on the basis of experience argue as to the future or the unexperienced parts of the past or present *assume* the inductive principle. Hence, we can never use experience to prove the inductive principle without begging the question [a logical fallacy]. Thus we must either accept the inductive principle on the grounds of its (1) intrinsic

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- evidence or (2) forgo all justification of our expectations about the future.”
- (e) Being an unbeliever, Russell gives only two options. He ignores a valid third option, the biblical Christian one: we know that nature is uniform because God, the personal God of Scripture, who created all things and sovereignly controls all that happens (even to the number of hairs on our head), that God makes the future like the past and amenable to our knowledge so that we can get to know it and subdue it to His glory.
    - (i) Choose option 2: arbitrary or irrational. With this option, Russell begins from an irrational starting point and states that from this point on I’m going to be strictly rational.
    - (ii) Choose option 1: intrinsic evidence means “we will accept it on its own evidence or it is self-evident.” He continues, “The general principles of science such as the belief in the reign of law and the belief that every event must have a cause are as completely dependent on the inductive principle as are the beliefs of daily life. All such general principles are believed because mankind has found innumerable instances of their truth and no instances of their falsehood. But this affords no evidence for their truth in the future unless the inductive principle is assumed.”
    - (iii) Here, the unbeliever himself gives us all the evidence we need that only the Christian view of life provides the preconditions of intelligibility for science, for reasoning, for language.
    - (iv) It is the most reasonable thing in the world to believe in God. It is entirely unreasonable not to believe in God. Why? Because God’s existence is the precondition for all reasoning.
4. Any time the unbeliever chooses to reason with you, *he has lost the argument.*
- a) What the unbeliever assumes when he talks to you.
    - (1) Laws of logic are valid.
    - (2) Inductive principle is valid.
    - (3) Moral absolutes are valid.
    - (4) Dignity of man is valid.
    - (5) Freedom of the mind is valid.
  - b) What we are not claiming: that a profession of God’s existence is necessary to engage in reasoning.

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- c) We are rather claiming: an unbelieving worldview cannot provide a cogent reason for what we necessarily assume in all reasoning.
    - (1) Unbelieving thinking cannot make sense of reasoning.
    - (2) Thus, any system of unbelief (e.g., atheism, materialism) must be dismissed as another version of intellectual arbitrariness.
    - (3) It is the unbeliever who lives by a blind faith in the rationality of the universe.
- III. The argument against the existence of Christian theism based upon “evil in the world.”
- A. The argument presented, “The suffering and evil that we see all about is evidence of the fact that a good and all-powerful God (as Christian theism purports) cannot exist.”
  - B. The Answer of the Christian apologist.
    - 1. Affirm that evil does exist in the world.
      - a) As Christians we are realists and therefore we take evil seriously.
      - b) Evil is real and evil is ugly.
      - c) We must “feel” this reality.
    - 2. If your antagonist is emotionally charged (morally indignant) about this evil, then sincerely applaud his anguish and concern.
      - a) The unbeliever must play for keeps in this discussion.
      - b) Evil must be understood as *evil* ⇒ it can be defined objectively (relativism: what is evil to you is not evil to me).
      - c) If the unbeliever expresses moral indignation at evil (i.e., he is taking evil seriously), then there must be a reason why he is so angry.
    - 3. Evil as a logical problem.
      - a) What is wrong with this response?
        - (1) R. C. Sproul, “But in the final analysis, the evidence for the existence of the good (God) is not vitiated [invalidated - JN] by the anomaly [departure from normal – JN] of evil. Evil remains a perplexing mystery, but the force of the mystery is not enough to demand that we throw out the positive evidence for God, for the reality of good ... *While we cannot explain the existence of evil, that is no reason for us to disregard the positive evidence for God.*”
        - (2) This apologist is seriously underestimating the nature of the problem of evil.
          - (a) It is not this simplistic: positive evidence outweighs the negative evidence.
          - (b) We should not resolve the problem by comparing the positive evidence against the negative evidence.
      - b) The problem of evil amounts to the charge that there is a *logical incoherence* within the Christian worldview.
        - (1) If this charge be true, then the Christian faith falls; it cannot be intellectually acceptable and it is not truth (in spite of our own experience of the goodness of God).
        - (2) David Hume, “Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then He is impotent. Is He able, but not willing? Then He is

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- malevolent. Is He both able and willing? Whence then is evil?”
- (3) According to Hume, the Christian cannot logically accept these three premises.
    - (a) God is all-powerful.
    - (b) God is all-good.
    - (c) Evil exists in the world.
  - (4) Logical conundrums.
    - (a) If God is all-powerful, then He can prevent evil, if He so desires.
    - (b) If God is all-good, then He certainly desires to prevent evil.
    - (c) Yet, evil exists.
  - (5) George Smith, *Atheism: The Case Against God*, “Briefly, the problem of evil is this: ... If God knows there is evil but cannot prevent it, He is not omnipotent. If God knows there is evil and can prevent it but desires not to, He is not omnibenevolent.”
  - (6) Hence, for the Christian, God cannot be both all-powerful and all-good for these premises result in a logical contradiction.
    - (a) They do not comport with each other.
    - (b) Evil is incompatible with either God’s goodness or God’s power.
4. For whom (believer or unbeliever) is evil a logical problem?
- a) The unbeliever cannot press the “problem of evil” upon the believer unless the unbeliever can legitimately assert the existence of evil in the world.
    - (1) The two premises, (1) God is completely good and (2) God is completely powerful, do not create a contradiction.
    - (2) The problem arises when we add a third premise: (3) Evil exists or evil happens.
  - b) Hence, it is crucial that the unbeliever must be able (from his worldview perspective) to adjudicate that “this event” is an instantiation of evil.
    - (1) By what standard does the unbeliever determine what is good and what is evil?
    - (2) What are the presuppositions in terms of which the unbeliever makes any moral judgments whatsoever?
  - c) Some answers from the unbelieving camp.
    - (1) Good is defined as what evokes public approval.
      - (a) The statement, “The vast majority of the community heartily approved of and willingly joined in the evil deed” makes no sense on this basis.
      - (b) Ethics is not a matter of majority opinion.
      - (c) Goodness is something that evokes public approval; public approval does not evoke goodness.

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- (d) Even unbelievers recognize that certain acts or traits possess the property of goodness (or evil) *irrespective* of public opinion.
- (e) This answer reduces evil to mere subjectivism implying that no two individuals can make identical ethical judgments (which approval standard do you go by?).
- (2) Good is defined in a utilitarian sense.
  - (a) An action or trait is good if it achieves a certain end or goal (the greatest happiness of the greatest number; the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few, or the one).
  - (b) Problems.
    - (i) By what standard do you grade or rate happiness?
    - (ii) By what standard do you equate happiness with good?
    - (iii) Is it possible to quantify all the consequences of a given trait or act?
    - (iv) What is the *proper* end or goal of man?
- d) *The problem of evil turns out to be a real problem for the unbeliever.*
  - (1) The unbeliever must evoke a standard for understanding the existence of evil meaningfully.
    - (a) The unbelieving worldview cannot provide an objective standard.
    - (b) Moral relativism lies impotent in the face of moral atrocities like war, rape, and torture.
    - (c) There must be an *objective* standard by which to adjudicate the nature of evil (only Christian theism provides us with such a standard).
  - (2) On the unbeliever's worldview, there is no good reason for saying that anything is evil in nature, but only by personal choice or feeling.
  - (3) When an unbeliever expresses sincere indignation with some evil action, the Christian apologist must show the unbeliever that such indignation requires recourse to the nature of the God as defined by Christian theism in order to make any sense whatsoever.
  - (4) The expression of personal indignation by an unbeliever at evil is an ethical indicator (moral compass pointing true north) to their being made in the image of God.
    - (a) They know God and His standards better than they "put on" to know.
    - (b) The nature of evil is not a matter of private opinion or judgment.

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- (c) If it is, then evil is person or culture relative; i.e., those who commit evil are really not doing any evil given the values that they have chosen for themselves.
    - (5) *The unbeliever assumes that Christian theism is true in his argument from the “problem of evil” that Christian theism is false ⇒ the “problem of evil” is a logical problem for the unbeliever, not the believer.*
  - e) It is only the Christian who can justify moral outrage against evil.
    - (1) The Christian may not be able to answer, “Why is their evil in this world?”
    - (2) Moral outrage, however, is consistent within the Christian framework.
5. Resolving the alleged paradox (or incoherence in the Christian worldview).
- a) Review the conundrum.
    - (1) God is all-good.
    - (2) God is all-powerful.
    - (3) Evil exists.
  - b) The Christian can assent to all three premises in a logically coherent fashion.
    - (1) Premise 4: *God has a morally good reason for the evil that exists.*
      - (a) God’s decrees are not stymied by evil in the universe.
      - (b) God has planned evil events for reasons that are morally commendable and good (Genesis 18:25; 22; 50:20; Job 1-2; Psalm 76:10; Acts 2:22-24; 3:13-15).
      - (c) It is a result of a Christian’s walk by faith that premise 4 can be asserted.
    - (2) The Biblical God is under no obligation to reveal to us His morally good reasons (Deut. 29:29; Isa. 55:9) although we know, by faith, that He has morally good reasons.
      - (a) The Bible calls all men to trust Him and the way He runs His world.
      - (b) The unbeliever is in no position to demand from God a reason for evil that he can examine and assess on his own standards. Who is in the dock here?
        - (i) For the unbeliever, God is in the dock (adjudicated by the unbeliever).
        - (ii) For God, the unbeliever is in the dock (adjudicated by Him).
      - (c) The “problem of evil” exposes the key issue: the nature of ultimate authority (God or man: Genesis 3).
      - (d) When the unbeliever embraces self-autonomy, then he does not resolve the “problem of evil,” he becomes part of the “problem of evil.”
      - (e) The unbeliever who refuses to submit to premise 4 is left *unable to give an account of any moral judgment whatsoever*. This is a high price to pay for rebellion.

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## Examples of Defending the Faith

- I. How *not* to defend the Faith.
  - A. The role of human reason: “Is Christianity rational?”
    1. Two extremes.
      - a) Anti-intellectual: Christianity is at least nonrational if not irrational (blind leap of faith).
      - b) Exclusively rational: There is no more to Christian conversion but mental assent to certain religious notions.
    2. A third point of view.
      - a) There is the rational element in conversion that consists of the “comprehension of a rational body of truth.”
      - b) Additional element in the conversion process: There is a moral choice for which one must depend on the Holy Spirit.
      - c) Man’s problem in conversion **does not lie in his rational abilities**; his problem is choosing for Christianity, “They don’t want to believe it.... It is primarily a matter of will.”
      - d) Consequently, “Faith in Christianity is based on evidence. It is a reasonable faith. Faith in the Christian sense goes beyond reason not against it.”
    3. Major difficulties in above view.
      - a) Human reason is not seen as **entirely** dependent on God.
        - (1) Christianity is presented as a view to be examined and judged by independent human reason.
        - (2) In other words, faith is not to rest on God’s self-testimony, but on evidence perceived by independent reason.
      - b) Reason is not seen as affected by the fall of man into sin.
        - (1) Man’s problem lies in his unwillingness to choose the truth.
        - (2) Ramifications.
          - (a) Rational evidences and arguments are neutral tools by which the unbeliever may be convinced of the credibility of Christianity.
          - (b) We are to clear up the unbeliever’s independent thinking so that he will be convinced of the truth of Christianity.
      - c) This view of human reason is contrary to Scripture.
        - (1) Man’s fall into sin is total.
        - (2) No “neutral” areas.
        - (3) What is the judge of truth? Reason or God?
        - (4) Augustine, “Believe in order to understand.”
        - (5) Rationalism, “Understand in order to believe.”
  - B. The manner of defense.
    1. Existence of God.
      - a) Evidences for the existence of God.
        - (1) The vast majority of humanity, at all times in all places, has believed in some kind of god or gods.

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- (2) Law of cause and effect (principle of causality) points to a first cause or “uncaused cause.”
- (3) The design seen in the world points to a divine designer.
- (4) All these evidences are “indications of God’s existence.”
- b) Problems.
  - (1) No account for the dependence of man’s reason on God.
    - (a) Can man judge the question of God’s existence independently?
    - (b) The unbeliever just needs to “clear up his thinking” in this area.
  - (2) No recognition is given to the effects of sin on the reasoning process of the unbeliever.
    - (a) Arguments for the existence of God will not bring the unbeliever to the truth; he must be converted.
    - (b) Unbelieving philosophers have discredited these arguments; none of these evidences are convincing.
  - (3) Can *thoughtful* unbelievers see God in creation?
    - (a) Scripture is clear: all men, even the unreflecting, know the God of Scripture through creation.
    - (b) To try to convince the unbeliever of the existence of a god of some *undefined character*, is to lead him away from what true knowledge of the God of Scripture he already has.
- 2. Deity of Christ.
  - a) Christ’s own claims to divinity. Four possible ways of reacting to Jesus’ self-testimony.
    - (1) Liar, “... those who deny his deity affirm that they think Jesus was a great moral teacher. They fail to realize those two statements are contradictions.”
    - (2) Lunatic, “... as we look at the life of Christ, we see no evidence of abnormality and unbalance we find in the deranged person.”
    - (3) Legend, “... legend theory does not hold water in the light of the early date of the Gospel manuscripts.”
    - (4) Only one alternative left: Jesus’ self-testimony is true.
  - b) Problems with the self-testimony approach.
    - (1) Unbeliever is encouraged to be “merely logical” about the claims of Christ; however, *repentance and faith are the only grounds of true knowledge of Christ.*
    - (2) Liar, lunatic, legend methodology exposed.
      - (a) Not all unbelievers believe Jesus was a great moral teacher.
      - (b) Not all would agree that the unusual life that Jesus led is different in quality from lunacy.
      - (c) Not all would accept the recent dating of the Gospel records as convincing evidence of the factual nature

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of their content, especially in supernatural and miraculous matters.

- (3) Unbelievers will certainly never be logically forced into believing Christ is truly the divine Son of God.
- c) Resurrection of Christ is proof of His divinity, “Jesus’ supreme credential to authenticate his claim to deity was his resurrection from the dead.”
  - (1) Truth: Without the resurrection, our faith is in vain.
  - (2) Deception: If Christ’s resurrection can be proved historically, then the deity of Christ is proven: “The only theory that adequately explains the empty tomb is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”
- d) Problems with this resurrection methodology.
  - (1) Various explanations of the resurrection are refuted on the basis of biblical data, the very source of information being called into question.
  - (2) Proving the historicity of the resurrection *does not* prove the deity of Christ ... The Bible and other religious traditions claim that many people have been resurrected from the dead.
  - (3) An unbeliever can attach whatever meaning he wants to an empty tomb; in fact, he will attribute any other significance to the empty tomb than the correct and biblical significance (even entering the event in Ripley’s *Believe It or Not!*).
  - (4) Apart from dependence on the revelation of God, the resurrection proves nothing.
    - (a) What did Peter do on the day of Pentecost?
      - (i) “See, the tomb is empty. Now disprove that Jesus is the Christ!”
      - (ii) He proclaimed the resurrection *in the context of Scripture* (Acts 2:34-35).
    - (b) We are to declare the resurrection in the context of biblical truth for this proclamation is the foundation of saving faith.

### 3. Authority of Scripture.

- a) Defending biblical authority, “While the statements and claims of the Scriptures are not proof of themselves, they are a significant body of data which cannot be ignored. There are, then, a number of pieces of evidence on which one can reasonably base his belief that the Bible is the Word of God.”
  - (1) Preservation and reliability of the texts of both the Old and New Testaments.
  - (2) Archeology and science (e.g., Paluxy riverbed in Texas) support biblical authority and give no evidence against it.
- b) Problems.
  - (1) “In everything we read and in everything we hear we must ask, ‘What is this person’s presuppositions?’ so that we may interpret his conclusion in this light.”

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- (2) Christian and non-Christian presuppositions about the Bible's relation to science are fundamentally different.
  - (3) Biblical authority must never depend on human verification for it is the unquestionable Word of God.
- C. Basic problem with popular tactics: *Authority*.
1. The non-Christian is in great need of forsaking his commitment to independence and turning in faith to the authority of Christ.
  2. If trust in Christ is founded on logical consistency, historical evidence, scientific arguments, etc. *then Christ is yet to be received as the ultimate authority*.
    - a) These other foundations have more authority than Christ Himself.
    - b) If belief in Christian truth comes only after the claims of Christ are run through the verification machine of independent human judgment, then human judgments is the ultimate authority.
- II. An Apologetic Parable: from Richard L. Pratt, *Every Thought Captive*.

## BACKGROUND:

There was once a man by the name of Defenseless Denny. When he heard the gospel, he turned to Christ as his Lord and Savior. Full of joy and full of zeal Denny visited his next door neighbors. Certain Cindy and David Doubter Nogod. Mr. and Mrs. Nogod were his closest friends before he became a Christian. As Denny approached the Nogod's front door he remembered the many evenings they spent together scoffing at all their Christian neighbors. Denny hoped that Cindy and David would come to know the new life in Christ which he had been given so freely. Certain Cindy and David Doubter had heard of Denny's new religion and as they welcomed him into their home they were determined to change his mind. Confrontation was inevitable; Denny tried to tell the Nogods of their need for salvation, but at every point Cindy and David would interrupt with objections.

"You don't really believe your religion is true, do you?" Cindy exclaimed. "This religious talk is ridiculous. You and I both know that Christianity is unscientific superstition. Come on now Denny! You can't expect me to believe something that isn't proven."

Denny was surprised. After all, he didn't have that much trouble when he heard the gospel. "Maybe it's just Certain Cindy's stubbornness," Denny said to himself. But David Doubter didn't react much better to the claims of Christ.

"Look Denny, I know you're sincere and mean well but I just don't think we can be sure about religion. There are thousands of religions in the world. We can't decide that one is better than another," David said. "You sure have become arrogant saying that we have to believe in Jesus to be with God. You're too narrowminded. I try to be more humble than that."

David Doubter's response started Denny thinking, "Maybe I didn't look into Christianity close enough before I committed my life to Christ. Maybe I was too naive. Maybe I am too dogmatic." Defenseless Denny left the Nogod's discouraged and confused.

On the way home, Denny met one of his new Christian friends, Freddie Factfinder. Freddie was loaded down with six books in each arm; he always carried lots of books and paper. Freddie had quite a mind but as he always said, "You never know what new facts will be discovered." When Denny told him of his encounter with Cindy and David, Freddie was sympathetic. He, too, had shared the gospel with his friends and had been discouraged at their unbelief. "The problem with you," Freddie urged, "is that you just don't have enough ammunition to support your witness. You need *facts* to convince the unbeliever." Denny and

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Freddie talked for some time about evidences for Christianity. Freddie had found facts in all the sciences that give great weight to the Christian view of things. In fact, Freddie carried an ever-increasing list of facts that support Christianity. Defenseless Denny was thrilled by the confidence that Freddie had and invited him to go along on a return visit to the Nogod home.

The Nogods were glad to see Denny again and welcomed Freddie into their home. Freddie was introduced as “a Christian who knows the facts.” This pleased both Cindy and David. Now they could better understand what Denny must be thinking.

“Denny tells me that you are not Christians,” Freddie began. “Is there any particular reason why you won’t believe in Christ? I have found plenty of facts which make Christianity reasonable.”

Certain Cindy smiled and said, “Let’s hear why you think I should believe there is a God.”

Freddie reached for his list of evidences for God’s existence and began reading them to Cindy. “1. Nearly everybody thinks there is a God of some sort. 2. The law of cause and effect shows that there must be a divine Cause for the world. 3. The order of the universe points to a God who designed it,” Freddie read with confidence.

Certain Cindy pointed to a shelf of books across the room and said, “Don’t you know that those old fashioned arguments were refuted long ago? You cannot establish God’s existence simply because lots of people believe it. People have believed lots of things in the past which were later shown to be wrong. Besides that, who’s to say the whole world had to have a divine Cause? The law of cause and effect is itself debatable and even so, logically it would point to a creaturely cause for the world, not a divine Cause. Moreover, the design of the world could have come about by chance or by the efforts of many gods, not just by your God! If you can’t do any better than that, I’m afraid your facts are not too convincing, Freddie.”

Somewhat dismayed, Freddie turned to David Doubter. “Freddie,” David said, “I’m not as certain as Cindy but I do know that your arguments are not conclusive. It’s awfully hard to know for sure whether God exists or not. I see evidence for it and against it; I think any honest person would have to remain silent on the question.” Freddie was frustrated but not defeated.

“Let’s assume, just for the sake of argument that there is a God,” Freddie suggested. Cindy and David agreed.

“I think that Jesus was God come in the flesh and that the Bible is God’s Word,” Freddie argued.

Cindy and David responded, “What sort of facts do you have to prove those claims?”

“Well,” said Freddie, “Jesus claimed to be God and He was no lunatic or liar. So, He must have been God.”

Cindy couldn’t remain silent. “Look,” urged Cindy, “I’m no lunatic and I’m not a liar but if I were convinced I were God and said so, that wouldn’t prove that I was God. Besides, well known historians debate even whether Jesus ever lived, and if he did live, whether he actually claimed to be God at all. You can’t prove that Jesus is God because He claimed to be. You’ve got to find better facts, Mr. Factfinder.”

“What about the resurrection?” exclaimed Freddie. “Surely Jesus is shown to be God by the empty tomb!”

Cindy argued, “To begin with, it would take many more facts than you’re able to produce to convince me that Jesus was resurrected. I’m certain there would be a better explanation for it than His divinity.”

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“I have to disagree with you again, Freddie,” confessed David. “The myths of religions are so many and so unbelievable, it is impossible to know which ones are true.”

Nearly desperate, Freddie demanded, “The Bible says all these things are true and I can prove that the Bible is trustworthy. There are no contradictions in the Bible. The Bible is proven true by historians and scientists. The Bible even claims to be God’s Word.”

“So what?” Cindy contended. “I think there are plenty of contradictions in the Bible. Show me the logic of saying that Jesus was a man and was God at the same time! Besides this, there are plenty of noted authorities who say there are clear differences between history, science, and the Bible.”

David Doubter concurred, “I’m sure you mean well but I’m afraid you haven’t presented a convincing argument.”

At that point Denny interrupted and said, “Why, Freddie Factfinder, you’re as defenseless as I am. I thought you had it all figured out.”

“I did too,” replied Freddie. “I guess I’ve never run into unbelievers who could think so quickly. We need to go home and find some more facts that we can use.”

“What’s the use,” Denny said. “You go and find your facts. They’ve been little help to me.”

So they both said good-bye to the Nogods and went their separate ways.

The next day Defenseless Denny ran into his Christian neighbor Benny Bible Banger. After listening to the events of the last evening, Benny said, “I could have told you that would happen! Freddie Factfinder goes about things all wrong. You can never argue unbelievers into the faith. All we can do is preach the gospel and demand that they believe.”

It was evident to Denny that Benny was at least partially right. All of Freddie’s facts couldn’t convince Cindy and David. “Maybe Benny is right. Maybe we should not try to defend the faith,” Denny thought to himself. “Let’s go visit the Nogods and see if your approach is better than Freddie’s,” Denny said. Benny agreed and the two set off for another confrontation.

“Cindy and David,” Denny said. “I would like for you to meet my friend Benny Bible Banger.”

By this time the Nogods were suspicious of Denny’s Christian friends, but they did not wish to be rude.

“Come in and have a seat,” David said reluctantly.

Benny began to share his faith in Christ with Cindy and David saying, “I want you to forget what Freddie Factfinder said to you yesterday. He was wrong for trying to prove Christianity to you with evidences. Christianity is not reasonable; it is a matter of faith.” Benny continued, “The fact is that science and reason are of the devil. To know God you have to just believe what the Bible says by faith. If we try to think through the claims of Christ we will never know the truth.”

“Why should I believe in the Bible?” Cindy asked.

“You must believe because it is wrong not to believe the Bible,” Benny replied.

“Do you mean that we have to give up thinking altogether?”

“Yes.”

“I don’t know about David, but I’m convinced that you Christians are just pulling at straws. You know as well as I that Christianity is ridiculous so you claim that thinking and reasoning about it is wrong. I will not believe in the Bible without some basis for belief,” Cindy concluded.

“I’m afraid I have to go along with Cindy,” David said. “If I can’t reason about Christianity then how can I decide if it’s right or wrong? From your perspective one religion

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could be just as true as another. I had a hard enough time with Freddie Factfinder, but I find your view impossible to accept.”

Disappointed once again, Denny took Benny by the arm and grumbled, “Come on, Benny, let’s go home!”

Later that day, Defenseless Denny saw Chris Christian. It wasn’t long before the Nogods became a topic of discussion between them as well.

“You know, Chris,” Denny confessed. “I was really disappointed to learn that the Christian faith cannot be defended.”

“Wait a minute,” Chris interrupted. “Christianity *can* be defended. It’s just that Freddie and Benny don’t know how to defend their faith. The Bible commands us to ‘make a defense to everyone who asks...’ (1 Pet. 3:15).”

“I know that I believe in Christ, but Cindy and David were able to destroy Freddie’s and Benny’s arguments,” Denny remarked.

“Yes, I know brother Freddie and brother Benny. They mean well and try hard, but they are not biblical in their approach. I’m not guaranteeing that Cindy and David will become believers, but I can promise that a biblical approach will give them plenty of reason to accept the Christian view. Moreover, it will encourage you and strengthen your faith,” she said sincerely.

“Chris, I have a hard time believing you, but I guess I can give your way a fair chance, too. What’s your approach?” Denny asked.

Chris Christian went on to explain to Denny what a biblical defense was like and how it would work out in different conversations. “The first thing you have to realize,” she told Denny, “is that both Freddie and Benny had some correct notions about defending the faith. Freddie is right when he insists that Christianity can be defended rationally. Reasoning with the unbeliever is an important part of a biblical defense. On the other hand, Benny has made an important point. He bangs the Bible because man should never act as the judge of God’s Word. Instead, he should have God’s Word proclaimed to him as an unquestionable authority.”

“But how can we fit these two ideas together?” Denny asked.

“The Bible gives us the answer! In Proverbs 26:5-6 it says, ‘Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him. Answer a fool according to his folly lest he be wise in his own eyes.’”

“I see,” shouted Denny, “on the one hand we present the truth of the Bible as unquestionable and thereby keep from becoming like the unbeliever. On the other hand, we argue and seek to convince the unbeliever on his own ground. Right?”

“Almost,” Chris replied. “We use reason and arguments in both cases but we argue by truth first and then we argue by folly. We present the biblical answer and evidence for the Christian view, and we seek to destroy the unbeliever’s self-confidence by using his own ideas against him.”

“Let’s go see Cindy and David.”

As Denny and Chris arrived at the Nogod home, Certain Cindy and David Doubter agreed that they would talk one more time with Denny’s friends.

“Denny tells me that you both have trouble believing that Christianity is true,” Chris began. “Is there some particular reason why you will not trust Christ as your Lord and Savior?”

“There sure is!” Cindy exclaimed. “I don’t even believe that God exists, much less all that stuff about Jesus and the cross. Why should I believe in God?”

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“Let me begin by telling you that my reasons for belief in God stem from my commitment to Christ. When I became a Christian I became aware of God’s existence in a way I had never been before.”

“Yes, but that doesn’t answer my question.”

“Wait a minute! Give me a chance! I believe that God exists because the Bible says so again and again. In fact, I cannot conceive of the world being as it is apart from God’s creative activity. Everywhere I look I see God’s handiwork and His power.”

“If that’s the best you can do, then you’re no better off than Benny Bible Banger. You’re asking me to believe something that is not reasonable.”

“I understand what you’re saying. But from my point of view as a Christian, believing in God is very reasonable. Still, I’m not surprised you do not believe; you have committed yourself to thinking independently.”

“I don’t understand what you mean,” Cindy objected. “I just look at the facts and tell what I see.”

“Cindy, I am committed to trusting God’s Word and depending on God for the answers to my questions, but you are committed to examining and looking at things independently of God’s Word. Why don’t you believe in God?”

“Because it is unscientific.”

“Why do you think being scientific is the way to truth?”

“It’s the only way of thinking that makes sense,” Cindy replied.

“The way that makes sense to whom?”

“To me!”

“You see, you have set yourself up as the ultimate judge of what is true and false and that’s why you will not accept the Christian view of things.”

“So what? I may have decided independently to reject Christianity, but you have done the same thing when you decided to believe it. It was your choice and your decision.”

“No, it wasn’t,” insisted Denny. “After I became a Christian I learned that God was the one who chose me first and enabled me to believe Him. I did not choose independently.”

“That’s what you say because of the Bible. It’s not really true.”

“You see, once again you object to the Christian view because you seek to reason independently. Let me ask you a question. Why do you think you are independent and able to know truth without submitting to God and the Bible?”

“Because I think all this talk about depending on God is ridiculous,” Cindy said.

“Yes, but you believe it is ridiculous because of your commitment to being independent. You arrived at that conclusion on your own.”

“So?”

“So you haven’t justified your commitment to independence. You have reasoned in a circle saying that you believe you are independent because you believe something you decided independently. No matter what you answer you cannot justify the commitment that undergirds everything you believe.”

“The same is true of you,” Cindy urged.

“No! I do not claim that I am the ultimate authority. God is the ultimate authority. God is the one who supports my life-commitment. I know that is foolish from your view, but my point is that your view is foolish and inconsistent not just to my view but to your own view as well.”

“How is that true?”

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“Your commitment to independence is groundless and yet you want to be so scientific and logical. You are unable to escape that dilemma.”

“I guess I see your point. Nevertheless, it is still true that belief in God is unscientific. There is no evidence for God.”

“Have you been everywhere in the universe at every moment and then outside the universe looking for God?”

“No.”

“Then you can’t say for sure that science is against Christianity. You cannot know all the evidence and so you can’t be sure there is no God.”

“I know that science has shown evolution to be true and God cannot exist if evolution is true.”

“Evolution is just a theory, and until scientists know all there is to know about everything, we cannot be sure they are understanding correctly what they claim to know. You can’t be certain, Cindy. In fact, since you’re limited as you are and refuse to depend on God, it is evident you can’t be sure of anything. If you want to be sure about something you have to ignore this problem and have blind faith in yourself. You will never truly arrive at certainty.”

David Doubter could not remain quiet any longer. “That’s what I’ve been trying to tell you all along, Certain Cindy,” he said. “But the thing you don’t see, Chris, is that you can’t be any more certain than Cindy. We are all unable to get enough evidence to know anything for sure, much less debatable things like God’s existence. I guess that’s why I’m an agnostic.”

“That’s not true, David. I know God exists because God has spoken in His Word. He knows everything, and if I depend on Him I can know truly without knowing everything,” Chris responded.

“Yes, but we can’t be sure that God has really revealed Himself or that He exists. We have to leave that question alone.”

“David, your problem is that you want to be a doubter and stay safe from committing yourself one way or another. Yet, you are fully convinced and sure that we must be uncertain. You are just as dogmatic as Certain Cindy.”

“I don’t see exactly what you mean.”

“You do not know enough to know for sure that we must be uncertain about everything. You can’t be sure that we cannot know God until you have searched everywhere and know that such knowledge is not possible.”

Chris continued saying, “You both are doing the same thing and making the same mistake. Cindy is sure she is right but to be sure she must not deal with the reality of her limited and uncertain knowledge. David is sure that he is right but he has no way of knowing this for sure. You both ignore the plain facts in order to hold your views.”

“But you have to admit this is the best we can do,” Cindy replied.

“No, I don’t,” Chris said. “You have the choice of ignoring the problem, going insane, committing suicide, or becoming a Christian. Christ can save you from this futility. He can give you hope and meaning in life, if you will but trust His death and resurrection as sufficient for your salvation. Commit yourself to dependence on Him.”

“You’ve defended your position well,” David admitted. “But we have no desire to become Christians.”

“Well, the gospel is offered to you. I hope that you will consider the claims of Christ seriously. In John 3:36 Jesus said, ‘He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.’”

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Chris and Denny left the Nogod's home and went to Chris' home where they prayed for the Nogods. Denny was encouraged; he was no longer defenseless. Both he and Chris gained hope that God would move in the Nogod's hearts and turn them to Christ. Until that time, however, Denny and Chris would continue faithful to their Lord and to the defense of the Christian faith.

Taken from Richard L. Pratt, Jr. *Every Thought Captive* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1979), pp. 133-142.

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## III. *Why I Believe in God*, by Cornelius Van Til (1895-1987).

1. You have noticed, haven't you, that in recent times certain scientists like Dr. James Jeans and Sir Arthur Eddington, as well as some outstanding philosophers like Dr. C.E.M. Joad, have had a good deal to say about religion and God? Scientists Jeans and Eddington are ready to admit that there may be something to the claims of men who say they have had an experience of God, while Philosopher Joad says that the "obtrusiveness [undesirably noticeable – JN] of evil" has virtually compelled him to look into the argument for God's existence afresh. Much like modernist theologian Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr who talks about original sin, Philosopher Joad speaks about evil as being ineradicable [cannot be eliminated – JN] from the human mind.
2. Then, too, you have on occasion asked yourself whether death ends all. You have recalled, perhaps, how Socrates the great Greek philosopher, struggled with that problem the day before he drank the hemlock cup. Is there anything at all, you ask yourself, to the idea of a judgement after death? Am I quite sure, you say, that there is not? How do I know that there is no God?
3. In short, as a person of intelligence, having a sense of responsibility, you have from time to time asked yourself some questions about the foundation of your thought and action. You have looked into, or at least been concerned about, what the philosophers call your *theory of reality*. So when I suggest that you spend a Sunday afternoon with me discussing my reasons for believing in God, I have the feeling that you are basically interested in what I am proposing for discussion.
4. To make our conversation more interesting, let's start by comparing notes on our past. That will fit in well with our plan, for the debate concerning heredity and environment is prominent in our day. Perhaps you think that the only real reason I have for believing in God is the fact that I was taught to do so in my early days. Of course I don't think that is really so. I don't deny that I was taught to believe in God when I was a child, but I do affirm that since I have grown up I have heard a pretty full statement of the argument against belief in God. And it is after having heard that argument that I am more than ever ready to believe in God. Now, in fact, I feel that the whole of history and civilization would be unintelligible to me if it were not for my belief in God. So true is this, that *I propose to argue* that unless God is back of everything, you cannot find meaning in anything. I cannot even argue for belief in Him, without already having taken Him for granted. And similarly I contend that you cannot argue against belief in Him unless you also first take Him for granted. Arguing about God's existence, I hold, is like arguing about air. You may affirm that air exists, and I that it does not. But as we debate the point, we are both breathing air all the time. Or to use another illustration, God is like the emplacement on which must stand the very guns that are supposed to shoot Him out of existence. However if, after hearing my story briefly, you still think it is all a matter of heredity and environment, I shall not disagree too violently. My whole point will be that there is perfect harmony between my belief as a

Van Til is securing the reader's attention in paragraphs 1-3.

The reader is introduced to the key matter of epistemology: how do I know?

I propose to argue ... thesis statement; an introduction to the transcendental method.

Gun emplacement simile: unbelievers need God and depend upon Him to get along every bit as much as Christians do. An unbeliever depends upon God even in his arguments against Him.

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child and my belief as a man, simply because God is Himself the environment by which my early life was directed and my later life made intelligible to myself.

## *The “Accident of Birth”*

5. We are frequently told that much in our life depends on “the accident of birth”. In ancient time some men were said to spring full-grown from the foreheads of the gods. That, at any rate, is not true today. Yet I understand the next best thing happened to you. You were born, I am told, in Washington, D.C., under the shadow of the White House. Well, I was born in a little thatched roof house with a cow barn attached, in Holland. You wore “silver slippers” and I wore wooden shoes.

Acknowledge that one’s background affects what one comes to believe. This anticipates the fallacious (but all too common) objection to Christianity, “You believe that because that is the only thing you were taught.” Such an *ad hominem* (appealing to the man) argument does not address the objective truth or falsehood of Christianity
6. Is this really important for our purpose? Not particularly, but it is important that neither of us was born in Guadalcanal or Timbuktu. Both of us, I mean, were born in the midst and under the influence of “Christian civilization.” We shall limit our discussion, then, to the “God of Christianity.” I believe, while you do not believe or are not sure that you do believe, in this particular kind of God. That will give point to our discussion. For surely there is no sense in talking about the existence of God, without knowing what kind of God it is who may or may not exist.

Defining terms of an argument is essential.
7. So much then we have gained. We at least know in general what sort of God we are going to make the subject for our conversation. If now we can come to a similar preliminary agreement as to the standard or test by which to prove or disprove God’s existence, we can proceed. You, of course, do not expect me to bring God into the room here so that you may see Him. If I were able to do that, He would not be the God of Christianity. All that you expect me to do is to make it reasonable for you to believe in God. And I should like to respond quickly by saying that that is just what I am trying to do. But a moment’s thought makes me hesitate. If you really do not believe in God, then you naturally do not believe that you are his creature. I, on the other hand, who do believe in God also believe, naturally, that it is reasonable for God’s creature to believe in God. So I can only undertake to show that, even if it does not appear reasonable to you, it is reasonable for you, to believe in God.

Critical question is raised, “By what standard?” One’s definition of God affects the answer to this question. The Christian God is One who cannot be put to a test. If He exists, He is the One from whom all tests derive their legitimacy. Thus, if He exists, He cannot be subjected to the scrutiny of science or logic. Whatever subject that can be analyzed by these methods is not the God of Christianity, and is thus not the subject of this essay.
8. I see you are getting excited. You feel a little like a man who is about to undergo a major operation. You realize that if you are to change your belief about God, you will also have to change your belief about yourself. And you are not quite ready for that. Well, you may leave if you desire. I certainly do not wish to be impolite. I only thought that as an intelligent

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person you would be willing to hear the “other side” of the question. And after all I am not asking you to agree with what I say. We have not really agreed on what we mean by God more than in a general and formal way. So also we need not at this point agree on the standard or test in more than a general or formal way. You might follow my argument, just for argument’s sake.

## *Childhood*

9. To go on, then, I can recall playing as a child in a sandbox built into a corner of the hay-barn. From the hay-barn I would go through the cow-barn to the house. Built into the hay-barn too, but with doors opening into the cow-barn, was a bed for the working-man. How badly I wanted permission to sleep in that bed for a night! Permission was finally given. Freud was still utterly unknown to me, but I had heard about ghosts and “forerunners of death.” That night I heard the cows jingle their chains. I knew there were cows and that they did a lot of jingling with their chains, but after a while I was not quite certain that it was only the cows that made all the noises I heard. Wasn’t there someone walking down the aisle back of the cows, and wasn’t he approaching my bed? Already I had been taught to say my evening prayers. Some of the words of that prayer were to this effect: “Lord, convert me, that I may be converted.” Unmindful of the paradox, I prayed that prayer that night as I had never prayed before.
10. I do not recall speaking either to my father or mother about my distress. They would have been unable to provide the modern remedy. *Psychology* did not come to their library table - not even *The Ladies Home Journal*! Yet I know what they would have said. Of course there were no ghosts, and certainly I should not be afraid anyway, since with body and soul I belonged to my Savior who died for me on the Cross and rose again that His people might be saved from hell and go to heaven! I should pray earnestly and often that the Holy Spirit might give me a new heart so that I might truly love God instead of sin and myself.
11. How do I know that this is the sort of thing they would have told me? Well, that was the sort of thing they spoke about from time to time. Or rather, that was the sort of thing that constituted the atmosphere of our daily life. Ours was not in any sense a pietistic family. There were not any great emotional outbursts on any occasion that I recall. There was much ado about making hay in the summer and about caring for the cows and sheep in the winter, but round about it all there was a deep conditioning atmosphere. Though there were no tropical showers of revivals, the relative humidity was always very high. At every meal the whole family was present. There was a closing as well as an opening prayer, and a chapter of the Bible was read each time. The Bible was read through from Genesis to Revelation. At breakfast or at dinner, as the case might be, we would hear of the New Testament, or of “the children of Gad after their families, of Zephon and Haggi and Shuni and Ozni, of Eri and Areli.” I do not claim that I always fully understood the meaning of it all. Yet of the total effect there can be no doubt. The Bible became for me, in all its parts, in every syllable, the very Word of God. I learned that I must believe the Scripture story, and that “faith” was a gift of God. What had happened in the past, and particularly

Two-fold purpose of personal testimony: (1) Its warmth disarms any hostility. (2) Illustrates the sweeping implications of a God-centered worldview. A proper concept of God will condition every human endeavor (see paragraph 24). Never use personal testimony as a form of proof of the objective truth of Christianity. See paragraph 45.

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what had happened in the past in Palestine, was of the greatest moment to me. In short, I was brought up in what Dr. Joad would call “topographical and temporal parochialism.” I was “conditioned” in the most thorough fashion. I could not *help believing* in God - in the God of Christianity - in the God of the whole Bible!

12. Living next to the Library of Congress, you were not so restricted. Your parents were very much enlightened in their religious views. They read to you from some *Bible of the World* instead of from the Bible of Palestine. No, indeed, you correct me, they did no such thing. They did not want to trouble you about religious matters in your early days. They sought to cultivate the “open mind” in their children.
13. Shall we say then that in my early life I was conditioned to believe in God, while you were left free to develop your own judgment as you pleased? But that will hardly do. You know as well as I that every child is conditioned by its environment. You were as thoroughly conditioned *not* to believe in God as I was to believe in God. So let us not call each other names. If you want to say that belief was poured down *my* throat, I shall retort by saying that unbelief was poured down *your* throat. That will get us set for our argument.

Paragraphs 12 and 13 relate the “religious” character of denying that the Christian God conditions everything. Both Christians and non-Christians have presuppositions about God. The contrast between two upbringings illustrates this point.

## *Early Schooling*

14. To the argument we must now shortly come. Just another word, however, about my schooling. That will bring all the factors into the picture.
15. I was not quite five when somebody - fortunately I cannot recall who - took me to school. On the first day I was vaccinated and it hurt. I can still feel it. I had already been to church. I recall that definitely because I would sometimes wear my nicely polished leather shoes. A formula was read over me at my baptism which solemnly asserted that I had been conceived and born in sin, the idea being that my parents, like all men, had inherited sin from Adam, the first man and the representative of the human race. The formula further asserted that though thus conditioned by inescapable sin I was, as a child of the Covenant, redeemed in Christ. And at the ceremony my parents solemnly promised that as soon as I should be able to understand they would instruct me in all these matters by all the means at their disposal.
16. It was in pursuance of this vow that they sent me to a Christian grade school. In it I learned that my being saved from sin and my belonging to God made a difference for all that I knew or did. I saw the power of God in nature and His providence in the course of history. That gave the proper setting for my salvation, which I had in Christ. In short, the whole wide world that gradually opened up for me through my schooling was regarded as operating in its every aspect under the direction of the all-

In paragraph 13, Van Til notes that both belief and unbelief were inescapably conditioned. Here he presents a Christian interpretation of the unbeliever’s conditioned unbelief: *it is sin*. In you are of the Baptist persuasion, do not throw out the “baby with the bath water” here because of Van Til’s Presbyterianism.

Van Til notes and relishes in the intellectual freedom that Christians enjoy in Christ. This attitude counters the common mischaracterization of Christianity as stifling and intellectually impoverished.

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powerful and all-wise God whose child I was through Christ. I was to learn to think God's thoughts after him in every field of endeavor.

17. Naturally there were fights on the "campus" of the school and I was engaged in some - though not in all - of them. Wooden shoes were wonderful weapons of war. Yet we were strictly forbidden to use them, even for defensive purposes. There were always lectures both by teachers and by parents on sin and evil in connection with our martial exploits. This was especially the case when a regiment of us went out to do battle with the pupils of the public school. The children of the public school did not like us. They had an extensive vocabulary of vituperation. Who did we think we were anyway? We were goody goodies - too good to go to the public school! "There! take that and like it!" We replied in kind. Meanwhile our sense of distinction grew by leaps and bounds. We were told in the evening that we must learn to bear with patience the ridicule of the "world." Had not the world hated the church, since Cain's time?

18. How different your early schooling was! You went to a "neutral" school. As your parents had done at home, so your teachers now did at school. They taught you to be "open-minded." God was not brought into connection with your study of nature or history. You were trained without bias all along the line.

19. Of course, you know better now. You realize that all that was purely imaginary. To be "without

This sums up the point that was introduced in paragraph 12.

bias" is only to have a particular *kind* of bias. The idea of "neutrality" is simply a colorless suit that covers a negative attitude toward God. At least it ought to be plain that he who is not *for* the God of Christianity is *against* Him. You see, the world belongs to Him, and that you are His creature, and as such are to own up to that fact by honoring Him whether you eat or drink or do anything else. God says that you live, as it were, on His estate. And His estate has large ownership signs placed everywhere, so that he who goes by even at seventy miles an hour cannot but read them.

Every fact in this world, the God of the Bible claims, has His stamp indelibly engraved upon it. How then could you be neutral with respect to such a God? Do

Again, the subject of our enquiry taints how the enquiry is approached. If we discuss the Christian God, *we are discussing the Owner of the discussion!*

you walk about leisurely on a Fourth of July in Washington wondering whether the Lincoln Memorial belongs to anyone? Do you look at "Old Glory" waving from a high flagpole and wonder whether she stands for anything? Does she require anything of you, born an American citizen as you are? You would deserve to suffer the fate of the "man without a country" if as an American you were neutral to America. Well, in a much deeper sense you deserve to live forever without God if you do not own and glorify Him as your Creator. You dare not manipulate God's world and least of all yourself as His image-bearer, for you own final purposes. When Eve became neutral as between God and the Devil, weighing the contentions of each as though they were inherently on the face of them of equal value, she was in reality already on the side of the devil!

Note: neutrality is the Devil's position.

20. There you go again getting excited once more. Sit down and calm yourself. You are open-minded and neutral are you not? And you have learned to think that any hypothesis

Note that Van Til has yet to commence with his argument. He is laboring to clarify the terms of the discussion in order that an improper method of argument will be avoided.

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has, as a theory of life, an equal right to be heard with any other, have you not? After all I am only asking you to see what is involved in the Christian conception of God. If the God of Christianity exists, the evidence for His existence is abundant and plain so that it is both unscientific and sinful not to believe in Him. When Dr. Joad, for example says: “The evidence for God is far from plain,” on the ground that if it were plain everybody would believe in Him, he is begging the question.<sup>24</sup> If the God of Christianity does exist, the evidence for Him *must* be plain. And the reason, therefore, why “everybody” does not believe in Him must be that “everybody” is blinded by sin. Everybody wears colored glasses. You have heard the story of the valley of the blind. A young man who was out hunting fell over a precipice into the valley of the blind. There was no escape. The blind men did not understand him when he spoke of seeing the sun and the colors of the rainbow, but a fine young lady did understand him when he spoke the language of love. The father of the girl would not consent to the marriage of his daughter to a lunatic who spoke so often of things that did not exist. But the great psychologists of the blind men’s university offered to cure him of his lunacy by sewing up his eyelids. Then, they assured him, he would be normal like “everybody” else. But the simple seer went on protesting that he did see the sun.

21. So, as we have our tea, I propose not only to operate on your heart so as to change your will, but also on your eyes so as to change your outlook. But wait a minute. No, I do not propose to operate at all. I myself cannot do anything of the sort. I am just mildly suggesting that you are perhaps dead, and perhaps blind, leaving you to think the matter over for yourself. If an operation is to be performed it must be performed by God Himself.

Note that Van Til seeks to remain faithful to God in his argumentation. He will not compromise that commitment in order to win a convert. To some unbelievers, a biblical argument is the message of life; to others it is a message of death (II Corinthians 2:14-17).

## *Later Schooling*

22. Meanwhile let us finish our story. At ten I came to this country and after some years decided to study for the ministry. This involved preliminary training at a Christian preparatory school and college. All my teachers were pledged to teach their subjects from the Christian point of view. Imagine teaching not only religion but algebra from the Christian point of view! But it was done. We were told that all facts in all their relations, numerical as well as others, are what they are because of God’s all comprehensive plan with respect to them. Thus the very definitions of things would not merely be incomplete but basically wrong if God were left out of the picture. Were we not informed about the views of others? Did we not hear about evolution and about Immanuel Kant, the great modern philosopher who had conclusively shown

Van Til reiterates that the God of Christianity, if He exists, conditions everything.

Van Til is clearing “debris” here; getting pesky objections out of the way. He is trying to show that Christian scholarship can honestly and credibly defend itself on its own terms against the objections that are marshaled against it, though the objectors will not agree to Christian terms.

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<sup>24</sup> Begging the question is a logical fallacy where one assumes as a premise for an argument the very conclusion one intends to prove; e.g., our team is the outstanding team in the conference because it is the outstanding team in the conference.

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that all the arguments for the existence of God were invalid? Oh, yes, we heard about all these things, but there were refutations given and these refutations seemed adequate to meet the case.

23. In the Seminaries I attended, namely Calvin, and Princeton before its reorganization along semi-modernist lines in 1929, the situation was much the same. So for instance Dr. Robert Dick Wilson used to tell us, and, as far as we could understand the languages, show us from the documents, that the “higher critics” had done nothing that should rightfully damage our child-like faith in the Old Testament as the Word of God. Similarly Dr. J. Gresham Machen and others made good their claim that New Testament Christianity is intellectually defensible and that the Bible is right in its claims. You may judge of their arguments by reading them for yourself. In short, I heard the story of historic Christianity and the doctrine of God on which it is built over and over from every angle by those who believed it and were best able to interpret its meaning.
24. The telling of this story has helped, I trust, to make the basic question simple and plain. You know pretty clearly now what sort of God it is of which I am speaking to you. If my God exists it was He who was back of my parents and teachers. It was He who conditioned all that conditioned me in my early life. But then it was He also who conditioned everything that conditioned you in your early life. God, the God of Christianity, is the *All-Conditioner!*
25. As the All-Conditioner, God is the *All-Conscious* One. A God Who is to control all things must control them “by the counsel of His will.” If He did not do this, He would himself be conditioned. So then I hold that my belief in Him and your disbelief in Him are alike meaningless except for Him.

Critical to the argument is a right understanding of the biblical God as the All-Conditioner.

A restatement of Van Til’s thesis.

## *Objections Raised*

26. By this time you are probably wondering whether I have really ever heard the objections which are raised against belief in such a God. Well, I think I have. I heard them from my teachers who sought to answer them. I also heard them from teachers who believed they could not be answered. While a student at Princeton Seminary I attended summer courses in the Chicago Divinity School. Naturally I heard the modern or liberal view of Scripture set forth fully there. And after graduation from the Seminary I spent two years at Princeton University for graduate work in philosophy. There the theories of modern philosophy were both expounded and defended by very able men. In short I was presented with as full a statement of the reasons for disbelief as I had been with the reasons for belief. I heard both sides fully from those who believed what they taught.
27. You have compelled me to say this by the look on your face. Your very gestures suggest that you cannot understand how any one acquainted with the facts and arguments presented by modern science and philosophy can believe in a God who really created the world, who really directs all things in the world by a plan to the ends He has in view for them. Well, I am only one of many who hold to the old faith in full view of what is said by modern science, modern philosophy, and modern Biblical criticism.
28. Obviously I cannot enter into a discussion of all the facts and all the reasons urged against belief in God. There are those who have made the Old

Van Til’s is using the concept of presuppositions here.

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Testament, as there are those who have made the New Testament, their life-long study. It is their works you must read for a detailed refutation of points of Biblical criticism. Others have specialized in physics and biology. To them I must refer you for a discussion of the many points connected with such matters as evolution. But there is something that underlies all these discussions. And it is with that something that I now wish to deal.

29. You may think I have exposed myself terribly. Instead of talking about God as something vague and indefinite, after the fashion of the modernist, the Barthians, and the mystic, a god so empty of content and remote from experience as to make no demands upon men, I have loaded down the idea of God with “antiquated” science and “contradictory” logic. It seems as though I have heaped insult upon injury by presenting the most objectionable sort of God I could find. It ought to be very easy for you to prick my bubble. I see you are ready to read over my head bushels of facts taken from the standard college texts on physics, biology, anthropology, and psychology, or to crush me with your sixty-ton tanks taken from Kant’s famous book, *The Critique of Pure Reason*. But I have been under these hot showers now a good many times. Before you take the trouble to open the faucet again there is a preliminary point I want to bring up. I have already referred to it when we were discussing the matter of test or standard.

Kant’s philosophy is what Van Til is trying to address and confute.

30. The point is this. Not believing in God, we have seen, you do not think yourself to be God’s creature. And not believing in God you do not think the universe has been created by God. That is to say, you think of yourself and the world as just being there. Now if you actually are God’s creature, then your present attitude is very unfair to Him. In that case it is even an insult to Him. And having insulted God, His displeasure rests upon you. God and you are not on “speaking terms.” And you have very good reasons for trying to prove that He does not exist. If He does exist, He will punish you for your disregard of Him. You are therefore wearing colored glasses. And this determines everything you say about the facts and reasons for not believing in Him. You have had your picnics and hunting parties there without asking His permission. You have taken the grapes of God’s vineyard without paying Him any rent and you have insulted His representatives who asked you for it.

Van Til is exposing the unbeliever’s predisposition to disbelieve in God and reject Him, which conditions how the unbeliever thinks about everything. The consequences of this rejection are calamitous if incorrect.

31. I must make an apology to you at this point. We who believe in God have not always made this position plain. Often enough we have talked with you about facts and sound reasons as though we agreed with you on what these really are. In our arguments for the existence of God we have frequently assumed that you and we together have an area of knowledge on which we agree. But we really do not grant that you see any fact in any dimension of life truly. We really think you have colored glasses on your nose when you talk about chickens and cows, as well as when you talk about the life hereafter. We should have told you this more plainly than we did. But we were really a little ashamed of what

This apology serves two purposes: (1) Although Christians have wrongly defended the faith (and compromised it thereby), the division between belief and unbelief is more important than divisions among Christian theologians. (2) Compromised apologetics is sin.

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would appear to you as a very odd or extreme position. We were so anxious not to offend you that we offended our own God. But we dare no longer present our God to you as smaller or less exacting than He really is. He wants to be presented as the All-Conditioner, as the emplacement on which even those who deny Him must stand.

Recall the gun emplacement simile in paragraph 4.

32. Now in presenting all your facts and reasons to me, you have assumed that such a God does not exist. You have taken for granted that you need no emplacement of any sort outside of yourself. You have assumed the autonomy of your own experience. Consequently you are unable - that is, unwilling - to accept as a fact any fact that would challenge your self-sufficiency. And you are bound to call that contradictory which does not fit into the reach of your intellectual powers. You remember what old Procrustes did. If his visitors were too long, he cut off a few slices at each end; if they were too short, he used the curtain stretcher on them. It is that sort of thing I feel that you have done with every fact of human experience. And I am asking you to be critical of this your own most basic assumption. Will you not go into the basement of your own experience to see what has been gathering there while you were busy here and there with the surface inspection of life? You may be greatly surprised at what you find there.
33. To make my meaning clearer, I shall illustrate what I have said by pointing out how modern philosophers and scientists handle the facts and doctrines of Christianity.
34. Basic to all the facts and doctrines of Christianity and therefore involved in the belief in God, is the creation doctrine. Now modern philosophers and scientists as a whole claim that to hold such a doctrine or to believe in such a fact is to deny our own experience. They mean this not merely in the sense that no one was there to see it done, but in the more basic sense that it is logically impossible. They assert that it would break the fundamental laws of logic.
35. The current argument against the creation doctrine derives from Kant. It may fitly be expressed in the words of a more recent philosopher, James Ward: "If we attempt to conceive of God apart from the world, there is nothing to lead us on to creation" (*Realm of Ends*, p. 397). That is to say, if God is to be connected to the universe at all, he must be subject to its conditions. Here is the old creation doctrine. It says that God has caused the world to come into existence. But what do we mean by the word "cause"? In our experience, it is that which is logically correlative to the word "effect". If you have an effect you must have a cause and if you have a cause you must have an effect. If God caused the world, it must therefore have been because God couldn't help producing an effect. And so the effect may really be said to be the cause of the cause. Our experience can therefore allow for no God other than one that is dependent upon the world as much as the world is dependent upon Him.
36. The God of Christianity cannot meet these requirements of the autonomous man. He claims to be all-sufficient. He claims to have

Van Til is challenging the unbeliever to "face up" to his attitude toward God.

Kant returns (see paragraph 22). According to Kant's autonomous reasoning, creation is impossible because it is outside of human experience.

Van Til anticipated this refutation in paragraph 22 where he stated the God is basic to all definition.

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created the world, not from necessity but from His free will. He claims not to have changed in Himself when He created the world. His existence must therefore be said to be impossible and the creation doctrine must be said to be an absurdity.

37. The doctrine of providence is also said to be at variance with experience. This is but natural. One who rejects creation must logically also reject providence. If all things are controlled by God's providence, we are told, there can be nothing new and history is but a puppet dance.

One's presuppositions determine how one interprets the facts of experience. Given this premise, apologetical methods that merely present facts do not meet the unbeliever at his crucial point of rebellion against God. Presuppositions, not facts, are what divide believing thought from unbelieving thought.

38. You see then that I might present to you great numbers of facts to prove the existence of God. I might say that every effect needs a cause. I might point to the wonderful structure of the eye as evidence of God's purpose in nature. I might call in the story of mankind through the past to show that it has been directed and controlled by God. All these evidences would leave you unaffected. You would simply say that however else we may explain reality, we cannot bring in God. Cause and purpose, you keep repeating, are words that we human

Bright unbelievers will be unimpressed by appeals to fulfilled prophecy.

beings use with respect to things around us because they seem to act as we ourselves act, but that is as far as we can go.

39. And when the evidence for Christianity proper is presented to you the procedure is the same. If I point

out to you that the prophecies of Scripture have been fulfilled, you will simply reply that it quite naturally appears that way to me and to others, but that in reality it is not possible for any mind to predict the future from the past. If it were, all would again be fixed and history would be without newness and freedom.

Here is the famous problem of induction that was formidably posed by David Hume and has since cast a dark shadow of doubt upon empirical science.

40. Then if I point to the many miracles, the story is once more the same. To illustrate this point I quote from the late Dr. William Adams Brown, an outstanding modernist theologian.

Bright unbelievers will also be unimpressed by appeals to miracles.

"Take any of the miracles of the past," says Brown, "The virgin birth, the raising of Lazarus, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Suppose that you can prove that these events happened just as they are claimed to have happened. What have

you accomplished? You have shown that our previous view of the limits of the possible needs to be enlarged; that our former generalizations were too narrow and need revision; that problems cluster about the origin of life and its renewal of which we had hitherto been unaware. But the one thing which you have not shown, which indeed you cannot show, is that a miracle has happened; for that is to confess that these problems are inherently insoluble, which cannot be determined until all possible tests have been made" (*God at Work*,

To summarize Brown: It is possible to prove the resurrection. If one succeeds in proving it, he shows our misunderstanding of physical possibility. He does not prove that a miracle has occurred, for miracles cannot happen.

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New York, 1933, p. 169). You see with what confidence Brown uses this weapon of logical impossibility against the idea of a miracle. Many of the older critics of Scripture challenged the evidence for miracle at this point or at that. They made as it were a slow, piece-meal land invasion of the island of Christianity. Brown, on the other hand, settles the matter at once by a host of stukas from the sky. Any pill boxes that he cannot destroy immediately, he will mop up later. He wants to get rapid control of the whole field first. And this he does by directly applying the law of non-contradiction. Only that is possible, says Brown, in effect,

Philosophers since Kant have set up man as the measure and determiner of truth.

which I can show to be logically related according to my laws of logic. So then if miracles want to have scientific standing, that is be recognized as genuine facts, they must sue

for admittance at the port of entry to the mainland of scientific endeavor. And admission will be given as soon as they submit to the little process of generalization which deprives them of their uniqueness. Miracles must take out naturalization papers if they wish to vote in the republic of science and have any influence there.

41. Take now the four points I have mentioned - creation, providence, prophecy, and miracle. Together they represent the whole of Christian theism. Together they include what is involved in the idea of God and what He has done round about and for us. Many times over and in many ways the evidence for all these has been presented. But you have an always available and effective answer at hand. It is impossible! It is impossible! You act like a postmaster who has received a great many letters addressed in foreign languages. He says he will deliver them as soon as they are addressed in the King's English by the people who sent them. Till then they must wait in the dead letter department. Basic to all the objections the average philosopher and scientist raises against the evidence for the existence of God is the assertion or the assumption that to accept such evidence would be to break the rules of logic.
42. I see you are yawning. Let us stop to eat supper now. For there is one more point in this connection that I must make. You have no doubt at some time in your life been to a dentist. A dentist drills a little deeper and then a little deeper and at last comes to the nerve of the matter.
43. Now before I drill into the nerve of the matter, I must again make apologies. The fact that so many people are placed before a full exposition of the evidence for God's existence and yet do not believe in Him has greatly discouraged us. We have therefore adopted measures of despair. Anxious to win your good will, we have again compromised our God. Noting the fact that men do not see, we have conceded that what they ought to see is hard to see. In our great concern to win men we have allowed that the evidence for God's existence is only *probably* compelling. And from that fatal confession we have gone one step further down to the point where we have admitted or virtually admitted that it is not really compelling at all. And so we fall back upon testimony instead of argument. After all, we say, God is not found at the end of an argument; He is found in our hearts. So we simply testify to men that once we were dead, and now we are alive, that once we were blind and that now we see, and give up all intellectual argument.
44. Do you suppose that our God approves of this attitude of His followers? I do not think so. The God who claims to have made all facts and to have placed His stamp upon them will

Here Van Til apologizes for Christians who fail to offer any reasoned defense of the faith (which is disobedience: cf. I Peter 3:15).

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not grant that there is really some excuse for those who refuse to see. Besides, such a procedure is self-defeating. If someone in your home town of Washington denied that there was any such thing as a United States Government would you take him some distance down the Potomac and testify to him that there is? So your experience and testimony of regeneration would be meaningless except for the objective truth of the objective facts that are presupposed by it. A testimony that is not an argument is not a testimony either, just as an argument that is not a testimony is not even an argument.

45. Waiving all this for the moment, let us see what the modern psychologist of religion, who stands on the same foundation with the philosopher, will do to our testimony. He makes a distinction between the *raw datum* and its cause, giving me the raw datum and keeping for himself the explanation of the cause. Professor James H. Leuba, a great psychologist of Bryn Mawr, has a procedure that is typical. He says, "The reality of any given datum - of an *immediate* experience in the sense in which the term is used here, may not be impugned: When I feel cold or warm, sad or gay, discouraged or confident, I *am* cold, sad, discouraged, etc., and every argument which might be advanced to prove to me that I am *not* cold is, in the nature of the case, preposterous; an immediate experience may not be controverted; it cannot be wrong." All this seems on the surface to be very encouraging. The immigrant is hopeful of a ready and speedy admittance. However, Ellis Island must still be passed. "But if the raw data of experience are not subject to criticism, the causes ascribed to them are. If I say that my feeling of cold is due to an open window, or my state of exultation to a drug, or my renewed courage to God, my affirmation goes beyond my immediate experience; I have ascribed a cause to it, and that cause may be the right or the wrong one." (*God or Man*, New York, 1933, p. 243.) And thus the immigrant must wait at Ellis Island a million years. That is to say, I as a believer in God through Christ, assert that I am born again through the Holy Spirit. The Psychologist says that is a raw datum of experience and as such incontrovertible [impossible to dispute – JN]. We do not, he says, deny it. But it means nothing to us. If you want it to mean something to us you must ascribe a cause to your experience. We shall then examine the cause. Was your experience caused by opium or God? You say by God. Well, that is impossible since as philosophers we have shown that it is logically contradictory to believe in God. You may come back at any time when you have changed your mind about the cause of your regeneration. We shall be glad to have you and welcome you as a citizen of our realm, if only you take out your naturalization papers!

Psychologists easily answer those who would argue for God's existence on the basis of subjective testimony. A psychologist (assumed to be an unbeliever) will not agree that the Christian's experience can be attributed to the Christian's God.

46. We seem now to have come to a pretty pass. We agreed at the outset to tell each other the whole truth. If I have offended you it has been because I dare not, even in the interest of winning you, offend my God. And if I have not offended you I have not spoken of my God. For what you have really done in your handling of the evidence for belief in God, is to set yourself up as God. You have made the reach of your intellect, the standard of what is possible or not possible. You have thereby virtually determined that you intend never

"By what standard?" is again reiterated as the key to the discussion. The believer and the unbeliever cannot agree on the standard. To one, God is the standard; to the other, self is the standard.

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to meet a fact that points to God. Facts, to be facts at all - facts, that is, with decent scientific and philosophic standing - must have your stamp instead of that of God upon them as their virtual creator.

47. Of course I realize full well that you do not pretend to create redwood trees and elephants. But you do virtually assert that redwood trees and elephants cannot be created by God. You have heard of the man who never wanted to see or be a purple cow. Well, you have virtually determined that you never will see or be a created fact. With Sir Arthur Eddington you say as it were, "What my net can't catch isn't fish."

Van Til's apologetic not only addresses the unbeliever as being incorrect about God, but more importantly, as being in rebellion against Him. The unbelieving rebel can do nothing about his predicament; only the God he has offended can save him. Thus the Gospel is an integral part of a biblical apologetic.

48. Nor do I pretend, of course, that once you have been brought face to face with this condition, you can change your attitude. No more than the Ethiopian can change his skin or the leopard his spots can you change your attitude. You have cemented your colored glasses to your face so firmly that you cannot even take them off when you sleep. Freud has not even had a glimpse of the sinfulness of sin as it controls the human heart. Only the great Physician through His blood atonement on the Cross and by the gift of His Spirit can take those colored glasses off and make you see facts as they are, facts as evidence, as inherently compelling evidence, for the existence of God.
49. It ought to be pretty plain now what sort of God I believe in. It is God, the All-Conditioner. It is the God who created all things, Who by His providence conditioned my youth, making me believe in Him, and who in my later life by His grace still makes me want to believe in Him. It is the God who also controlled your youth and so far has apparently not given you His grace that you might believe in Him.

50. You may reply to this: "Then what's the use of arguing and reasoning with me?" Well, there is a great deal of use in it. You see, if you are really a creature of God, you are always accessible to Him. When Lazarus was in the tomb he was still accessible to Christ who called him back to life. It is this on which true preachers depend.

It is through God's common grace that the believer can speak to an unbeliever (even though their presuppositions are at odds). All men know the biblical God (Romans 1:19, 21) although, in their rebellion, they suppress this knowledge. It is at this suppressed knowledge that the Biblical apologetic strikes root.

The prodigal [son] thought he had clean escaped from the father's influence. In reality the father controlled the "far country" to which the prodigal had gone. So it is in reasoning. True reasoning about God is such as stands upon God as upon the emplacement that alone gives meaning to any sort of human argument. And such reasoning, we have a right to expect, will be used of God to break down the one-horse chaise of human autonomy.

51. But now I see you want to go home. And I do not blame you; the last bus leaves at twelve. I should like to talk again another time. I invite you to come to dinner next Sunday. But I have pricked your bubble, so perhaps you will not come back. And yet perhaps you will. That depends upon the Father's pleasure. Deep down in your heart you know very well that what

Here is the turning point: the argument begins in earnest at this point (all efforts before this were clarifying in nature).

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I have said about you is true. You know there is no unity in your life. You want no God who by His counsel provides for the unity you need. Such a God, you say, would allow for nothing new. So you provide your own unity.

But this unity must, by your own definition, not kill that which is wholly new. Therefore it must stand over against the wholly new and never touch it at all. Thus by your logic you talk about possibles and impossibles, but all this talk is in the air. By your own standards it can never have anything to do with reality. Your logic claims to deal with eternal and changeless matters; and your facts are wholly changing things; and “never the twain shall meet.” So you have made nonsense of your own experience. With the prodigal you are at the swine-trough, but it may be that, unlike the prodigal, you will refuse to return to the father’s house.

This paragraph applies Proverbs 26:5. With the unbeliever’s presuppositions, all is nonsense and any knowledge is impossible.

52. On the other hand by my belief in God I do have unity in my experience. Not of course the sort of unity that you want. Not a unity that is the result of my own autonomous determination of what is possible. But a unity that is higher than mine and prior to mine. On the basis of God’s counsel I can look for facts and find them without destroying them in advance.

This paragraph applies Proverbs 26:4. Christian presuppositions do indeed give coherence to all human thought and experience.

On the basis of God’s counsel I can be a good physicist, a good biologist, a good psychologist, or a good philosopher. In all these fields I use my powers of logical arrangement in order to see as much order in God’s universe as it may be given a creature to see. The unities, or systems that I make are true because [they are] genuine pointers toward the basic or original unity that is found in the counsel of God.

53. Looking about me I see both order and disorder in every dimension of life. But I look at both of them in the light of the Great Orderer Who is back of them. I need not deny either of them in the interest of optimism or in the interest of pessimism. I see the strong men of biology searching diligently through hill and dale to prove that the creation doctrine is not true with respect to the human body, only to return and admit that the missing link is missing still. I see the strong men of psychology search deep and far into the sub-consciousness, child and animal consciousness, in order to prove that the creation and providence doctrines are not true with respect to the human soul, only to return and admit that the gulf between human and animal intelligence is as great as ever. I see the strong men of logic and scientific methodology search deep into the transcendental for a validity that will not be swept away by the ever-changing tide of the wholly new, only to return and say that they can find no bridge from logic to reality, or from reality to logic. And yet I find all these, though standing on their heads, reporting much that is true. I need only to turn

Here is the unavoidable contradiction in unbelieving thought. In order to save ethics, man is different from plants and animals. But, according to materialistic science, man is the same as plants and animals. Therefore, trampling a blade of grass is no different than killing a human being (since they are essentially the same). Van Til goes on to affirm that unbelieving science does make great advances, but they can only be seen as advances from the Christian point of view. Successful unbelieving scientists cannot account for their success, but Christians can.

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their reports right side up, making God instead of man the center of it all, and I have a marvelous display of the facts as God has intended me to see them.

54. And if my unity is comprehensive enough to include the efforts of those who reject it, it is large enough even to include that which those who have been set upright by regeneration cannot see. My unity is that of a child who walks with its father through the woods. The child is not afraid because its father knows it all and is capable of handling every situation. So I readily grant that there are some “difficulties” with respect to belief in God and His revelation in nature and Scripture that I cannot solve. In fact there is mystery in every relationship with respect to every fact that faces me, for the reason that all facts have their final explanation in God Whose thoughts are higher than my thoughts, and Whose ways are higher than my ways. And it is exactly that sort of God that I need. Without such a God, without the God of the Bible, the God of authority, the God who is self-contained and therefore incomprehensible to men, there would be no reason in anything. No human being can explain in the sense of seeing through all things, but only he who believes in God has the right to hold that there is an explanation at all.
55. So you see when I was young I was conditioned on every side; I could not help believing in God. Now that I am older I still cannot help believing in God. I believe in God now because unless I have Him as the All-Conditioner, life is Chaos.
56. I shall not convert you at the end of my argument. I think the argument is sound. I hold that belief in God is not merely as reasonable as other belief, or even a little or infinitely more probably true than other belief; I hold rather that unless you believe in God you can logically believe in nothing else. But since I believe in such a God, a God who has conditioned you as well as me, I know that you can to your own satisfaction, by the help of the biologists, the psychologists, the logicians, and the Bible critics reduce everything I have said this afternoon and evening to the circular meanderings of a hopeless authoritarian. Well, my meanderings have, to be sure, been circular; they have made everything turn on God. So now I shall leave you with Him, and with His mercy.

A full restatement of Van Til's thesis.

Note the powerful exhortation to the reader; he must forsake his sinful and rebellious convictions and turn to the Biblical God, the All-Conditioner in order to make sense of what he knows to be true.

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