

THE Logical Defense OF THE FAITH

CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS
IN ONE LESSON

- What is the Defense of the Faith?
- An Analysis of Belief Systems
- The Christian Worldview in Brief
- Questions: An Apologetic Method
- Some Practical Suggestions
- The Use of Evidentialism
- Thoughts on Circular Reasoning

Harvey Bluedorn

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by Harvey Bluedorn

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the common King James Version. Brackets surround all of our corrections or alternate renderings.

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"Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn." First Corinthians 9:9; First Timothy 5:18; Deuteronomy 25:4. *"The laborer is worthy of his reward."* First Timothy 5:18; Matthew 10:10; Luke 10:7; Leviticus 19:13; Deuteronomy 24:15. *"Thou shalt not steal."* Deuteronomy 5:19; Matthew 19:18; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20. *"I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that steal My words every one from his neighbor."* Jeremiah 23:30.

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Introduction

The Christian faith has been engaged in a great culture war since the first century A.D., and it continues until today. Part of our overall calling and mission as Christians is to conquer cultures for Christ. We will not win this war by adopting worldly ways or fleshly weapons.

For while we walk in the flesh, we never wage war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly. Rather, they are powerful through God for the pulling down of strong defensive barriers: for pulling down reasonings [literally: logical arguments] and every high barrier which lifts itself up against the knowledge of God; and for capturing all intellect [or, every thought] to the obedience of Christ. (Second Corinthians 10:3-5, Very Literal Translation)

Using the weapons which the Lord gives us, we can storm the city, pull down its high defensive walls of false reasonings, pull down the barriers lifted up in the mind against the knowledge of God, then overwhelm and subdue the rebel city of man's culture, taking intellectual prisoners to be slaves — willing or unwilling slaves — for Christ.

We can try to diagnose the problem, we can assign the blame, and we can ring our hands all we want about the moral and intellectual decline of American culture, but the fact remains that American Culture is in decline precisely because American Christians have been in retreat. We need to return to the battle and to engage the enemy on all fronts, and we need to raise up a generation of Christians who are prepared to storm the walls of darkness with the weapons of Christian warfare, and we need to take prisoners.

Evangelism is the proclamation of the faith. Apologetics is the defense of the faith. The two work together. They have to: They are both fighting on the same side against the same enemies.

In this booklet, I hope to give you — in one lesson — all of the basic information which you need to defend the faith. I will sketch out for you the scene of battle from a philosophical perspective, some of the strategies of war, including the enemy's battle plan with variations, and some of the weapons of Christian warfare. Our mission is to conquer the culture for Christ.

I. What is “the Defense of the Faith?”

What is meant by the expression, “the defense of the faith.” In the first chapter of Philippians (1:7,17), Paul declared that he was set for “the defense and confirmation [=establishment] of the gospel.”

The Greek word translated “defense” is *ἀπολογία* [apologia], which means “a speech in defense.” From this we derive our English word “apology” which Webster's 1828 dictionary defines as “An excuse; something said or written in defense . . . of what appears to others [to be] wrong, or unjustifiable. . .”

Somehow, in the past 170 years, the English word “apology” has taken on

an almost opposite meaning. Today, we ordinarily use the word “apology” to mean we are sorry for doing wrong, we make no excuses, and we have no defense. But Webster did not even offer this meaning back in 1828. So when someone speaks of an “apology for the Christian faith,” he does not mean he is sorry he is a Christian. He means “apology” in the older sense of the word: “a defense for the Christian Faith.” In theological jargon, we call the defense of the faith “Christian Apologetics.”

The first time we encounter this word ἀπολογία in the New Testament is in the Gospel of Luke. Twice it is found there in the verb form, ἀπολογέομαι [apologeomai] “to reply in defense.”

And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: [Literally: “do not be anxious about how or what ye should reply in defense or what ye should say:”] For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say. (Luke 12:11-12, KJV)

Compare also this passage in Luke.

But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name’s sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: [Literally: do not give painful attention to what ye should reply in defense] For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. (Luke 21:12-15, KJV)

The Apostles were here promised a special grace to respond under persecution. Jesus will give them a mouth — which is the ability to speak; and He will give them wisdom — which is something to say. Since we also are required to respond under pressure and persecution, we may understand His promise to extend to us also, though in a derived and diminutive sense.

The King James says “take ye no thought” and “not to meditate before.” This translation might suggest that they should give the matter of their defense no previous thought. But otherwise is the case. These texts say literally, “do not be anxious about” and “do not give painful attention to” your reply in defense.

What happens when we prejudge a situation and prepare only for what we only suppose is going to happen? Often, the situation ends up being different from what we supposed. So we are not properly prepared at all for the audience and the situation. So do not go in with a canned approach. That may work in some instances, though often it works in spite of, not because of, the canned approach. Instead, we should always be thoroughly prepared in the truth and full of arguments for the truth, then allow the Lord to direct us to what needs to be said in that specific situation, at that particular moment, before that select audience.

This text is not saying, “Do not study your Bible, do not search out the truth, do not think through matters. Just go in with a blank mind and expect the Lord to fill it with momentary wisdom.” Rather, this text is saying, “Always

be prepared to defend your faith so that you do not have to anxiously prepare a reply at the last moment.” We should be prepared to go in and address the situation out of the treasury of matters which we have already studied through and stored in our mind. We do not need any special preparation. We are always prepared. When the time comes, the Lord will help us with the final details of delivery. For example, three times in the book of Acts, the Apostle Paul gave his *ἀπολογία* or defense, and told the story of his conversion. But each time he told the story differently, molding his defense to fit his particular audience. No canned approach here. It is those persons who are not always in a state of readiness who then anxiously make ready at the last moment — like the parable of the foolish virgins who had no oil for their lamps.

We have this command to always be ready:

But sanctify [=set apart] the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer [ἀπολογία: defense] to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: (First Peter 3:15, KJV)

This is the central text of Scripture regarding the defense of the faith, or “Apologetics.” We should always be prepared to defend our faith against any fallacious arguments, lies, falsehoods, misrepresentations, or slanders. Always be prepared for a logical defense. Always. Here is another command.

Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be always[s] with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man. [Literally: how it is morally necessary for you to respond to each one individually.] (Colossians 4:5,6, KJV)

We are to be constantly walking in wisdom and always seasoned with grace in order that we may know how we ought to answer. We must always be prepared.

When we are personally called to give a defense of the faith, — which is also our faith — we should not be anxious about how to speak or what to say. We should always be fully prepared in the truth, so that we can give an answer without relying on some canned approach or some hastily drawn up response. We should always be prepared for a logical defense. If we do not know **what** we believe, or **why** we believe it, then **how** can we defend it? For that matter, **why should we** defend it? A faith which is not built upon solid ground cannot be solidly defended. To be properly prepared to defend the faith is really to be properly prepared to believe the faith. This is not just an appendix attached to the Christian religion. This is part of the essential Christian life. We should know — or at least be learning — how to defend our faith against all opposition, such that when we are done, our opposition has nothing to say — they are reduced to the assertions of their own imaginations. They will either admit we are speaking the truth, or they will try to shout us down and drown us out, or worse, they will try to put us away. That is the kind of faith in action which drives away the darkness and turns the world around.

II. An Analysis of Belief Systems

Here is some information which will be valuable in dealing with your own beliefs and with the beliefs of others.

Some persons are rather naive and gullible. They tend to accept most of what they hear. Some persons are skeptical. They distrust most of everything they hear. But everybody believes something. It cannot be avoided and it cannot be denied. It is an *inescapable concept*. If we do not believe that we believe anything — then *that* is what we believe. We have to use our belief in order to deny our belief, and that is what I mean by an inescapable concept. We cannot dodge it or run away from it. No matter how we try to avoid it, we run smack dab into it. Everybody believes something. [At least, that is what *I* believe.]

And beliefs have consequences. There was the man who believed he could fly, so he jumped off of the top of the Sears Tower. As he passed the window of each floor on his “flight” down, he shouted to the onlookers, “So far, so good.” He was flying along pretty well, even gaining speed. But as he approached the pavement below, he suddenly realized that he had made a big mistake. He did not *believe* he had any landing gear. We may compare our culture to this example. We go contrary to God’s law, and we keep yelling “so far so good.” Just wait until we hit the bottom! Beliefs have consequences.

Our Hierarchy of Beliefs, or Presuppositions

Our many beliefs may be arranged into different levels as to how fundamental and essential they are to our thinking.

Some beliefs are of little importance, and for us to change our belief would have little consequence for us. I believe the sun is 93 million miles from the earth. If I found out it was actually 92.9999 million miles, I would not lose any sleep over it. (Unless, of course, that number was decreasing rapidly.)

Other beliefs are basic to our life, and we would change them only for strong reasons. I believe my wife’s name is Laurie. If I found out my wife’s name was actually Hillary Rodham, it would affect me rather dramatically.

Still other beliefs are axiomatic, and to change them would mean a complete change in our life. I believe I am alive. If I found out that I was dead, then my whole behavior would change. [I would eat less, and rest more.]

Our Fundamental Beliefs

Some of our beliefs hold sway over other beliefs. If I believe I am hungry, then I believe I will find something to eat. If I believe the Bible, then I believe Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, abortion is murder, and there will be a resurrection of the just and the unjust.

But there are some beliefs which are so fundamental that they hold sway over everything else we believe. Particularly, we all have fundamental beliefs about three main things:

First, what is *true*. [Epistemology] How do we know that what we know is true, certain, and reliable?

Second, what is *real*. [Metaphysics] What do we know is really out there? Is it just the things we see, hear, smell, taste, and feel? Or are there things beyond these — spiritual things which cannot normally or easily be detected by us?

Third, what is *good*. [Ethics] What do we believe is right, and just, and good as opposed to wrong, unjust, and evil?

Our Epistemological Self-Consciousness

Now, we may not be self-consciously aware of what we believe about these three things. We may not go around deliberately thinking abstractly about what we believe is *true*, *real*, and *good*. Instead, we may have just picked up our beliefs about these things from our surrounding culture — beginning with our own family life — in just the same way which we picked up the language which we speak. As a matter of fact, faith is wound up with the language we speak. If anyone wanted to change a culture's beliefs about things, then he would also have to change that culture's language — the way it talks about things. The words “pro-choice,” “alternative life-style,” and “feminism” are oxymorons which have been insinuated into our culture in order to disintegrate our belief system, and they have been very effective.

Though many of us are less than self-conscious about what we believe, others of us are very aware of what they believe, and deliberately try to live out what they believe in a consistent way. If we are self-consciously Christians, then we try to live in a very Christian way, and we try to speak in a very Christian way. If we are self-consciously Buddhists, then they try to live in a very Buddhist way. If we are self-consciously atheists, then we try to live according to the religion of atheism.

Though a person may not be self-consciously aware of what his beliefs are and where they came from, his beliefs nevertheless determine how he looks at the world, how he interprets everything he sees, and how he responds to the world he believes is out there.

Our Ultimate Perspective = Our Worldview;

Our Focal or Reference Point = Our God

Whatever we believe in any one of these three areas [what is good, true, and real] will affect what we believe in the other two areas.

For example, if I believe *what is good* is whatever *feels good to me*, then I will most likely believe *what is true* is whatever *seems true to me*, and *what is real* is whatever *appears real to me*. I am my ultimate reference point for everything. My perspective is entirely *self-centered*.

On the other hand, if I believe *what is good* is whatever *God commands is good*, what is *true* is whatever *God says is true*, and what is *real* is whatever *God creates as real*, then God is my ultimate reference point, and my perspective is

God-centered.

If I believe whatever the socialist-state *legislates* is *good*, whatever the socialist-state *teaches* is *true*, and whatever the socialist-state *creates* is *real*, then I have adopted the philosophy that man is the measure of all things [humanism], and my perspective is *man-centered*, and I worship the incarnation of man in the state, and to criticize the head of state is, in my belief system, to blaspheme the godhead. Whatever is our ultimate reference point is ultimately our god — the one to whom we bow down and worship, that one to whom we turn in our time of need.

Our beliefs about what is *good*, *true*, and *real* is our worldview, and our worldview is determined by our ultimate reference point — our god. Whatever our god is, that is our ultimate reference point. Everything in our world appears to circle around our god.

For example, let us suppose that I believe that **matter** is all there is to *reality*, that *truth* is determined by observation of the *senses*, and that *good* is whatever I happen to *like* at any given moment. Now you challenge me. You ask me what is *real*. I tell you **matter** is all of *reality*. (That is my view of *reality*.) So you ask me to prove that **matter** is all which is *real*. I will argue that *reality* is all which I observe with my *senses*. (That is my view of *truth*.) So you ask me to prove that I can only know *truth* through my *senses*. I will argue that **truth** is whatever I happen to *like* at the moment. (That is my view of *good*.) You ask me to prove that what I *like* is *good*. I will argue that **good** is the balance of the chemical **material** in my brain at any moment. (That is my view of *reality*.)

I have argued in a full circle — from matter, to senses, to likes, then back to matter again. It is all circular reasoning. As long as I stay within the circle of my god, I will see everything from my perspective. My god determines my worldview. My worldview reflects my god. This kind of arguing will never get anyone to break out of his own circle of faith and to enter the circle of Biblical *truth*, Biblical *reality*, and Biblical *good*.

*Logic: An Inescapable Concept
Which Transcends All Systems
and Can Justify Only One System*

There is one concept which goes beyond the fundamental beliefs or axioms of anyone's belief system. This is the concept of logic. Without logic, we can have no meaning, we can have no language, we can have no communication, we can have no thought, we can have nothing. Like faith, logic is a concept which is basic and inescapable. Both faith and logic are fundamentally necessary to thinking.

Granted, there are some people who seem to think without using any logic. But as a matter of fact, they are using logic. They just have a different system of beliefs than we do, so that it only appears to us that they are not using logic.

Nevertheless, they are always using logic. Even when a contradiction confronts their belief system, they use logic to somehow adjust their beliefs into harmony and non-contradiction.

Perhaps you have heard of the man who thought he was dead. So they showed him medical textbooks and convinced him that dead men cannot bleed. Then they pricked him with a pin and said, “Look, see, you are bleeding.” He said, “What do you know, dead men do bleed!” By altering his view of dead men bleeding, this man logically resolved the contradiction within his belief system between his belief that he was dead, and his belief that dead men cannot bleed.

Without logic, we cannot evaluate anything, including any belief system. By definition, to evaluate is to determine a value, and logic is the means of determining that value. One attempt to avoid logic is through what is called “values clarification.” This is not clarifying values according to an objective or absolute standard. [The only absolute standard is Scripture.] Rather, this is clarifying values according to the subjective standard of one’s own inward feelings. One becomes the measure of all things relative to himself. This is personal humanism. But even this process cannot avoid using some portion of logic and evaluation, or else the process would not be able to mask over the absurd nonsense which personal humanism, in reality, is.

All worldviews or belief systems must use logic — even if they deny logic, which some of them do. Some worldviews openly and overtly deny logic, but all false worldviews can be reduced to a denial of logic for one simple reason: because they inherently contradict themselves somewhere.

We cannot prove logical laws without presupposing the logic to prove them. But we cannot deny logical laws without presupposing the logic to deny them. Either way, we have to presuppose logic. Logic is an inescapable concept. The Hindu, for example, denies the laws of logic, then borrows those laws to prove his denial. In doing so he fundamentally contradicts himself and he entangles himself in a web of distorted logic and denial which reduces to nonsense.

Only one system of belief, or worldview, can be consistent with reality. Multiple truth values for multiple cultures — they call this multi-culturalism — is a contradiction in terms. It is nonsense.

We can buy a **light** bulb which shines and removes the darkness, but we cannot buy a **darkness** bulb which removes the light. Shades of darkness are only degrees of the **absence** of light. Shades of false worldviews are only degrees of the **absence** of the true Biblical worldview. All false worldviews borrow parts from reality in order to attack and deny reality as a whole. Our job is to shine the light of reality — the Biblical worldview — on the darkness of false worldviews in order to expose their internal contradictions — where their system conflicts with the reality which they borrowed from us.

False Reasoning is Self-Defeating; Our Job is Simply to Expose It

A relativist is one who believes there are no absolutes. The relativist reasons this way:

Absolutes and Universal laws do not exist.

Laws of Logic are absolutes and universal laws.

Therefore, Laws of Logic do not exist.

Does anyone detect a problem with this kind of reasoning? It requires that we presuppose the laws of logic in order to disprove the existence of those very laws. The unbeliever always borrows from the truth in order to build his system. It is like the man who denied the existence of air — all the way up to his last dying breath! Sometimes a simple question can expose the inherent contradiction within belief statements:

Language is not meaningful. (What do you *mean* by that?)

There are no absolutes. (Are you *absolutely* sure about that?)

All Logic is false. There is no such thing as truth. (How can that be *true*?)

Skepticism as a Methodology

Logic, particularly the Law of Contradiction, is an inescapable concept. Every falsehood is built on a contradiction. Logic is the means to drive men from their refuge of contradictions into the open light of the truth. If men still prefer darkness in their world of contradiction, then we can do nothing for them.

A Christian should play the role of the skeptic toward all other worldviews. He needs to know his own worldview very well in order to be able to recognize the darkness in other worldviews — where they happen to depart from the true faith; then to expose them.

III. The Christian Worldview in Brief

I cannot spend much time on what the Christian Worldview is. This is the substance of a course in theology. There are a number of Worldview Curricula available which explore the subject in much detail. The following is only a brief statement meant to suggest the things which we need to study out.

The three main criteria of a worldview are: What is real? What is true? What is good?

1. What is real? [Metaphysics]

God is real. He is self-sufficient. He needs nothing outside of Himself. He is autonomous, self-ruling, a law to Himself. He is the ultimate reality, and all other reality is His creation. He is completely independent of all which He

creates.

God created the universe. The universe is completely dependent upon God for its creation and its continuing existence. Its order and its laws are from its Creator. Hence the Creator and the creature are sharply distinct. God is not a man. God governs the universe by His providence within creation. He sustains all things by the word of His power. He (personally) is everywhere (immanent). He is intimately acquainted with all our ways.

2. What is true? [Epistemology]

God is true. God perfectly and completely knows Himself personally. God perfectly and completely knows everything within His creation. He does not sit outside and observe it. He created its every part, and He governs its every part, and thereby He knows its every part. Nothing surprises God.

God is infinite. Man is finite. God knows everything. Man cannot know everything. In order to know anything truly, one must truly know everything. But man does not need to know everything. He only needs to know the One Who does truly know everything. Man truly knows nothing apart from God. All true knowledge is knowledge with reference to God. Man is completely dependent upon God for everything, including knowledge. Man knows nothing unless God reveals it to him. All revelation is through Christ. This includes special revelation, such as Scripture, and general revelation, such as the work of the law written on the conscience. Unbelievers depend upon God for all of their knowledge, but their knowledge is actually turned into ignorance because it is not known with reference to God. They borrow the laws of logic in order to twist information apart from reference to God in order to argue against God and to suppress the knowledge of God.

3. What is good? [Ethics]

God is good. Jesus said, “Only God is good” — meaning: we cannot define good apart from reference to God. God’s character defines good. There is no standard of right and wrong apart from reference to God.

Any notion of good apart from God is selfish, self-centered, and evil — even if it “outwardly” conforms to some objective standard of good behavior. Just walking down the street — if it is done without reference to God — is a hell-damning sin, worthy of eternal punishment. To teach for hours a day in a classroom school without any mention or reference to God is an aggravating sin which stinks in the nostrils of God. To argue that there is inherent good in nature apart from God is to surrender the argument that God alone is the only source and ultimate reference point for all good.

IV. Questions: An Apologetic Method

All defense of the faith is in opposition to some other faith. If others did not believe something else, then we would not have to defend our beliefs. We must make our opponent recognize his own belief system. We may need to help him to define his own belief system, for he may not be self-conscious of it.

Obviously, there are many ways to engage someone in a discussion of his worldview. One effective method of apologetics is to ask questions. Questions get attention. [How many of you would agree with that? See! It gets your attention every time!]

Questions usually lead to other questions as we explore the avenues of someone's belief system. The more we learn about another's worldview, the better prepared we are to find the holes in his system and to shine a little light down that hole and expose the lack of logic.

What is the Most Fundamental Question?

We will get back to the method of asking questions later, but first we want to explore what the most fundamental question is. What is the most basic question anyone could ask?

How about those three worldview questions: "What do you believe about what is true, what is real, and what is good?" These are good questions for finding out what someone's worldview is, but, as we have before shown, we may get on a merry-go-round and go spinning round and round with those questions in a circular argument of unbelief. What we want is a question which will act like a stick poked in the spokes of a spinning bicycle wheel — it stops the spinning right there, and maybe breaks a few spokes in the process.

How about this question, "Is there a God?" Is this the most fundamental question? I do not think so. First of all, everybody knows there is a god — especially the atheists. There used to be men who tried to prove Hitler was still alive. Now there are men who try to prove Elvis is still alive. Why? Because they are worried about it. For some reason, they feel more comfortable in their worldview if he is not dead. I do not spend my time proving there is no tooth fairy. I am not worried about it. It is outside of my belief system. So why do atheists try to prove there is no God? Because the question of God's existence is fundamental to the belief system which they are building. [Actually, I think it is because they are worried that He's listening, so they want to develop a logical excuse for ignoring Him.]

Converted atheists admit that they always knew there was a God, but in their foolishness they wanted to deny it. Romans 1:19-22 declares that though God's eternal power and godhead are invisible, they are nevertheless clearly seen from the creation of the world. The self-evident fact of creation declares that there is a Creator more powerful in every way than all of creation — in other words, creation declares God's eternal power. The self-evident fact of creation also declares that the creature is in every way responsible and accountable

to its Creator — in other words, creation declares God’s godhead. This leaves everybody — but especially scientists who study God’s creation — without any excuse.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold [=suppress] the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: (Romans 1:18-20, KJV)

Men simply become fools trying to deny their Creator. Consider the Big Bang theory for a moment. There is no Creator, so the universe created itself. First there was nothing, then it exploded, and all of the complex and intricate order — from the atom to the DNA molecule, from planets to galaxies, from genes to life, from viruses to man — it all came from that chaotic explosion breaking down for billions of years. We have to be very desperate and go to college for a very long time in order to become fanciful enough to dream up a theory like this, or stupid enough to believe it. I know. I used to believe it.

Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, (Romans 1:22, KJV)

They are educated beyond their intelligence.

Do not waste a lot of time on the question, “Is there a God?” Those who deny God’s existence are only fooling themselves.

If we all know there is a God, then we can also answer these questions:

Who is God? He is my Creator.

Who am I? I am God’s creature.

Where did I come from? God created me.

Why am I here? To do whatever God wants me to do.

Where am I going? Wherever God chooses to send me.

A lot does ride on the question, “Does God exist?” It is a very important question. But this is actually a form of the question, “What is real,” and we will just take a spin on the fool’s merry-go-round if that is the only question we pursue.

How Do You Know?

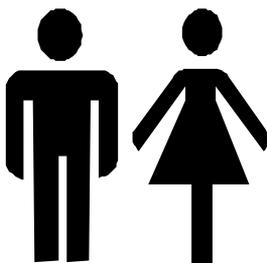
So, what is the most fundamental question? I think the most fundamental of all questions is “What do you really know, and how do you really know it?” Or, we could say it this way, “How do you know anything for certain?” This question reaches behind the worldview questions: “What is true?” “What is real?” “What is good.” It drops down to the bottom line of the source of all knowledge. It is the question of authority for our whole worldview — our system of beliefs. How do we know what we believe? By what standard do we measure our belief system, which consists of: 1) our ultimate perspective — our worldview, and 2) our ultimate reference point — our god? This question

challenges whatever authorities a person uses. Rightly understood, every worldview falls before this question — every worldview, except one.

What Evidence Would You Accept?

What evidence would we accept as absolute, final, conclusive proof for our belief system? Let us consider a few possible sources of authority, for our belief system — our worldview and our god.

1. **Some people rely on natural sensory experiences.** Can we trust our senses? Of course we cannot. We are fooled every day and we love to have it so. Artificial flavors, artificial fabrics, artificial scents, stereo amplifiers and special video effects fool our five senses all of the time, to our delight. In fact, we love being fooled, and many people make a living fooling us. Magicians make a living from optical illusions. Politicians make a living from election-time illusions.

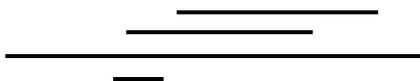


Mr. & Mrs. Flat

Here we have Mr. and Mrs. Flatt. They live in a two dimensional world — they live on the plane of a piece of plain paper. They have no depth in their lives, that is, no thickness. They live a very shallow existence.

We who live in a three-dimensional world can only actually *see* two dimensions, but because we have two eyes which are set apart for stereo vision, and we can move around to see things from different angles, we can *perceive* a third dimension. We don't actually *see* depth, we only *perceive* it. We call this "*depth perception*."

Now imagine yourself in the Flatt world — the world of Mr. and Mrs. Flatt, on a sheet of flat paper. How many dimensions could you see? Only one. Everything would appear to you as lines of various lengths. When Mr. and Mrs. Flatt look at each other, they can only see a line. But, by moving around and looking at each other from different angles, they can perceive two dimensions. Here is how they look to each other from different angles.



how Mr. & Mrs. Flat see each other

Now, imagine my invasion of the Flatt world with my finger. What does my finger look like to Mr. and Mrs. Flatt? It appears as a line in the Flatt world, but, by moving around, the Flatts can perceive that I am a circle. Yet they really do not get the full picture of me.

Now step up into our three dimensional world. We can see only two dimensions, but we can perceive a third dimension: depth perception; and because we move forward through time (nobody's figured out how to move backward or sideways yet) we can perceive a fourth dimension: time perception. Could there be dimensions beyond our experience which we have no direct way of perceiving? We have a radio which receives only AM and FM. Does that mean there are no radio bands beyond these?

To trust only what we obviously perceive with our five senses is to leap into the dark. Our own senses tell us that our senses are often easily deceived and cannot be trusted.

2. *Modern Science*. But surely we can trust science as absolute, final, and conclusive proof for our belief system. The scientific method is the way to find all truth, right? Well, the first question is, which scientific truth should we believe? Last millennium's? Last century's? Last decade's? Last year's? Last month's? Last week's? Yesterday's? Today's? Tomorrow's? If there is one thing which never changes about scientific truth, it is that scientific "truth" always changes.

The inductive scientific method can never arrive at truth. The inductive method, unless it is pursued universally and exhaustively (like God), can never arrive at absolutes or universal laws. It can only approximate and speculate.

3. *Tradition (Conservatism)*. Can we rely upon tried and true tradition? Tradition slowly changes also. It is now traditional to send children to state-controlled schools. It used to be traditional to teach children at home. Since traditions conflict with one another, how do we choose which tradition we can trust?

4. *Common Sense*. Can we trust our gut judgement — our sixth sense of intuition — in all matters? In any matters? Maybe you can trust your common sense, but mine does not work very well. My wife claims hers works better than mine, but I do not think the statistics match her claims.

5. *How about dreams, visions, and unusual experiences* — can we trust them? Again, they often conflict with one another, so how do we determine which ones we can trust?

6. *Speculations*. In other words, guesses. The coin came up heads three times. I guess it will be tails the next time. The Cubs have been out of the series 54 years. I guess it will be 55 years. Not too reliable.

7. *Feelings — Emotions*. Can we find truth in feelings? Feelings change. Truth never changes, for if it did, then it would contradict itself. Then truth would not be true.

8. *Public Opinion*. If everybody *did* depend upon public opinion, then nobody *could* depend upon public opinion because then there would *be* no public opinion — everybody would still be waiting for it. If *nobody* depended

upon public opinion, then there would be no public opinion because *nobody* could depend upon it. If only *some* people depended upon public opinion, then how many person's opinions would it take to amount to *a true measure* of public opinion: a plurality? A majority? And who would measure it? And how would it be measured?

You may think this is silly, but our society is now being manipulated by the media's use of what they call "public opinion." And "public opinion" carries great weight with a majority of Americans — which, I just pointed out in the previous paragraph, is a logical contradiction! People with a socialist mindset are blind to this contradiction because they cannot recognize media manipulation when it hits them square between the eyes.

9. *Chemical balances in the brain.* The mind is nothing more than the brain — a complex chemical machine. "The brain secretes thoughts as the liver secretes bile." Whatever I happen to think at any moment is all the truth I can ever know. Biochemical stimuli determines all truth. But, then again, how can we ever know if what we believe is true to reality, or if it is merely a biochemical anomaly.

The Bible teaches that we are what we think.

For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee. (Proverbs 23:7, KJV)

But the materialist deduces:

We think what we are (materially).

We are (materially) what we eat.

Therefore, We think what we eat.

That explains those bad dreams at night after eating sauerkraut and pickle pizza — we think what we eat.

10. *Life is an illusion.* I am not really here. You are not really there. We really do not know anything because there is not anything to know. If this is true, then what am I doing arguing about it? I need to go get a life — or, wait a minute, I cannot! There is no life to get! Obviously, if we do not exist, then we are completely out of touch with all truth and authority — because there is none to be in touch with!

Solipsism is the world view which says that I alone exist. Everything else is a projection of my mind. The logician Bertrand Russell once received a letter from another logician, Mrs. Christine Ladd Franklin, declaring that she was a solipsist and she was surprised that nobody else was. Do you see a problem with this logic?

About Standards

When we measure something, do we use a rubber yardstick which we can stretch or squeeze to fit what we want? No! Only an absolute standard can render absolute truth. A relative standard can only render relative truth — which is no truth at all. Truth is not relative — it does not change. If truth

changed, it would contradict itself. Then truth would no longer be true.

How about this standard: The Word of God. This standard is in a league all by itself. There are a few contenders as to what is the Word of God — the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Islamic Koran, the Hindu Vedas —, but certainly if we have the Word of God, then we have something different from any other source of authority. God alone would be in a position to speak authoritatively about everything. Well, not exactly. Some of the gods from this list of religious writings do not quite meet the muster. But the God of the Bible is unique in that He excludes all other gods and their claims of authority. It is Him against everybody else. The God of the Bible claims to be in a position to know all things, because He created all things, and He sustains their existence at all times. This makes the Bible a unique source for all authority.

So how do we know if the Bible is indeed what it claims to be — the very Word of God to man, the authoritative source of all true knowledge? Here is the problem: There is no authority higher than God to authenticate His word. No man, nor any institution of men, nor of angels, could have the authority to authenticate God's word. To do so would be to place their authority above God's authority. They would need a higher than the highest authority to authenticate the highest authority, which would be a logical contradiction. Hence the word of the God of the Bible must be self-authenticating — which is exactly what the Bible says.

For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself; Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.

Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability [=unchangeableness] of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: (Hebrews 6:13-18, KJV)

What are the two immutable things which make it impossible for God to lie? God's counsel — He cannot change His mind. God's oath — He cannot change His word. Because God Himself cannot change, His counsel and His word cannot change. Whatever the God of the Bible testifies to is absolute truth. The Scripture itself, within Scripture, declares that it is the Word of God. We encounter such expressions as:

The scripture of truth. (Daniel 10:21)

It is written (meaning — “with all authority”).

The Scripture says (meaning — “God says”).

You have read in the Scriptures (that is, in the final authority). (Mark 12:10)

It is contained in the Scripture. (First Peter 2:6)

The Scripture must be fulfilled.

The Scripture cannot be broken. (John 10:35)

They searched the Scriptures. (Acts 17:11)

He reasoned out of the Scriptures. (Acts 17:2)

According to the Scriptures. (First Corinthians 15:3,4)

All scripture is given by inspiration of God. (Second Timothy 3:16)

No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation . . . but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. (First Peter 1:20,21)

Do you not err, because you do not know the Scriptures. (Mark 12:24)

The unlearned and unstable wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction. (Second Peter 3:16)

The Scripture everywhere teaches that the Scripture itself is the standard of all truth, the final authority.

For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ. (Second Corinthians 2:17, KJV)

But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. (Second Corinthians 4:2, KJV)

If the claim is true — if the Scriptures are self-authenticating — then the Scriptures are the very Word of God, the only source of original propositions of truth.

What is the bottom line to all of this?

Now faith is the [underlying] substance of things hoped for, the evidence [=conviction] of things not seen. . . . Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. . . . But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. (Hebrews 11:1-3,6, KJV)

The bottom line is, God only speaks to those who will listen.

The crowd back in Romans 1:20 knew God, but would not seek Him, so God made fools out of them. And God will make a fool out of us, if we do not seek Him.

So the whole matter can be reduced down to whether we believe the truth, the Word of God, or whether we believe one of the many lies which have been invented on the basis of any or all of those other authorities which we listed earlier: our senses, science, tradition, ...feelings, public opinion, etc. — all things which we simply cannot believe with any certainty. In the final analysis, “**how we know what we know**” ultimately depends upon “**what we believe.**” We will not believe the truth unless God grants us a love for the truth such that we seek the truth. If we truly seek the truth, then we will never be able to end our search until we find the Author of the truth — because God Himself is the Truth, and He rewards all those who diligently seek Him.

Those who will not believe God's Word cannot know anything for sure. Hence, as long as we know God's Word, and we argue from what we know God's Word says, then we can have complete confidence in any argument which we may have with a non-believer. We may not be able to answer one of his questions or arguments or objections — either because we do not know or understand enough, or because he is using a fallacy which we have not detected, or whatever — but we can be completely confident that *he* cannot answer it consistently from his own worldview *either*.

We cannot defend what we do not know. We can only defend the truth which we do know. We do not have to know all of the truth in order to stand on what truth we do know. We do not have to know all of the lie in order to be able to point out a lie which we see that our adversary is standing on. So just show him where we know he is standing on sand, and show him where we know we are standing on solid rock, then let the chips fall where they may. This is a confidence game. We have the confidence. He is playing a game. You can be sure that he cannot be sure.

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. (First John 5:5, KJV)

Faith is our confidence in God's truth.

So what is the ultimate question? The ultimate question is, "*How do you know?*" As long as we stand on God's absolute truth, we are standing on a rock. We must not allow ourselves to become deceived into stepping off of that rock — and if we see that we have been lured off, then we must step right back on. If we keep driving our opposition back to that question, "*How do you know?*" then we will either drive him to the truth, or we will drive him to distraction. If he turns to truly seeking the truth, then eventually God — Who is the Truth — will allow Himself to be found by him.

The truth is personal. Jesus is the **Way**, the **Truth** and the **Life**. What is *good*? What is *true*? What is *real*? He is *good*. He is *true*. He is *real*. He is the *good way*. He is the *true truth*. He is the *real life*. He is the ultimate perspective and the ultimate reference point. He is our worldview and our God. All things are of Him and through Him and to Him. . . . and no man comes to the Father but by Him. If we have seen Jesus, then we have seen the Father.

. . . he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and [must believe] that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. (Hebrews 11:6, KJV)

Without faith no man will ever begin down the road of seeking the truth. We must always be in prayer for our opponent, "God, if it please Thee, grant him the seed of faith to seek the truth." If we think arguing is going to get the job done, may God humble our proud and arrogant hearts.

V. Some Practical Suggestions

Now we need to talk a little about technique. Of course, we have to know the truth thoroughly before we can defend the truth. Know your Bible. And I do not mean simply know everything it says. I mean know everything it means, and know all of its practical applications — as much as you can. Become self-consciously aware of what you believe and deliberately try to live out what you believe in a consistent way, in every area of your life. That is really what it means to be a Christian. If you start doing this, then I guarantee ample opportunities will open up for you to defend your faith.

Remember what Peter said,

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer [=defense] to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: (First Peter 3:15, KJV)

We must sanctify or set apart the Lord God in our hearts. This does not mean we should have an *ooey gooey* feeling toward God. This means we should set apart the heart-core center of our being to God alone. Let Him be our fear, and let Him be our dread, and let Him be our ultimate reference point and let us live out our worldview around Him.

When people see that we march to the beat of a different drummer, they are either going to ask about the tune — our worldview, or they are going to challenge our drummer — our God. So we had better *be* prepared for a logical defense to everyone who asks us for a reason concerning the hope which is in us.

And it says that we should do this with meekness or gentleness and with fear. If we have a chip on our shoulder and we want to arrogantly show off our arguments, then we simply do not get it. God has so ordained that one of the main components of our argument must be *us*. Yes, God does use us in spite of ourselves, and He sometimes blesses us in our stupidity, but that is no argument for stupidity, but only for the mercy and grace and power of God. God is pleased to let His light shine through us before men that they may see our good works in meekness and fear and glorify our Father Who is in heaven.

Toolbox of Questions

When we are going to do some work, it is always a good idea to bring along our toolbox. One of the things we want in our Apologetic toolbox is a good assortment of questions. When used correctly, questions can be effective tools. The right kind of question can act as a gauge to see whether someone is in the mood to talk. A good question can act as a pry bar to open up a closed conversation. If someone happens to react negatively to our questions, then we can always stop asking questions.

A continuous barrage of direct demanding questions can be very taxing on an individual and may border on the rude. So instead of repeating a question which demands much thought and a detailed answer, we may offer a multiple

choice.

“What happens when you die?

1) Do you just cease to exist.

2) Are you reincarnated as some other living being.

3) Or do you pass on to a final judgement before your Creator.”

And do not forget to follow up with, “how do you know?” Because we are trying to open up our opponent, we need plenty of “How do you know” pry bars in our toolbox. Here are a few:

“How can you be sure that is true?”

“Have you ever wondered what would happen if you were wrong?”

“Are you sure you want to build your life around the certainty of that?”

“How would you prove that that is the case?”

“Have you ever doubted that?”

“Has anyone ever questioned you on that?”

“How did you arrive at that conclusion?”

These are a few good “How do you know” type questions for our toolbox.

When someone redirects the “how do you know” question back on us, then we need a good redirector in our toolbox, like, “What would you accept as evidence?” followed up with, “Why?” Ultimately, you want to drive them to see that everything which they believe is unreliable and self-contradictory, and that there is only one reliable and non-contradictory belief system, and that is the one revealed by God in the Bible.

If we get deep into a discussion with Mr. Interrupter or Miss Go-on-and-on-er, then we might try these lines:

“I promise not to interrupt, if you promise not to interrupt.”

“I promise to listen, if you promise to listen.”

“I promise not to go on and on without completing a thought, if you promise not to go on and on without completing a thought.”

“I will let you be the judge of whether I have made my point, if you will let me be the judge of whether you have made your point.”

You will have to develop your own toolbox of questions which fit your particular way of doing things, but this short list should get you started. After a while, your toolbox will fill up with all kinds of prying questions and satisfying replies.

Do not be afraid to ask “What do you mean?” Entire conversations turn on definitions of terms and ideas. “Would you explain what you mean by that?” Often, the person you are speaking with actually does not know what he means. You need to make sure he does know what you mean. Be sure to press the practical ramifications of his faith. “What do you see as the consequences of what you believe?” “What difference does it make?” “So what?” And here is a very good one which I mentioned earlier — but you do not want to use it too often because it can be very annoying: “Why?” This question combines logic with authority.

Think of the good challenges people have popped on you, and how would

you answer them now. Here is a common one: “Your religion is archaic and close minded and not open to change.” Here is a response: “Does truth ever change?”

VI. The Use of Evidentialism

There are lots of good resources for apologetics, if we know how to use them. Most materials are written from an *evidentialist* point of view. I believe we must first stand upon the solid ground that the Bible is the Word of God, then argue from that position. By contrast, evidentialists first fight to prove that the Bible is the Word of God. They use evidence from all of the unreliable sources of truth which I mentioned earlier — such as evidence from our senses combined with the scientific method. They argue that man, by reason, can find out God — which essentially places the authority of man’s reason above the authority of God’s word. They begin at the wrong place. They use the wrong evidence as authority. Remember, the bottom line is, “How do you know for sure?” Scripture — the Word of God — is the highest possible authority. There is no authority higher than the Word of God which can be used to authenticate the Word of God. The only authority which we can use to prove Scripture is Scripture itself. Scripture is self-authenticating. If we use any other evidence, that evidence must necessarily be lower in authority than Scripture. To use a lower authority than Scripture to authenticate Scripture is like using a tone-deaf three-year-old with a kazoo to authenticate the musical compositions of Bach — the authority of the greater is necessarily lowered by the lesser. How can we rely on a three-year-old to authenticate Bach? The weakness of evidentialism is that it surrenders the question of “how do you know?” before it even begins the argument.

That does not mean, however, that we have to throw out evidentialism. It has a legitimate use. Evidential arguments — arguments which use those less than reliable authorities — are useful, not as a true defense of the faith, but as a means of removing obstacles to faith and casting doubt on other belief systems.

For example, creationist arguments are evidential arguments. They do not prove creation. I am not going to base my faith in the Biblical flood upon the creationist theory of the water canopy over the earth. Technically speaking, that theory is not provable — at least not in this life. If some day that theory appears discredited, that will not change my faith, I will continue to believe what Scripture says.

But such evidential arguments do not have to be “provable” in order for them to cast doubt upon equally unprovable evolutionary dogma. Once we cast doubt upon evolution, we create a crisis of “how do I know anything for sure” in the mind of the evolutionist. That is our opening for the argument that, indeed, we cannot know anything for sure unless the Bible is the Word of God. The alternatives are either 1) the Bible is true, or else 2) we cannot know truth, everything is actually nonsense — absurdity. The second alternative should

ultimately drive us to set ourselves up as the only authorities — which is humanism. This raises the specter of Solipsism, which simply means that we fool ourselves into thinking that everything else is real, when in fact nothing is real. In other words, we are god, and all that we know is a lie. By contrast, the first alternative — that the Bible is true — should drive us humbly to our knees in worship of our Almighty Creator.

The bottom line is, “It is all in the Book.” We must not pretend that we do not have the Book to begin with. We must begin with the Book and end with the Book, because there is no authority for what we believe outside of the Book. Without the Book we have no faith to defend. How do we know? Because the Bible tells us so.

In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (Colossians 2:3, KJV)

VII. Thoughts On Circular Reasoning

Some people think circular reasoning (also known as begging the question or *petitio principii*) is false. Not at all. All sound, true and valid reasoning is circular. That is, the conclusion must always be found somewhere within the premises, such that if we accept the premises then we must necessarily accept the conclusion. Ordinarily the conclusion restates the premises in a new and somewhat interesting way.

Jack’s salary doubles every year.

Jack started at one dollar per year.

Therefore, in 20 years, Jack will have earned over one million dollars.

$1 + 2 + 4 + 8 + 16 + 32 + 64 + 128 + 256 + 512 + 1,024 + 2,048 + 4,096 + 8,192 + 16,384 + 32,768 + 65,536 + 131,072 + 262,144 + 524,288 = 1,048,575$

The conclusion is entirely contained within the premises. If it were not, then the conclusion would not be valid.

Now, some circular reasoning is false, not because it is circular, but because it only *appears* to be circular, while in fact it does not make a perfect circle. It is inconsistent somewhere. We call it the fallacy of “circular reasoning” because it goes round and round like the worldview merry-go-round. It tries to validate itself — which no false system can actually do. Somewhere in the system it has had to borrow from reality, and in doing so, it has created an inconsistency within itself. Then it creates what I call “artificial logic” which is a false worldview trying to be consistent with itself at the sacrifice of genuine logic. So it is actually the fallacy of “non-circular reasoning.”

For example, geologists date fossils by the rocks in which they are found. But the rocks are dated by the fossils which they contain. This is so-called “circular reasoning.” This would be okay if there were an absolute dating point which served as a reference point to support the circular reasoning. The problem is that this circular reasoning is not based upon an absolute dating point. No, this circular reasoning is used to **establish** the absolute dating point with unstated

assumptions! Hence, because of the way it is used, this circular reasoning is ultimately “non-circular reasoning” — it does not complete the circle.

The error of these “non-circular” systems of reasoning becomes apparent when they try to authenticate themselves. There is only one system which can authenticate itself, and that is the one which begins with the Word of God. This is an inescapable concept. Hence the “authorities” which “authenticate” a false system from within the system itself eventually become the “word” of that system’s “god.” Politically correct ideology is self-evident truth supposedly revealed in the very nature of things — from the viewpoint of the false worldview, that is. It does not need to be proven, indeed, it dare not be questioned. It is the word of “god.” Well, actually, it is a presupposition of a false philosophy masquerading as the word of “god.”

All true reasoning is consistent and all consistent reasoning is perfectly circular. So all false systems attempt to clothe themselves with the appearance of consistency so that they may appear to be the truth.

VIII. Some Final Thoughts

Do not forget that you are part of the argument. Others must not only see consistency in your worldview, but they must also see consistency in your life. If you do not live out your beliefs, then they are quick to see the inconsistency.

*Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:
(Second Corinthians 3:2 — KJV)*

Remember also that no one will truly enter the circle of the true Christian worldview and worship the true Christian God unless God grants him faith.

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that [faith is] not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: [That faith is] not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:8,9 — KJV)

The victory in this great culture war is ultimately the Lord’s. He alone can conquer in any ultimate sense. We must be faithful to Him, obey His orders, use the weapons He issues to us, and go forth conquering cultures for Christ.

Credits.

The idea and some of the development for the threefold division of worldviews came from Christ Schlect, *The Christian Worldview and Apologetics*, 1998, Logos School, Moscow, Idaho.

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The idea of the toolbox of questions came from Bill Jack, *Simple Tools For Brain Surgery*, video tape available from Worldview Academy, Box 5032, Bryan, Texas, 77805, <http://www.worldview.org/>

The solipsist story, and a few other miscellaneous ideas came from T.E. Grover Gunn, Apologetics Lecture at Christ Presbyterian Church, Elkton, Maryland, March, 1997.

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