

CAPTIVE TO REASON

Vincent Cheung

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Preface

This book is a collection of short articles that mainly deal with Christian philosophy and apologetics. These articles explain and apply my thinking to particular contexts and questions, and as such, they properly supplement what I have previously written.

And because this book is best used as a supplement, if it is possible or convenient, I encourage you to first read my previous writings on these subjects before reading the articles in this book. This will help you to better understand the following articles.

Although I hope that you will read all of them, it is not necessary to read these articles in the order listed; rather, feel free to go directly to the articles that interest you and read them first.

Many of these articles were written in response to written messages sent to me by readers, and I usually include an edited version of the original question to accompany each of my replies.¹ I have withheld the names of the inquirers to protect their privacy. This is not a problem since the quoted statements do not contribute to the actual substance of the articles, but they provide only the contexts for me to present my answers and explanations.

To clearly distinguish the words of the inquirers, their statements are indented and displayed using a different font. This has eliminated the need for me to always specify that a certain article was written in answer to a question, or to specify that a certain portion of text was a message from a reader, since all of this will be obvious to any reader.

Finally, I have also included two previously published articles at the end. The topics of these articles are consistent with the overall theme of the book, and therefore I consider it appropriate to put them together with the other articles in this volume.

¹ Among other modifications, for some articles I have attached numbers to the other person's statements, so that you can more easily recognize the answers that correspond to them.

1. Starting with the Answer²

In a previous message to you, I wrote, "We know that the axiom of biblical revelation is true because God revealed it, and we know that God revealed it because the same logically undeniable axiom tells us so. This is presuppositionalism."

As the Westminster Confession says, "The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, depends not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God (who is Truth itself), the author thereof; and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God."

Let me make a related point about this.

I have written an answer to the problem of evil,³ but this answer would not be necessary if there isn't a *problem* of evil to start with. Evil itself is neither a question nor an objection, so it does not demand an answer, defense, or explanation from us, but a response is needed only when someone makes it into the problem of evil, that is, an objection.

As a child before conversion, and then for some time after conversion, I had never even considered the *problem* of evil, although I had reflected on evil itself. It never occurred to me that evil was a problem against Christianity. Of course God could do whatever he wants, I thought, and of course he is righteous in all that he does. Up to that time, I had never considered this positively held belief as a response to any objection against Christianity; nevertheless, this is precisely one of the main biblical answers to the problem of evil.

You see, I started with the answer, but never considered objections against it, so I never considered it as an answer to anything – to me, it was just the plain truth. But then, as I became aware that there were rebellious souls who challenge God's word,⁴ I turned this into an answer against the objections; nevertheless, it is the same truth, only that I now express and employ it in a way so that it functions as an answer against particular challenges.

The Bible is true because God revealed the truth in it – as long as there is no challenge to this, there is no apologetics involved. Thus, apologetics always implies the presence of sin. If we were sinless, we would always immediately recognize God's voice and believe whatever God tells us. There would be no objections against which to defend ourselves, and there would be no false beliefs for us to attack. If there is no rebellion and unbelief,

² The following is an edited message that I sent as part of a discussion on apologetics.

³ See Vincent Cheung, "The Problem of Evil."

⁴ Of course I was also a rebellious soul before my conversion, but the truth is that I never had any conscious objection against Christianity.

then there is no need for apologetics, although there will still be theology. When we use the biblical or presuppositional approach to apologetics, we are using what we positively affirm in our theology to interact with our opponents in a way such that revelation now functions as a defensive and offensive weapon.

This is an essential difference between the biblical or presuppositional approach and the classical or evidential approach.

In biblical or presuppositional apologetics, we start with the answer, so that some of what we say in apologetics depends on the nature of the challenge, since our apologetics is really an adaptation of our theology to a particular situation.

On the other hand, the classical or evidential approach starts from a point that is very far from the answer, and then it tries to get to the answer from there. It deliberately begins from the sinner's own starting point – from one's subjective intuition, fallible sensation, or a false axiom. Since its own starting point (common with the sinner's) is not the answer, and not a word from God, it must argue even if there were no unbelief, rebellion, or objection. This cannot be heaven's way of thinking, but as Christians, we have the mind of Christ even now.

If revelation is really the answer, and if it is only through revelation that we can truly understand and interpret anything, then it is self-defeating to put aside this necessary revelation in order to get back to revelation from some non-biblical starting point, which starting point is adopted only because of man's sinfulness and rebellion in the first place.

Thus to learn the biblical approach of apologetics,⁵ we must become familiar with the biblical system – that is, what Scripture has revealed about various subjects and their relationships with one another.⁶ We must also understand what things are necessary to every intellectual system, so that we may grasp and critique every opposing system as we encounter it.⁷

If there is no challenge against revelation, then it continues to stand true on its logical necessity and self-attesting authority – for God cannot swear by anyone higher than himself – and this is the system of truth that we affirm. To the extent that we correctly understand Scripture, there will be no essential modifications to our understanding of this revealed system even when we get to heaven, but only increased understanding of the same revelation, as well as additions to it.

At the same time, the biblical system also logically excludes all non-biblical systems, so that as long as our system stands true and defensible, all others are false by necessity. Then, when there is a direct challenge against it, we only need to adapt its content to decisively answer it, both to defend our faith, and to crush our opponent.

⁵ It is appropriately called by various names, such as, dogmatism, presuppositionalism, biblical rationalism, biblical foundationalism, etc.

⁶ See Vincent Cheung, *Systematic Theology, Ultimate Questions, and Presuppositional Confrontations*.

⁷ See Vincent Cheung, *Apologetics in Conversation*.

In other words, in practicing a biblical or presuppositional approach to apologetics, we are acting as God's instruments to unleash his own revealed wisdom to vindicate himself and to defeat the enemy. Rather than using our intuition, sensation, or fallacious reasonings to testify about God, our apologetic is essentially an expression and application of God's testimony about himself, since God is his own best witness, and he can swear by no one higher.⁸

⁸ This has been a theological explanation of what happens in biblical or presuppositional apologetics. For more information, including practical instructions, I recommend the exposition of Acts 17 in my *Presuppositional Confrontations*, and also my *Apologetics in Conversation*.

2. Captive to Reason⁹

Gordon Stein asked Greg Bahnsen what it would take to convince him that Christianity is false. I do not recall Bahnsen being too sharp on this issue. How would you deal with this question?

In one sense, this question is difficult to answer. It is difficult because once I have arrived at my current position on the philosophical issues and my current approach to apologetics, any attempt to conceive of how Christianity can be refuted or how I can be convinced that Christianity is false requires a full acceptance of Christianity in the first place. Since it is true that the presuppositions of the biblical worldview are the necessary presuppositions of all thinking and all knowledge, then it is impossible for me to even conceive of how Christianity can be refuted.

Bahnsen once said that if someone were to really dig up the bones of Jesus, then he would admit that Christianity is false. Yes, if you really find the bones of Jesus, showing that he was never raised from the dead, then we can say that. But this is almost irrelevant, since apart from the full Christian worldview, how can you have an epistemology that can learn the very words and concepts in the expression, "the bones of Jesus," and an epistemology that enables you to actually identify the bones?

That is, even if we grant that, if we were to find the bones of Jesus, then Christianity is false, given what I have already established elsewhere, we must also grant that, if Christianity is false, then we can never identify the bones of Jesus. In fact, I have established that even given the correct presuppositions by which knowledge is possible, all scientific and empirical methods are in themselves logically fallacious, so that any conclusion derived from the use of such methods is at best an unjustified opinion, not knowledge. Therefore, Christianity can never be refuted by any scientific or empirical method, and a person's bones can never be infallibly identified no matter what.

Thus the question is difficult only in the sense that I cannot provide the type of answer that an unbeliever would expect. But then, the unbeliever's expectation is based on his irrational epistemology, so that I am not rationally obligated to respect it. Perhaps the simplest and truest answer to the question is, "I will believe that Christianity is false if you can prove it to be false"; or, to be more precise, "I will believe that Christianity is false if you can prove that which is true to be false."

In other words, I insist that it is logically impossible to refute Christianity, or even to begin to refute Christianity, so that to refute Christianity would be to establish a logical contradiction, which is impossible. Of course, anybody can physically say anything they want, but it does not mean that what he says will make any sense, and I am saying that no argument against Christianity can make any sense at all.

⁹ The following is an edited correspondence on apologetics.

The most I can do is to listen to an unbeliever when he tries to refute Christianity, because I cannot even imagine how I would do it myself. Again, of course unbelievers will have various ideas, and they can try various arguments, but this is because they are stupid and don't realize that their arguments are complete nonsense until someone who knows better comes along to point it out, and even then, they might still be too blind to realize their mistake.

In my books, I show that I am aware of the relevant issues and the objections from unbelievers, and how I would answer them. I clearly explain my method of apologetics in my writings, and how this method can defend the biblical worldview and refute its opponents. So I am not coming from the standpoint of a non-rational or irrational fideism. Rather, Christianity is so rationally necessary that I cannot conceive of how to even begin to refute it without letting my own system of apologetics immediately defeat my attempt. So an unbeliever will have to take his best shot without my help.

Some people assert that if a claim is not logically falsifiable, then neither can it be logically established, or that it is just meaningless. But this depends on what we are talking about and why it is not falsifiable. What if it is not falsifiable because it is necessarily true? If something is necessarily true, then it is not falsifiable; if something is falsifiable, then it is not necessarily true. Our rationally justified claim is that Christianity is necessarily true.

Now, if someone claims that nothing is necessarily true, then this claim itself is not necessarily true. He must offer an argument showing that it is necessarily true that nothing is necessarily true, but if his argument is sound, then it refutes itself (which means that it is impossible to construct a sound argument for this conclusion), and if his argument is not sound, then he fails to prove his conclusion (that nothing is necessarily true).

But why must we accept any version of the principle of falsifiability in the first place? It is just a "pretty" excuse for failing to refute Christianity. It is not my fault that unbelievers are intellectual wimps. If they can't compete, they should stay out of the ring, instead of inventing silly principles to excuse themselves.

My answer to your question is exactly what it should be if Christianity is true and if I am a Christian. That is, my mind is anchored by the Word of God, and held captive by the truth, so that I can't see a way out and I don't want a way out. If I can see a way out or if I want a way out, then either the gospel does not have the power that it claims, or I am not really a Christian.

If the unbeliever has the truth, then he will have to show me; he will have to make his case without my help. But how can he do it without being prevented at the very beginning by our biblical method of apologetics and by our presuppositional argumentation?

The truth is that he is also held captive by the Logos of God, and by his innate knowledge of God's attributes and God's laws, so that his mind can only function on God's terms, even as he rebels against Christ the Reason. He is deceived into thinking that he is a "free thinker," but the only thing that he is running free from is Reason – yet he can never escape, for Reason will crush him every time, and grind his futile arguments to powder.

3. Occasionalism and Empiricism¹⁰

– A –

What do you think about someone (a materialist) who says that the same concept can be located at two spatiotemporal locations? This happens because the brain is like a computer that copies another computer's program. So, when I speak, the sound waves enter your ears and your brain copies the concept that I had in my head.

I would expect a materialist to say this – it seems to follow from their view of reality. I can directly challenge him on this point, but I can also demand justification for the logically prior premises.

For example, I do not believe: (1) that a "concept" is physical, and (2) that brains "think." Say that I choose to first challenge the materialist on (2). If he uses science and empiricism on the way to prove it, then I will challenge science and empiricism. My own position on this topic of thinking and concepts is a version of occasionalism, so I am able to avoid all the problems that I present against the materialist.

If the main point of your question is about communication in the materialist scheme, then I would quickly challenge empiricism. I would admit that *if* the materialist can communicate to another person, then there would be two physical copies of the same thought. But I deny that they can communicate, so they will need to first prove that they can communicate by an empirical epistemology – that is, even if we were to ignore for the moment whether materialism is true, whether thoughts are physical, and whether brains can think.

As for occasionalism, I use the expression "on the occasion" more than the term "occasionalism," since many beginners read my books and they would have no idea what the term means, so I use the explanation or the meaning of the term instead of the term itself. The point is that God's providence includes complete control of everything about everything, which means that he must be the sole power controlling all communication and knowledge acquisition.

Jonathan Edwards affirmed a form of occasionalism, and also Malebranche, as well as a number of other Christian thinkers. You could see Calvin, Luther, etc., at times saying things that sound like occasionalism. I would just say that it is a necessary implication and a consistent application of the biblical doctrine of providence.

¹⁰ This is an edited correspondence in which I discuss occasionalism and empiricism. The other person is a follower of Van Til's approach to apologetics.

– B –

Why would you deny communication for them? Is it because when you communicate, you are communicating propositions, and propositions are not material, so that the same proposition cannot be in more than one spatiotemporal location?

That would be the logically prior reason – I do deny that propositions are material.

But I am saying that even if we ignore the logically prior issues, they still need to show that they can communicate by speaking and hearing. Whether propositions are material or not, they need to give me a logical proof showing that when one hears a proposition spoken, he actually hears when is being spoken. That is, they need a proof for empiricism.

– C –

(1) Now they would probably say that your response is self-refuting, since you had to use your physical mouth to ask the question, and you assumed that my ears would hear your question. At this point you would deny this in favor of your occasionalism, right?

(2) On the other hand, I could say that within my worldview, God made our mouths to communicate and our ears to receive information, but within his worldview and by empiricism, how would he know that he is actually hearing what is spoken? At this point, he would probably reassert his conclusion that he knows this because he answered my question.

(1)

Occasionalism is my positive answer, but I don't need to use that yet.

Rather, at this point I can push the debate into a purely mental world. For example, I could suggest that we might be having the entire debate in a dream. How do we know that we are not? This is just to say that I refuse to presuppose the physical world without justification. It begs the question to say that we know we are in the physical world because we are speaking and hearing, since my point is that we might be doing all of it in a purely mental world, or in a dream. Since the materialist constantly needs the physical world in his philosophy, he cannot proceed until he provides the rational justification that I demand.

On the other hand, my basic principles, and indeed my entire worldview, is completely immune and undamaged, since in my worldview, the physical world is deduced from a non-physical principle. In fact, if not for the fact that Scripture teaches that there is a physical world, I can completely discard it and still have everything else intact. So I can deny that I am necessarily using my physical mouth when I ask or answer anything – the materialist will have to prove it to me.¹¹

¹¹ I do not deny that there is a physical world — to deny that there is a physical world would be to deny what Scripture teaches. Rather, I am saying that I don't have to be in the physical world in order to function. If not for the fact that Scripture indicates that there is a physical world, I could deny the existence of the physical world altogether, and all my beliefs would still be intact.

So I could force everything to pass from the physical to the purely mental just by suggesting it, and this destroys everything that is physical (for the physical world has been assumed without justification up to this point). If the opponent cannot survive in a purely mental world, or if he cannot get back out once forced into a purely mental world, then he loses right then and there.

(2)

You will have to formulate an answer using Van Til's approach.

But note that just because God made the ear does not mean that its abilities and purposes are as you think. Scripture itself shows that the eyes and ears are often mistaken, and people who are supposedly seeing and hearing the same things often come to different conclusions, or disagree on what they are seeing and hearing (2 Kings 3:20–22; John 12:27–29).

So, the problems of empiricism are still as real as ever – even if you begin from biblical presuppositions, there is no way to show in any given instance whether your sensation is correct. Even given biblical presuppositions, you still cannot rescue what is inherently irrational and logically impossible. Even if it was somehow possible for one to receive knowledge through sensation before the Fall (although I affirm that empiricism is irrational and impossible even apart from sin), we must take into account the noetic effects of sin on the reliability of sensation.

With occasionalism, there is no problem. The ears at best provide the occasion upon which God (the Logos) communicates directly to my mind – on the occasion of the sensation but independent of the sensation. In addition, he is the one who controls everything about both the occasion and the communication.

It is unlikely that your opponent will think of this and bring it up – that is, to challenge you on empiricism. I mention this only as a remote possibility, but if it happens, then you must have an answer for it. And it will have to be an exegetical answer, since you claim to base the reliability or possibility of sensation on biblical principles.

– D –

(1) How do you know you're not dreaming?

(2) It would be fallacious for my opponent to argue that since sensations are sometimes mistaken, therefore they are always mistaken. Or, it would be fallacious to say that if sometimes you cannot know whether your sensations are working properly, therefore you can never know whether they are working properly.

(1)

I might be dreaming, and it does no damage to my worldview, and all my basic principles are intact. That's the point. But I can be dreaming and still affirm that there is a physical world, not because I trust my sensations, but because the Bible reveals this to me.

On the other hand, my sensations feel the same to me when I think I am dreaming as when I think I am not dreaming, so by my sensations I cannot reliably confirm whether or not I am dreaming. Even if my sensations are different when I think I am dreaming as when I think I am not dreaming, how do I know that I am really dreaming when I think that I am dreaming, and that I am not dreaming when I think that I am not dreaming? Perhaps I have them in reverse, so that when I feel a certain way and I think that I am dreaming, I should really think that I am not dreaming when I feel that way, and vice versa.

But since I reject empiricism, this poses no problem to my approach.

(2)

Yes, but unless you can show how you know at any given instance whether or not that particular sensation is reliable, then you can't show how you could trust any given instance of sensation.

So, even if some instances of sensation are reliable, and that in these instances, what you sense really corresponds to what is there to be sensed, unless you can show which instances of sensation are reliable and which instances are unreliable, it makes no difference – you still can't trust any of them, since you have no way of knowing when your sensations are right and when they are wrong.

So your opponent does not need to show that you never sense what you think you sense. As long as your sensations are not infallible, and then as long as you have no non-empirical infallible standard by which to judge each instance of sensation, the effect is that no instance of sensation is reliable.

– E –

But could they say that since sometimes your dreams have been false (i.e. a big monster chasing you), how do you know that you're communicating truth? You'd probably say that to deny your worldview, whether in a dream or not, would result in irrationality, and that the laws of logic, necessary inferences, etc., hold in dreams as well.

Right, I affirm what I affirm not because of what I "see," whether in the physical or the mental world (or a dream), but because of divine revelation and logical necessity.

Actually, it would be convenient if an empiricist would ask this question about dreams. It would in fact be a challenge against him and not against me – unless he can answer this question, it would mean that we must not trust what we sense whether or not we are in a dream. It provides yet another illustration of the impossibility of gaining any knowledge by sensation.

In any case, the real contrast is not between the dream state and the non-dream state, but between a purely mental world and a physical world.

Also, we need to talk about what is meant by "real." If a monster chases me in a purely mental world, or in a dream, then this is what is "real" in the purely mental world or in the dream. That is, it is really true that a monster is chasing me in the dream.

On the other hand, the question seems to imply that if something does not happen in the physical world, then it is not "real," but this begs the question.

– F –

I'd say that (1) God made us this way, and (2) this is how we normally operate. (3) There needs to be a proper environment so that if I were on drugs, in poor lighting, deprived of sleep, etc., then I wouldn't have a hard time saying that I was mistaken about some trivial observation, but sensations are generally reliable.

(1)

You need to show from Scripture that God made us "this way." "This way" cannot just mean that God made the eyes and the ears, but you must show that we can reliably derive actual knowledge through them by sensation – through some inherent function in them, and that you would know in any given instance why that instance of sensation is reliable.

(2)

That we normally operate a certain way does not prove that we are correct. I can just say that we are normally wrong.

(3)

You will have to show that Scripture says that sensation is reliable under certain conditions, and that it is unreliable under these other conditions you listed. And you can't specify these conditions if you "discovered" these conditions from sensation in the first place, since that would beg the question.

That is, how do you know that drugs affect your sensation? You can't claim to know this by sensation if you have yet to establish the reliability of sensation. And how do you know that the lighting is poor in a room? Maybe the lighting is fine (what is fine?), but you are going blind.

Also, even if Scripture says that sensation is reliable under certain conditions, and that it is unreliable under other conditions, you must still have a way to discover what kind of condition you are currently under. And if you use sensation to discover what condition you are under in order to determine whether your current sensation is reliable, then this begs the question.

– G –

(1) The knife cuts both ways and you need to show from Scripture all the things that you affirm and counter me with.

(2) Also, I think you'd have to deny some common sense things, so that you don't know that "Vincent is a man." You may be willing to bite that bullet, I don't know.

(1)

Yes, I have done that in my books.

But to say "the knife cuts both ways" is to admit that it cuts *your* way, and you must still show from Scripture that your view is correct.

(2)

I am skeptical against "common sense" altogether, and I think that "common sense" itself is incoherent. In fact, "common sense" is not common and it makes no sense.

And if I know that "Vincent is a man," I certainly do not know this on an empirical basis¹² or by common sense, but by illumination from the Logos, in accordance with my explanation on occasionalism.

I would certainly deny that "Vincent is a man" is something that I can know by "common sense." Now, if you "know" something, you *know* something – only opinion can be held by degrees of certainty or rational reliability. Therefore, if I don't *know* something – if I am only more or less sure, and if it is not rationally undeniable – then I don't *know* it.

That said, I would *never* say, "By common sense, I know that I am a man, and this knowledge that I've received from common sense is just as rationally certain as Scripture, God's revelation. Both common sense and Scripture give me knowledge, or tell me things that I can know; therefore, common sense is just as rationally certain as Scripture, and I believe common sense just as much as I believe Scripture."

If Scripture gives me knowledge (not mere opinion), and common sense gives me knowledge (not mere opinion), then unless there are degrees of certainty in knowledge (so that you have sure knowledge, less sure knowledge, or even unsure knowledge, which makes no sense), then both Scripture and common sense can give me intellectual content of the same level of rational certainty – namely, knowledge – and it follows that common sense is just as reliable and certain as Scripture, and Scripture is not more reliable and certain than common sense.

I would never say anything like this, or even imply it. I would never state or imply that what I claim I can discover apart from God's revelation is just as certain as God's revelation. I would never say that "common sense" is just as reliable as divine revelation. To make such a claim would be both irrational and irreverent.

¹² What precisely do I sense to know that "Vincent is a man"? And how do I know that this is what I must sense?

4. Short Answers to Several Criticisms¹³

– A –

One thing that makes me unable to understand how anyone could hold Clark's belief is that the nerves in the brain are sensory, and thus by making the decision to think specific things and change thought processes in their minds, are they not thus relying on their senses in order to even think, and thus relying on their senses to deduce with logic and attain knowledge?

This badly begs the question. It already assumes that science is right and/or that any/all thinking occurs in the brain. Who says?

In fact, I deny that *any* thinking occurs in the brain; rather, I affirm that whatever coincidentally occurs in the brain while someone thinks, thinking itself occurs only in the incorporeal mind.

– B –

Here's something that's problematic: one uses his senses to read the words in the Bible. If the senses allow us to recall what we already know about God, then what of other parts in the Bible? For example, David's adultery. It is hard to imagine that we already knew about this adultery via some innate knowledge. So, we can't know that David committed adultery even though it is recorded in the infallible word of God.

This entails a very bad misunderstanding of both Gordon Clark and me. We never said that all knowledge is innate, only that all knowledge must come from God apart from sensation, but some knowledge comes from God on the occasion of sensation (but still apart from sensation).

As for the claim that we must use the senses to read the Bible, I have already answered this in several places.

And note even if it is true that we need the senses to read the Bible (although I have refuted this), this observation alone does not prove empiricism, so that unless Tom can

¹³ The following includes a number of objections against my rejection of empiricism. They were taken from an online discussion board, and sent to me by one of my readers. Although these objections are weak and careless, they represent some of the frequent misunderstandings and fallacious reasonings that Christian empiricists (or at least Christians who embrace some version or some degree of empiricism) have toward my position. So what follows should still help a number of people. Although the objections were written by several different people, it is not important to designate the author of each objection, so for the sake of clarity and convenience, I have edited my answers as if all the objections were written by "Tom" (not anyone's real name). Also, since the reader who sent me the objections was already familiar with my writings and my arguments, most of my answers to him were short. I have expanded on some of these answers in what follows, but not by much.

prove empiricism, we would just end up with skepticism, which means that *no one* can read the Bible.

But whereas Tom cannot read the Bible before proving empiricism, I can, and precisely because I reject empiricism.

– C –

I don't see how he can deny that we can know *anything* through sense perception. Surely, we can even know certain things about God through sense perception (Romans 1).

I have already dealt with Romans 1 in several places my books, showing that it does not entail empiricism.¹⁴

And if Tom thinks that we can argue from sensation to God, then he should write out the proof so that we can consider it.

– D –

I'd be interested in seeing if a third man argument would work against this, since it is one of the most devastating argument against Plato's theory of knowledge (recollection), which seems to be, with some modifications, similar to Cheung's.

If we must compare, I am closer to Augustine, and the Logos doctrine of various Church Fathers, not Plato.

But I am in fact just applying the necessary implications of the biblical doctrines of divine sovereignty, providence, etc.

Or is God sovereign over all things, except sensations?

– E –

Your critiques are only against one view of sense perception. I don't have the view that facts bear their own meaning. I would tend more towards Quine's "web" program. But nonetheless, you use your senses to obtain knowledge. Tell me, how would you know how many ants were in your backyard? Did you know this previously?

Note that he never tells us exactly how any knowledge can come from sensation. He just keeps on saying that it must be so. But none of the things that he says necessarily entails that any knowledge can come from sensation.

He accuses me of following Plato (which I deny) – but is he now following Quine (which he admits)?

¹⁴ See Vincent Cheung, *Presuppositional Confrontations*, chapters 1 and 2.

He should give an account of how he can support sensation from Scripture, keeping in mind that to show that somebody saw something does not support sensation. I never deny that we see (that is, the act occurs), but that knowledge does not come from what we see; rather, God must work.

And who says we know how many ants are in our backyard? Does he know?

As for knowing "previously," this is again the misunderstanding that we say that all knowledge is innate, which we never taught.

– F –

But since, in some cases, our senses are required to obtain knowledge (e.g., how many ants are in my back yard), then I would say that in those cases senses are a necessary feature of gaining knowledge.

How true! If the senses are necessary, then the senses are necessary.

But are the senses necessary? And necessary for what? What exactly do they do? How?

Now if knowledge can be rationally derived from sensation, then it could be written out as a propositional argument or a syllogism. I want him to write out the syllogism so that we can examine its validity.

– G –

Sorry, brother, but you just proved too much! If God conveys *all* things, then he conveys "John's" belief that a heretic is correct, and also "Tim's" belief that he is not correct! God is not the author of confusion. I think this is devastating to what you just argued.

So are heretics autonomous? As I repeatedly point out, such inconsistent Calvinism results in dualism – two opposing powers of good and evil, instead of one God who reigns supreme.

As for the denial that God is the "author of confusion," I have addressed this in my article, "The Author of Confusion."

– H –

Furthermore, the observations are not dependent on the molecules! The molecules are the same, regardless. It is the way man's brain interprets the collection of molecules that results in hallucination.

This does not directly attack my position, but it betrays the person's fallacious thinking.

It begs the question. He is leaning on science again, and he assumes premises that, if empiricism is false, could never be established.

What are molecules anyway? Do we know that there are such things? Really, we know that? We are sure? How?

He should first prove empiricism and science before using these premises, since empiricism and science are precisely the things being questioned.

As for the comment on "the way man's brain interprets the collection of molecules," how does he know that? Does the brain "think" at all? Does it interpret anything at all?

– I –

Lastly, if God is in control of *everything*, and conveys *everything* to people, then, what about this: John "sees" a bee on a rose, but "Tim" doesn't see it. John believes that his observation was true. Tim believes the converse. So, God conveyed A and not-A?

Of course. So what?

There is only a problem if we say that God *affirms* both A and not-A.

But note what Tom is thinking. His question implies that God does not really control *everything*. In fact, if we take his words seriously, he is saying that God is not even "in control" of everything.

So our problem is not really first about sensation or empiricism, but that Tom does not even affirm the Christian God and His sovereignty, or to speak charitably, he is at least being very inconsistent here.

Tom speaks as if false information occurs autonomously! But how? By spontaneous generation? By autonomous sensation? By free will?

If Tom cannot believe that God controls false information, then how can he believe that God is even now directly sustaining Satan himself? Or as Luther affirms, that God even now controls (not only sustains) Satan?¹⁵

– J –

Now, of course God can tell you how many ants are in your backyard, but is this the normal operation of how things work? Indeed, I'm very interested in exploring this concept and the view that there is no new revelation.

I do not say that there is "new revelation." I am saying that God's control over all knowledge and all mental acts *is* the normal operation of things. It is a matter of ordinary providence.

¹⁵ See Vincent Cheung, *Commentary on Ephesians*, and Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*.

It is as if Tom is saying that if God controls anything today, then that must be a miracle. And if he controls knowledge, then there must be new revelation (in the same sense as biblical revelation). Is Tom a deist?

Just as I believe that the death of a sparrow is still controlled by God, without calling that a miracle (since a miracle is special providence, but the death of a sparrow is ordinary providence), I merely include knowledge in the category of ordinary providence, as anyone must who affirms the biblical doctrine.

But Tom wants to protect sensation and autonomous evil and spontaneous errors, and therefore his position becomes inconsistent.

– K –

The whole faculty of man, which God created with eyes and ears in order to learn and know things about his environment, does use his senses to acquire knowledge. But this cannot be separated from his rationality – seeing a tree and coming to a conclusion also involves a chain of reasoning.

Just because God created something does not mean that it is for the purposes and functions that Tom thinks. Tom's statement begs the question. He says that God created eyes and ears "to learn," but this is precisely the point we are arguing about. Asserting it again does not make it true.

Then, Tom admits that seeing a tree and coming to a conclusion involves a chain of reasoning. Good! This gets closer to my point: Is the chain of reasoning logically valid? Write it out as a syllogism and let us examine it.

– L –

You missed my point about John and Tim. I said that God told one a *lie* and the other a *truth*. Does God lie?

This involves a foolish misunderstanding and a strange confusion. Telling is different from facilitating or controlling. I am talking about metaphysics, and he is talking about (it seems) an interpersonal relationship. Yes, God causes people to believe lies as he wishes (and as Scripture teaches), but that is different from him telling a lie as if he claims that it is the truth.

– M –

I would still need that verse refuted for as it stands: the Lord of Glory has told us that "when you see the fig tree you *know* that summer is near."

Right, then when you *see* a mirage of water, you *know* that there must be water. Errors and hallucinations never happen. This is nonsense.

It is fallacious to infer from this verse a simplistic "I see, therefore I know" epistemology. Otherwise, it would be impossible to make a mistake, so that when I *see* water, I *know* that there is water, and that it must not be a mirage.

Also, as I have pointed out in *Presuppositional Confrontations* while refuting Ronald Nash, when the Bible acknowledges that someone saw something, it is not the same as affirming sensation as a means to knowledge.

For example, if the apostle John writes, "Peter saw the resurrected Christ," I can accept John's statement about what Peter saw without accepting sensation itself as a way to knowledge. The object of my belief is John's divinely inspired statement, not Peter's fallible sensation. In fact, Peter's sensations could be wrong in all instances but this one, and I know that he is right this time only because John infallibly (by divine inspiration) says so.

In other words, when I think that I am looking at a red car, it is possible that I am indeed looking at a red car, but it is also possible that I am dreaming, or looking at the blue sky. The problem is, how do I know in this instance whether I am indeed looking at a red car?

Now, if God infallibly affirms that I am indeed looking at a red car, then I know that in this instance what I think I see indeed corresponds to physical reality. But from this, it would be fallacious to infer, "Therefore, sensation yields knowledge." No, it is God's infallible affirmation (that I am looking at a red car) that gives me the knowledge (that I am looking at a red car), and not my act of looking at the red car. That is, the sensation provides the occasion for God's infallible affirmation – it does not provide knowledge itself.

This is the kind of invalid inference that Tom has made with the statement from Jesus. That is, from an infallible but narrow and particular statement about something related to seeing, Tom incorrectly infers that seeing itself is a reliable way to obtain knowledge.

Does Tom want to prove that sensations are infallible? His own philosophy denies this. But then how can the verse that he quotes allow for errors in sensation, if Jesus is approving sensation itself instead of making an infallible but narrow and particular judgement about something related to sensation?

I affirm the words of Jesus in the verse, not the sensation of the Pharisees (of seeing the fig tree). On the other hand, on the basis of this verse, Tom directly affirms the sensations of the Pharisees, infers a general support for empiricism, and then applies it to all of humanity. This is indeed a spectacular display of fallacious reasoning.

Moreover, how then can he claim that sensations are fallible? On what basis and by what standard does he affirm or reject any instance of sensation, or any inference from sensation? I know that "when you see the fig tree, you know that summer is near" is true only because Jesus said so. The Pharisees could have been wrong about every other instance of sensation.

If we are going to be logical and rational, then let's be *strictly* logical and rational. An inference is valid only if you can write it out as a syllogism and show that the conclusion necessarily follows from the premises. Tom fails to do this in his defense of sensation as a way of knowing.

5. The Atheistic Argument from Existence¹⁶

The claim being made is that the theist, in asserting the existence of God, automatically (presuppositionally) demonstrates that he accepts the priority of existence.

Followers of Van Til often state as their presupposition the existence of God, or the "Ontological Trinity." In contrast, I do not say that my first principle is the existence of God, but that it is the entire divine verbal revelation, which we often just call "the Bible."

Bahnsen has explained that, when he says that his starting point is the existence of God, or the "Ontological Trinity," he means the same thing as saying that his starting point is the whole Bible. However, I am uncertain that this claim is commonly known by followers of Van Til, but it does not appear to be consistently conscious in their thinking and consistently practiced by them.

In any case, it is better to *always* say that our first principle is the Bible instead of the existence of God; that is, it is better to altogether avoid implying that our first principle is the existence of God alone. I mention this just to note that the difference in language between the supporters of Clark and the supporters of Van Til on this point is deliberate, and most likely reflects a real difference in thinking.

The point is that to begin from the whole Bible instead of just "the existence of God" avoids a whole host of problems and difficulties. For example, even if you begin with the existence of God, you still don't have all the other necessary things (propositions) in your biblical worldview, including things that are necessary to assert the existence of God in the first place, such as theories of epistemology, linguistics, and so forth. Unless you start with a complete worldview, and then proceed by deduction, the worldview will always fail.

For the same reason, even if the atheists can start with "existence," so what?¹⁷ What else do they have, including the things that they need to assert this first proposition?

Let me include something here that I wrote to another person, and then get back to this main topic. Someone asked me how to respond if the non-Christian claims to use "logic" as his first principle. The following is part of my reply:

¹⁶ The following is an edited correspondence. The subject is an "argument from existence" used by some atheists against theists. My answer is just an application of what I have already written in books like *Ultimate Questions* and *Apologetics in Conversation*.

¹⁷ I think their definition of existence begs the question, so that they cannot even start there, but we will ignore this for now.

I do agree that logic, or let's just say "the law of non-contradiction" to be more specific, is indeed self-justifying in a sense – that is, in a proximate and subsidiary sense, and not an ultimate sense.

Let me explain.

The law of non-contradiction is self-justifying at least in the sense that it is undeniable; that is, you must affirm it to even deny it. Because of this, your opponent considers it appropriate to make the law of non-contradiction his starting point, or at least one of his axioms.

But the law of non-contradiction cannot be a standalone first principle in one's worldview.

This is because the law itself carries information at all, so that from it, one cannot derive any knowledge by deduction. He must find some way to supply information for the law to process.

Since the law of non-contradiction is already his first principle, and precisely because of this, knowledge by strict deduction is no longer an option, unless he has some other first axioms, in which case you will have to examine them.

For example, if his other ultimate axioms involve intuition, then you can attack intuition as a foundation of knowledge. Also, his ultimate axioms must also be self-justifying, consistent with one another, and sufficient to provide an entire worldview.¹⁸

But if he the law of non-contradiction alone as his first principle, and if he does not have other axioms from intuition, etc., then he must supply the content for this first principle to process by induction, and this means that he must affirm some version of empiricism. He might also appeal to science or the "scientific method."

Here is where the differences between Van Til and me necessarily produce a difference in approach. At this point, I would challenge the opponent to rationally justify induction, empiricism, and science. Of course, he is going to say a lot of things, but since induction, empiricism, science cannot be rationally justified, my opponent can no longer proceed. I don't have to listen to anything else that my opponent has to say unless he gets pass this point, but he will never get pass this point.

Briefly, Van Til accepted induction, empiricism, and science, but he taught that they are unintelligible without the right presuppositions. I

¹⁸ See Vincent Cheung, *Ultimate Questions*.

disagree because induction, empiricism, and science are irrational in themselves, and even the right presuppositions cannot rescue that which is inherently wrong. For example, even if I make Scripture my starting point, this does not make "1 + 1 = 99" true.

You can attack your opponent's appeal to the law of non-contradiction as his first principle from another angle – you can point out that any proposition implies a whole host of philosophical – it implies an entire worldview.

For example, your opponent says, "Logic (or the law of non-contradiction) is axiomatic; it is self-justifying." But that he can say this demands that he has a theory on epistemology (logic, truth, knowledge, etc.), metaphysics (he must have a theory about the nature of reality to explain the fact that he is speaking, etc.), linguistics (he is using language), and a number of other things.

This means that he can never rest after claiming "logic" as his axiom, since if you demand it, he must also present his view on every related subject that makes his assertion of this axiom possible in the first place.

Moreover, his view on each of these areas must be rationally defensible (you should attack him on each), and coherent (e.g. his view on linguistics must not contradict his epistemology).

No non-Christian can satisfy these requirements. So, if you press him on it, he will never be able to get away with just saying, "Logic is my axiom."

To summarize, to the claim that logic is axiomatic and self-justifying, you can respond with at least (1) "But logic contains no information. You still need a defensible epistemology to supply it with information, but then, is your epistemology defensible?"; and (2) "But just to say this demands that you already have an entire true and coherent worldview, including theories on epistemology, metaphysics, linguistics, mind, and so forth. So, explain and defend all these areas of your worldview."

If he fails to satisfy (1) and (2), then that logic is self-evident is irrelevant. It does not help him at all.

This is different for the Christian. The whole Bible is his first principle from which he deduces all the necessary information for his worldview. Logic is already an integral part of Scripture from the start, but it is not a standalone axiom.

Without further explanation, I hope that you grasp how the above would equally apply to using "existence" as one's starting point. In short, one needs much more than just the idea of "existence" in his worldview in order to even just assert "existence."

The only defensible noetic structure is deduction from a self-justifying first principle, and the only way this is possible is if your first principle contains all the necessary information in your worldview. Neither "God exists" nor existence itself can satisfy this.

If you do not start with the whole divine revelation, your starting point will not have all the information you need to allow you to start at all. Then, you will have to depend on induction, intuition, empiricism, etc., to supply your first principle with information. But then, how did you know your first principle in the first place? If it is by these methods, then how is it first? Also, if these methods themselves fail, then even if you can have your narrow first principle, you are still as good as having nothing at all.

To repeat, in terms of the structure of a defensible biblical philosophy (we are not talking about what is metaphysically prior within the biblical worldview), God is on the same level with everything else at the top (which is the whole of revelation). Whether it is God, "existence," language, epistemology, etc., they all start at the top with the whole divine revelation as the first principle. The atheistic argument from existence starts from "existence," and I am saying that they can't do that unless they have everything else that makes that possible (so they still need to put together an entire worldview). But I have everything, including logic and "existence" (whatever that means), on the same level at the top, so that my first principle has the content to make such an assertion possible in the first place. All that I need is embedded from the start; otherwise, one cannot start at all.

Also, I wonder how their argument can refute pantheism.

When a presuppositionalist fails to be effective, it is often because the opponent's argument derails him from presuppositional thinking. That is, the opponent says something that somehow distracts the believer into seeing things from the unbeliever's false perspective, and if he cannot reason his way back out using the unbeliever's perspective, or if he fails to leap back to his own principles, then he is in trouble. But this is not a failure of presuppositional apologetics, but a failure to consistently apply it.

6. The Transcendental Argument for Materialism¹⁹

He said that he is going to use the transcendental argument for materialism. That is, I must use my physical mouth to say "logic." I must use my physical body to even be at the debate.

As stated here, the argument fails to prove materialism as such. At best, it shows that there is a physical world, and that when we speak, we do so through our physical bodies.²⁰ However, materialism affirms that physical matter is the primary or even only reality or substance, that there is no incorporeal mind or spirit. Far from proving this, the argument fails to address this altogether. For example, it does not show that we think with our brains and only with our brains. It offers nothing to contradict (let alone refute) my belief that we think with our incorporeal minds and that brains do not "think" at all.

We may discuss this in greater detail.

With me, that there is a physical world is not a conclusion from sensation or intuition, but a conclusion deduced from Scripture. And by "Scripture," I mean the "Word of God," or the verbal revelation from the mind of God. This means that I am not just talking about the physical book, as in paper and ink, but the non-physical intellectual content of the physical book. I am *not* denying that the Bible is the Word of God – of course it is – but I am saying that, strictly speaking, the Word of God is not physical but intellectual, since we are referring to the portion of God's mind that he has disclosed to us. That is, if you steal my Bible and cut it up into a million pieces, you have destroyed the physical book, but you have not destroyed the Word of God, which is the first principle of my thinking.

The intellectual content of my worldview, or the Word of God, resides in the divine Logos, and according to God's ordinary providence, it is directly communicated to my mind on the occasion of the visual sensations that occur when reading the Bible, but apart from the visual sensations themselves. The sensations provide the occasion; they do not communicate any information in themselves.

This is one version of "occasionalism." It is not entirely novel, but overlaps with Augustine's theory of illumination, Malebranche's "vision in God," and various forms of the "logos doctrine." Nevertheless, mine is not identical with theirs – it is more biblical (in that its basis is exegetical, and avoids the unbiblical assumptions in theirs), and it is more "extreme" (that is, coherent) in that I consistently apply it to every aspect of reality in my philosophy. But it is really just the necessary implication of the biblical doctrine of God's providence over every detail of his creation.

¹⁹ The following is an edited correspondence. It is my response to the so-called "transcendental argument for materialism."

²⁰ But as we will see below, it fails to prove even this.

So one of the several ways that I can defeat this sort of argument is by proposing that we might be having the debate in a purely mental world, or in a dream. How can we know otherwise? Since my philosophy does not depend on sensation or induction, it does not damage me at all – I can use the same arguments with the same effect whether or not we are debating in the mental world or in the physical world. However, since my opponent is an empiricist and/or a materialist, he depends on the physical world and a physical epistemology, so that he has to first prove that we are having the debate in a physical world.

Of course, there is a physical world in my philosophy, but this not because I feel it or sense it, but because the non-physical Word of God communicates to me that there is such a world.

To summarize, when I face an empirical opponent, I can always push the debate into the purely mental world. This annihilates everything that is physical and empirical that my opponent depends on (since he cannot prove that we are operating in the physical world, or that there is a physical world), but I can function perfectly in the purely mental world while retaining the physical world at the same time.

7. "But What is Knowledge?"

As my readers are aware, I deny that induction, sensation, and science can yield any knowledge, and I have provided biblical and rational justification for this denial in my writings. Besides the typical fallacious replies and evasions, one response is to ask, "But what is knowledge?" That is, if we cannot define knowledge, or cannot justify our definition of knowledge, then it would seem meaningless to say that induction, sensation, and science cannot yield any knowledge.

I have tolerated this sophistry for a while, but since I have been asked about it several times, and since I have been made aware that this point is sometimes brought up in discussions about my writings (as if it totally destroys my arguments!), I will briefly address it here.

It is true that when we use a word, we should often have a proper and justifiable definition for it. This is especially important when we are using it in the context of precise arguments and syllogisms.

However, the above objection misses the point. The point is that induction, sensation, and science involve fallacious reasonings such that they can never produce logically valid conclusions from the premises. That is, it is impossible to use induction, sensation, and science to validly reason from premises X and Y to conclusion Q regarding any subject P. Thus our main point stands even if we never define or even mention "knowledge."

Assuming the premise, "*I see* a red car," how is it possible to validly reason from this premise to, "*There is* a red car"? You need another premise to fill in the gap between "I see" and "There is," but how is this premise to be rationally obtained and justified, rather than just stubbornly assumed? This is the point.

As it stands, there is no rational difference between jumping from "I see a red car" to "There is a red car," and jumping from "I imagine a red car" or "I desire a red car" to "There is a red car." What is the rational difference between sensation, imagination, and expectation? How come one can jump from "I see" to "There is," and cannot jump from "I imagine" or "I desire" to "There is"? What is the additional premise that makes the difference? And how is this premise rationally obtained and justified? The issue is not even the definition of knowledge, but the validity of the reasoning process.

The objection is sophistical and irrational. Whether or not we define knowledge, and whether or not our opponents define knowledge, the objection has not even started to justify induction, sensation, and science, but it seeks to distract us from the main point.

But if the challenge is to define "knowledge" in a proposition such as, "Science cannot yield any knowledge," then let our opponents first define "science," and then logically

demonstrate how it can validly reach any conclusion about anything, and then we can proceed to examine our denial. For if our science-loving opponents have never claimed that science can reach rational conclusions about anything, or even yield "knowledge" (whatever that is), we would have never needed to make the denial in the first place.

In other words, I can affirm everything that I have said regarding induction, sensation, and science without ever using the word "knowledge" – I just have to say some things differently. In fact, I have already done this a number of times in my books. For example, I would say that science cannot validly deduce or infer anything about reality. And even "reality" does not need to be defined to make this point, since any X will do – "affirming the consequent" is fallacious regardless of what you are talking about.

So let's get back to the real issue and press our opponents to show how induction, sensation, and science can validly reason from premises to conclusion about anything at all.

To those who agree with me, we are right about this. Our position is biblical, rational, irrefutable, and so obviously so that it is laughably easy to defend. Just don't let intellectual tricksters bully or distract you, and don't let them smuggle in their irrational theories by falsely claiming biblical support, as if false assumptions can be founded on true presuppositions, or the lie justified by the truth. Instead, let us continue to crush the man-centered epistemologies of induction and sensation, and to exalt biblical revelation as the sole infallible source of true premises from which we would validly deduce conclusions about the many things that God has chosen to disclose to us.

8. But Where is the Refutation?

Mr. H attacked your position on sensation and mentioned you by name, but I think some of the things that he said were already answered by you in your articles. I am not sure if he reads them.

Here I will just refer you back to my books as my response to *all* criticisms that you can find *anywhere* written by *anyone* on this subject. I have confidence in my products – they are accurate and irrefutable. Yes, people can write all sorts of things against anything (even the Bible), but not every attempted refutation is logically sound or successful.

Now, an irrefutable position is no good when read by a moron, so it helps that my readers are not stupid. As the above reader writes, "I think some of the things that he said were already answered by you in your articles. I am not sure if he reads them." Bingo! And if there is anything unanswered in these articles, it is because (as I have repeatedly said) they are intended as supplements to my books.

However, not everyone has at least this much sense. Many people are affected by the most recent thing that they read, and so when they read my writings, they are swayed by them, but then when they read an attempted refutation, they change and think that I am wrong. Then, I offer my response and they seem to be convinced again. Thus they are tossed back and forth between differing positions, and never attain intellectual stability.

There are at least two reasons for this problem.

First, my position is widely disliked, and I am able to convince anyone only by the sheer rigorous rationality and precise biblical exegesis of my arguments. On the other hand, most people favor some version of empiricism even without any persuasion by another person, and even if they are initially awakened from their empirical slumber by my writings, it is easy for them to be swayed back to empiricism by even the flimsiest arguments, or even just a rhetorical question. That is, they will take any excuse to stay with what they already prefer to believe. Thus although, objectively, there is nothing against me, subjectively, the deck is stacked against me.

Second, many readers fail to apply the strict standards of rationality when they examine arguments and refutations. They fail to remember that not just any complaint is a valid refutation. Just like any sound argument, a refutation must have a conclusion validly deduced from true premises, and that contradicts its opponent's position. Nothing that Mr. H wrote against me amounts to this. He gives us assertions, speculations, rhetorical questions, but no argument (refutation) that reasons from true premises to their necessary conclusion. Moreover, nothing that he wrote actually supports empiricism. So even if he successfully refutes me, we would just end up with skepticism at best.

He has attempted several typical *ad hominem* points, but I have already dealt with them in my writings – I either refute them as fallacious and irrelevant, or I swallow them down without suffering any damage to the coherence of my position. And again, an *ad hominem* does not amount to a positive support for empiricism.

Finally, "But What is Knowledge?" is intended to answer a particular objection against me; it is in itself not a refutation of empiricism – I have already done that elsewhere. However, Mr. H interacts with only this short article as if I have presented my main or even entire case against empiricism there, and that what he says about the article thus undermines my entire position about empiricism. But again, he fails to refute even my short article.

If you will go back to Mr. H's article, you will see that he has failed on all counts. But I don't want to direct this only against Mr. H, since all of his objections are typical, and will be used again and again by other people. It would be counterproductive for me to write a specific response to every rehash of the typical objections against my position, when I have already answered all of them.

Again, I have no problem in answering something that is new, something that I have never addressed, and my readers would testify that I never resort to evasive maneuvers, nor do I need to. But slight variations of old and refuted objections do not deserve my attention. Something that forces me to respond will have to be really, really good. Otherwise, there is no point in doing it.

I am not interested in defending my reputation or my competence, but I am concerned when readers might be misled. The simplest solution is to remind all of you that I have already dealt with all the typical criticisms in my writings, and all you need to do is to read or review them. You should ask, (1) Does the objector give us real arguments and refutations? and (2) Does the objector say anything that is not already answered in Cheung's writings? It is impossible to write a specific reply for every attempted refutation – just don't be taken in by an attempt only because it states old and refuted objections differently.

As for those of you who are unfamiliar with my writings, I urge you to *read* my materials, slowly and carefully, and *really* try to understand what I am saying instead of dismissing me because of your traditions and assumptions, without actual refutations. And remember, an "actual refutation" must be more than an assertion or a rhetorical question, but just like any valid argument, it must be a conclusion validly deduced from true premises; otherwise, it is nothing more than an expression of one's subjective disapproval.

9. "Biblical" Empiricism Incoherent

One argument alleges that Scripturalism²¹ is incoherent because the proposition, "All knowledge comes from biblical propositions and their necessary implications," is not itself a biblical proposition, and that it cannot be deduced from biblical propositions; therefore, if one accepts Scripturalism, one should reject Scripturalism.

However, this argument begs the question. In effect, it is just saying that Scripturalism is false because it is not true, but it says this without showing that it is not true.

But the principle can indeed be deduced from Scripture. The Bible teaches that God is infallible, that the Bible is his infallible revelation, that God controls all things, that man is fallible, that man's sensations and intuitions are fallible, etc., etc. – put them together, and you have Scripturalism.

Then, think about empiricism. Yes, it is often assumed that sensation is a generally reliable way to obtain knowledge. But consider just several of the problems connected to empiricism and science:

1. If empiricism is rational, then it should be possible to demonstrate its rationality by a valid process of reasoning. What is this process of reasoning? And is it really valid?
2. If empiricism necessarily uses induction, then how can it avoid the logical problems that come with induction?
3. If empiricism is the very foundation of science, then how can science be considered eminently rational when we have yet to defend empiricism?
4. Then, how about the fact that the scientific method, by its very own nature, practices the fallacy of affirming the consequent in every experiment?

Anyone who decries my opposition to empiricism must show how he can know anything by sensation by his partially or totally empirical epistemology.

He cannot prove it by "pure reason," since logic by itself carries no content from which he can derive a proof for empiricism, and to use intuition as a foundation for sensation would require a proof for intuition as a way to knowledge, as well as a proven standard to determine which instance of intuition is correct.

²¹ This is a name given to the philosophy of Gordon Clark, and often also applied to mine.

Does he then claim that Scripture provides the preconditions for empiricism? It certainly provides the preconditions for us to understand that it is irrational and false, but does it provide rational justification to say that empiricism is true? Matthew 24:32 is not the only verse in the Bible.²² How about John 12:28-29 and 2 Kings 3:16-24?

If Scripture shows only one instance when sensation is not reliable, then at least we need a reliable standard or method by which we can tell which instance of sensation is reliable. What is this standard or method? And is this standard or method really reliable?

Or, if they claim that one sensation verifies another one, then this begs the question, since we don't know which one is right, and maybe both are wrong.

So it doesn't matter how many biblical passages they show, but as long as there is even one in Scripture that suggests the fallibility of sensation, then we are taken right back to the question of a standard and method by which we can tell which instance is reliable.

But I have already said all of this in my books and articles, so all you need to do is to read or review them.

It is amusing to me that some presuppositionalists have been so passionately arguing against my opposition to empiricism that it is as if they are now defending empiricism, and in a manner that often contradicts what they would say when they argue against evidentialism in apologetics.

Just don't forget to ask that, as they attack an opposition to empiricism, have they justified empiricism? How have they done this? And if empiricism (any degree or kind) is part of their epistemology, then they must first justify empiricism before attacking an opposition to empiricism; otherwise, they are just arguing in a circle while standing on thin air.

Finally, consider this. If they claim that one must use physical sensations to read the Bible, and that, in some sense, the words of the Bible are conveyed to the mind through the physical sensations themselves, and if they also admit that sensations are fallible, then whether or not the Bible is infallible immediately becomes irrelevant to them, since they can never have an infallible Bible in practice. This is because the Bible in effect will only be as reliable to them as their sensations.

Even if I allow them to believe that sensations are generally reliable, it is still irrelevant until they can show me how reliable they are, and even more importantly, how they know in which instances they are correct. If one cannot show me in which instances sensations are correct, then in effect it is as if none of the instances are reliable, since there is no way to tell one from the other.

²² And as we have already showed, Matthew 24:32 itself cannot prove an "I see, therefore I know" epistemology.

Some of them say that the Bible teaches them that God has created man in a way that man can use his senses to gain some knowledge, even if the sensations are fallible. But there are at least two problems with this:

1. They just got through saying that you must use the senses to read the Bible in the first place, so how did they find out what the Bible says about sensations without first proving the reliability of sensation? They argue in a circle.
2. The Bible provides many examples showing that the senses are fallible, that they are often deceived. So even if we forget about the previous point, we are still at a loss as to in which instances sensations are reliable, and we are back to square one again.

Thus, it is really their view that is incoherent.

On the other hand, my scheme bypasses all of these difficulties, since I start from the mind of God, and not the senses of man.

At this point, they sometimes exclaim, "Well, then you can't know anything!" But this is not proof that empiricism is the way out of skepticism! So don't be fooled by arguments like this one.

In fact, my method overcomes skepticism by starting with the Bible – that is, to really start with the portion of the incorporeal mind of God that has been verbally revealed in Scripture – instead of just saying that we start with the Bible, but then allow our fallible sensations as the only way to know what is in the Bible in the first place.

10. Fallacies, and Fallacies upon Fallacies²³

I hope everything is going well with you, your family, and ministry. I'm continually blessed by your daily articles and how you strive for Christ-likeness in everything, even responding to critics.

I am disheartened at the criticisms to your method, especially from other Christians. From what I can tell, Mr. M and others fail to note what Scripturalism really is. He assumes that it means propositions found only in the Bible are true and constitute as knowledge – they exclude what is deduced as knowledge because they say that "knowledge by deduction" can't be found in the Bible. Although I still have a weak grasp of Scripturalism, I don't believe that is what this philosophy adheres to.

I hope that you can continue strong in your ministry of teaching Christians. But a part of me hopes to see a response to such criticisms as well. Maybe in the future I can be able to help.

Thanks once again for your ministry of teaching. I've learned much and grown much.

Thank you so much for taking the time to write this message of encouragement. I am glad that I have a reader and a friend like you.

As I said, if I were to respond to every attempted refutation, then I would probably never be able to do anything else, since there are too many of them. And it is not as if the critics will stop after my initial response – they will keep trying, whether or not they are ever successful.²⁴

So, unless there is a threat worthy of extra attention, I must move on after making some general remarks; otherwise, the whole ministry would be hijacked by critics and driven by criticisms. I must stay focused on my mission so that I don't get caught in such a trap.

²³ The following includes an edited correspondence. It has to do with a recent essay against my philosophy and apologetic. Since I have already written several related articles, at first I did not plan to make this correspondence into another article. But then, I realized that the discussion could be used to make some general points that might help readers defend the faith more efficiently and effectively. So in what follows, I am going to first let you read the correspondence, and then I am going to add some general comments. Note that I have changed the name of the author of the essay in question into Mr. M – it is nobody's real name. The main point of this article is not about him or me, but about some general pointers on apologetics and debate.

²⁴ More than ever, it appears that whenever I make a public statement about anything, and especially when I proclaim that God is the only Sovereign and that Scripture is the only infallible source of knowledge, it is immediately circulated, discussed, scrutinized, criticized, and sometimes demonized. This is often done even by Christians who call themselves Calvinists and presuppositionalists.

Also, as I have pointed out, the overall effects of the criticisms have been overwhelmingly positive for this ministry. I have gained many first-time readers and new supporters for my approach. Therefore, do not be dismayed, but rather rejoice.

Now, Mr. M did send me his essay. And you are right (again, I am glad that my readers are not morons) – a failure to understand my position (or even just "Scripturalism" in general) is truly one of the major problems with it. Some of his criticisms are very fallacious, but probably still a little too subtle for some readers to notice, especially for those who do not have a good understanding of either my position or Scripturalism to begin with.

Before I continue, I should note that many people, including Mr. M, either practically or really identify my approach with Gordon Clark's Scripturalism. As I have mentioned in several places, this is a mistake. It is true that my approach overlaps with much of Clark's, and probably at no major point do we *contradict* each other, but the two are nevertheless not identical, so that some of the things that are said about Scripturalism cannot be blindly applied to me, so that although I overlap with him a great deal, I still differ from him enough to warrant separate treatment.

Many of my critics either fail to realize this or refuse to accept it, so that their criticisms are not only fallacious, but often simply irrelevant. Nevertheless, for the sake of convenience, and to avoid having to constantly remind readers of the distinction, in what follows I will apply the term "Scripturalism" to both Clark and me. But remember that this is not by preference, but by temporary concession.

To address your example, it has always been the claim of Scripturalists that knowledge consists of all the biblical propositions plus all of their necessary implications.

Logically speaking, the implications of the biblical propositions are not really additions to the biblical propositions at all, since all the implications of any proposition are already inherent in the proposition, so that if the necessary implications of a proposition are excluded, logically speaking, the proposition itself is also excluded.

So it is a strange objection to say that Scripturalists cannot be correct or coherent because they also affirm what is necessarily deduced from the biblical propositions. They have never restricted themselves to the biblical propositions apart from their necessary implications, nor do they need to, since all the implications of the biblical propositions are inherent in the biblical propositions. Rather, they rightly affirm that what is validly or necessarily deduced from revealed propositions is equally certain as what is explicitly revealed.

Then, although I affirm that only the biblical propositions and their implications are infallible, I never said that these are the only propositions by which we function. Instead, I entertain many extra-biblical propositions in my daily thinking and living – nevertheless, only as opinion, not infallible revealed information. This allows me to function and discuss many things just as the non-Scripturalists do, only that I make a

clear distinction between fallible opinion and infallible revelation, and I never elevate opinion to the level of revelation.

And when it comes to apologetics, my opinion is not my religion, so it is not what I defend. Therefore, it is no problem for me to acknowledge that I hold to some things as my fallible opinion, but that when it comes to my biblical faith, I hold to it as infallible revelation.

On the other hand, the non-Scripturalist standard for considering something as "knowledge" or reliable information is very low and irrational, and so many things are considered knowledge or reliable information even when they lack rational justification, and that are really mere opinion and guesswork. The result is that their belief systems are mixtures of uncertainty and confusion, and their irrational epistemology corrodes almost every part of their noetic structure.

I will cite another example from Mr. M. In his essay, he criticizes my affirmation that man's innate knowledge has enough content and is specific enough that it corresponds only to the biblical worldview and excludes all others. He thought that this was pure assertion, and that this could not possibly have been derived from Romans 1 and 2.

But Romans 1 says that this innate knowledge contains information about God's attributes, such as eternity and power, and it is specific enough to condemn all idolatry and even something like homosexuality. Then, Romans 2 says that the moral laws have been written in the minds of men, and this information is full and specific enough to either condemn or excuse many of their daily actions.

This is a lot of specific information! Since this innate knowledge is full enough to condemn everyone who does not worship the *Christian* God or the *Christian* God's moral laws, it necessarily follows that it is full enough to exclude all non-Christian ideas of God, and all non-Christian concepts of morality.

Of course, this still does not offer any information on how one might receive salvation, but it is enough to condemn all non-Christians. To oppose this is also to say that man's innate knowledge is sufficient to exclude many *but not all* religions, so that if God condemns the adherents of these religions that are not excluded by man's innate knowledge, it could not be on the basis of man's innate knowledge. However, this view (a necessary implication of denying my position) directly contradicts Paul's very point in Romans 1 and 2.

Also, Mr. M claims to be a Reformed Christian, but my position on the extent and content of man's innate knowledge as described here is standard Reformed doctrine. So it appears that Mr. M not only lacks an understanding of my position, and an ability to practice valid reasoning, but he also lacks a basic grasp of the Reformed faith that he claims to share with me. This makes his criticisms that much less credible. Thus I would again remind readers that just because a person offers a criticism does not necessarily mean that it is a successful criticism.

Similar errors pervade every section of his essay, so that it is just one overwhelming series of fallacies, and fallacies upon fallacies. How am I to handle such an essay? Am I expected to refute every single point? But do you notice how long it takes just to barely address several relevant points with adequate clarity? What, do I live to answer my incompetent critics, or do I live to serve God and his people? And what if another person releases another series of fallacies while I am still writing my response to this one? I would indeed be unable to answer them all, but not because I would be intellectually overwhelmed, but rather physically outdone by the combined efforts of my critics.²⁵

Finally, Mr. M fails to provide and justify his own positive construction, his own positive epistemology and philosophy, only by which he could criticize me in the first place. Always remember this point – this point alone will kill every non-Scripturalist epistemology.

For example, if he opposes my occasionalism and my anti-empiricism, then what is his epistemology, and how is it rationally justified? How can *he* read my books and then criticize them, unless he is a scriptural occasionalist like me, or unless he has rationally justified empiricism? If he is the former, then we agree and there is no problem; if he can't do the latter, then he completely fails before he even begins.

Since our epistemologies are different, he can't just criticize mine without having his own, and he must be able to justify his own before²⁶ he criticizes mine. This is because his criticisms must themselves have their basic presuppositions – while he attacks me, he must have a ground to stand on while he swings at me, and he must have something with which to swing at me. This would not be true if we were to have the same basic presuppositions, but disagree only on the subsidiary details – in that case, he might not have to present a positive construction and be able to defend it, but in this case, he must.

I could go on, but then this will really become another essay. I just wanted to encourage you in return, that these and other criticisms can indeed be adequately answered.

I am glad that you said you might be able to help in the future. I also believe this. If all my readers remain intellectual babies, so that I must come to the rescue at every little criticism, then they really haven't learned apologetics at all! And then my writings would not be doing much practical good, even if they are rationally sound.

Thanks again for your loyalty and appreciation.

²⁵ This leads to the general point that I would like to raise in the next section, and for the purpose of which I have chosen to publish this correspondence. That is, I would like to discuss how we should answer compounded fallacies in apologetics. But first, we will finish the remaining portions of my original response.

²⁶ I mean not necessarily chronologically before, but at least logically before; that is, he must already have a positive rational justification for his epistemology at least in his mind, ready to be articulated and defended at any time, before he criticizes my epistemology. Otherwise, rationally speaking, he cannot even know about my epistemology, since he has no positive and defensible epistemology of his own by which he knows about mine.

Now, we will return to the question of how we should answer compounded fallacies. Although we have taken so long to get to this point, my main concern for this article is in fact not to defend myself, since the critics' efforts are insignificant, but to help you become better apologists. This section might actually seem a little anticlimactic, since after all that I have said above, I only need to outline a general answer here.

Non-Christians have written entire books documenting the alleged errors in the Bible, many of which are alleged self-contradictions. We will use this as an example in considering the question of how we are to deal with multiple fallacies, with a focus on the alleged self-contradictions.

An obvious option, of course, is to write our own books to deal with every alleged self-contradiction in the Bible, and some Christians have done exactly this. This is certainly not a wrong approach, especially if these books successfully resolve every alleged self-contradiction, but it has its shortcomings. First, it takes much time and energy to write these books. Second, a reader who wishes to understand how to answer every alleged self-contradiction will probably need to first read the books written by the non-Christians to understand the allegations, and then also the books written by the Christians in reply to those allegations. This might require much effort and expense. Third, very soon after the Christians publish their answers to the alleged self-contradictions, the non-Christians will then come back with their replies. And almost every passage in question will be considered as an individual case.²⁷

Again, I am not against providing an answer to every alleged self-contradiction, but it is indeed inconvenient, the back-and-forth process will never end, and some believers will be left confused and uncertain. Instead, whether or not we immediately provide specific answers to all alleged self-contradictions, we can direct our attention to a more basic problem with these criticisms – almost all of them show that the non-Christians do not really understand the nature of a contradiction, that is, what a contradiction is or means.

When one proposition is *correctly* said to contradict another, what is meant is that the one makes the other logically *impossible*. That one proposition is different from another does not indicate a contradiction, and that one proposition includes information that another one lacks does not indicate a contradiction. For example, "Mary came to my dinner party last night" does not at all contradict, "There were five million people at my dinner party last night." The first proposition does not say that Mary was the only one who came, and the second does not deny that Mary was one of the five million.

²⁷ Also consider the scientific objections from unbelievers. If they publish a book containing a hundred scientific objections against the Bible, one option is to *scientifically* refute every one of those objections. A broader approach is to *scientifically* refute the very scientific theories on which those objections are based. On the other hand, my approach would be to *logically* refute science itself, and then all the objections against the Bible based on science in all of human history, whether past, present, or future, are at the same time destroyed.

This is a very simple point, but non-Christians appear to be oblivious to it when they accuse the Scripture of containing numerous self-contradictions, when what really happens is that these non-Christian are just showing us numerous times that they have no idea what a contradiction means.

This answer both helps the Christians and refutes the non-Christians, with relatively little effort. After grasping this point, a Christian can competently address any example that the non-Christian wishes to discuss without having to first read an entire encyclopedia on all the biblical passages in question.

Applying this back to my situation, although my differences with other people include more than just my views on empiricism, until they (those who affirm any kind and any degree of empiricism) irrefutably justify the use of sensation as a means to knowledge, they cannot even begin to criticize me. They can know nothing – right, they cannot even read the Bible, because they say that one needs the senses to read it (which I deny), but they have yet to justify their senses as means to knowledge. On the other hand, I can read the Bible precisely because I reject any kind and any degree of empiricism, and instead affirm that God rules over all, including man's thinking and knowing.

It is futile to say that biblical presuppositions provide the sufficient preconditions for knowledge by sensation. Yes, biblical presuppositions are required to render errors intelligible in the first place – I agree with that – but errors are still errors, only now we can intelligibly think of them as errors. And this is also why I can intelligibly think of empiricism as fallacious. Biblical presuppositions cannot change irrationality into rationality; they can only make irrationality intelligible as irrationality.

Now, unless there is an absolute proof from someone who affirms any kind and any degree of empiricism as to how anyone can know anything (and for the Christian, how anyone can read the Bible) other than on the basis of something like my scripturalism, it would be a waste of my time to review any more attempted refutations. And my time is precious – it is liberally given to edify teachable believers and to evangelize unbelievers, but not to entertain those who are just itching for a fight that they can't win.

People like these hounded Clark on the same things until the day he died, and yet they have never offered a successful refutation or their own positive construction.²⁸ Now they are trying to do the same to me, but I refuse to let them dictate the direction of this ministry. Yet, I even recommend their writings and support their apologetic efforts. Some of these same people have asked me for pointers when they debated unbelievers, and I answered them with genuine concern and without any condescension. Moreover, knowing their public opposition against me, I keep their names private so as not to embarrass them.

This is my honor and their shame. May God judge between us.

²⁸ See Gordon Clark, *Clark Speaks from the Grave*.

11. Invincibility, Irrefutability, and Infallibility

You always claim that your writings are invincible. I am not even saying I disagree with you, but sometimes you come off kind of strong, maybe a little too strong. Couldn't your writings contain errors? You even said yourself that you have remove some of your past writings from circulation because they were not on target.

Perhaps there is a misunderstanding as to precisely what I am claiming and about what I am making the claim, and there seems to be some confusion about the meanings and implications of invincibility, irrefutability, and infallibility. But it is good that you asked this, because other people might also have a similar misunderstanding and confusion.

I do claim that a number of things that I have written are invincible and irrefutable. Many of these things I have said are in fact in agreement with many other theologians, and in those cases, especially when they have also presented similar arguments, I would just as readily affirm that they are also invincible and irrefutable on those points.

For example, I would affirm that Martin Luther on divine sovereignty, Charles Hodge on justification by faith, Robert Reymond on the deity of Christ, and many other theologians on many other topics, are invincible and irrefutable. They have correctly built their arguments for these doctrines from Scripture, and Scripture is invincible and irrefutable. So when I claim that I am invincible and irrefutable on certain points, I am not claiming something that is exclusive or unique to me.

This is very different from claiming infallibility. As an example, take my claim that my apologetic method is invincible and irrefutable. Now, to say that a certain apologetic method is invincible and irrefutable is very different from saying that the person is infallible, and that a person is fallible does not mean that he is wrong all the time. It is possible for me to write "1 + 1 = 2" a hundred times in an essay without making a mistake, and this essay would indeed be invincible and irrefutable (even if not very interesting), but this doesn't mean that I am infallible as a person.

I have stopped making some of my earliest materials available because they "contain errors." This is true, but I never claimed infallibility, and I don't need infallibility to be invincible and irrefutable on some points. Also, I never said that they were full of errors, but only that I have improved and have written better materials to replace them. This also implies that I hold myself to a very high standard, and thus if it is relevant at all, it tends to confirm my credibility rather than to undermine it.

These old materials contained a number of deficiencies and errors because: (1) When I wrote them, I was practically a kid, and (2) At the time of their writing, I had not yet considered the relevant topics with nearly as much thoughtful and even prolonged

agonizing consideration as I have done since. In addition – and this is an important point – I never claimed invincibility or irrefutability for these old materials.

Also, this goes to show that I am willing to admit my mistakes, even to the point of pulling materials off the shelves and then publicly discussing it. Thus there is no intellectual hypocrisy or double standard here: I am just as ruthless toward the errors in my own works as I am toward those in the works of others.

Anyway, those materials were produced at the earliest stage of my ministry, not long after my conversion, in fact, and while I was not nearly as well-known as I am now (not that I am very well-known now, only that I was still more obscure then). So I could easily forgo mentioning it and nobody would notice. Yet, I have not tried to hide past errors even though I have no moral obligation to tell *everybody* about them, including those who have never read them.

It is with this same mindset, and the same willingness to admit error when I am wrong, that I insist that there is no possibility that my present apologetic method (among other things) can be defeated or refuted, either by reason or by revelation. I would admit it if it is even just possible that I am wrong about it, but I cannot make such an admission, because there is no chance that I am wrong about this. This is the plain truth, and to say otherwise would not be humble, but dishonest.

In contrast to these earliest materials, all of my beliefs regarding the core issues in my theology and in my writings are conclusions resulting from careful consideration, diligent comparison, and rigorous deductions. For the rest of my life, there is zero possibility that I will change my mind regarding these central points.

For example, I will never abandon Calvinism to embrace Arminianism. This is not because I have become stuck to my personal preferences or traditions, but because Calvinism has been biblically and rationally established, and Arminianism has been biblically and rationally demolished. The result is conclusive, and I know it. Since I know it, I am going to talk about it with an assurance that matches my certainty. If I am sure, how can I say that I could be wrong? If I say that I could be wrong, then it means that I am not sure. Or should I not be sure about anything? Are you sure about that?

I come off strong because, at the risk of being misinterpreted as arrogant, I wish to impart my confidence toward the Scripture to people. And I repeatedly remind the readers that I am so sure only because my own confidence is derived from the infallibility of Scripture. So I am not going to undermine my own materials by adopting a false humility, even if it would be more socially acceptable.

Christians so rarely witness any faith in their leaders that when one comes out and shows it, everybody thinks that he is just being arrogant. But they have been brainwashed by a non-Christian standard. If the Christians cannot claim invincibility and irrefutability because of the Scripture's infallibility, then the non-Christians will always have a place to

stand in the intellectual realm. But on the authority of Scripture and in the name of Christ, I allow the unbelievers no such place to stand.²⁹

If something is true and you affirm it, then you must be right on that point. If you are not sure that something is true, then don't say it, and there is no problem. Too many theologians and preachers say, "This *must* be true...but I could be wrong." This is not humble, just stupid. Don't be fooled by the constant self-abasement practiced by some people. It might be that they are in fact humble individuals, but on the other hand, they might just be spineless losers. They make an uncertain sound, and the people who hear them become confused and hesitant rather than focused and militant.³⁰

Now, other than my positions on the central issues, I admit that some of the statements in my books could be wrong. But I have never claimed to be infallible, only that my method of apologetics is invincible (it will always defeat the opponent) and irrefutable (it cannot be defeated by any opponent). And it is invincible and irrefutable because it is biblical and rational. This is still true even if certain non-essential statements in my books are mistaken. Again, a general invincibility and irrefutability is very different from infallibility or absolute perfection, and I have never claimed to be infallible or perfect.

This also applies to other Christians when they speak from Scripture. If you were to write an essay showing from the Bible that Christ is God, then you *better* claim invincibility and irrefutability (even if your presentation is not the best, and even if not every statement in your essay is correct). Some things are just *right*, and you ought to know it and claim it, and then pass on this confidence to others.

That said, there are indeed a number of things – some major and general, some minor and specific – that I am uncertain about. And if you will go through my writings, you will find that I always qualify those statements with words like "maybe," "probably," "it is possible," "it is my opinion," and so forth.

Sometimes, I am uncertain because I am being consistent with my epistemology, so that I will not claim more certainty than what I can rationally support. At other times, I am uncertain because I have not yet thoroughly studied and considered the relevant issues and arguments, so that I am unwilling to take a definite position. Moreover, there are some things that I refrain from mentioning altogether because I am not yet certain about the correct position; meanwhile, I continue to spend time researching those topics.

In fact, I qualify many statements regarding things for which other people would claim certainty based on their false epistemology, but my standard is much higher. This also

²⁹ This is also related to why I use what many consider to be offensive invectives when describing the intelligence and the lifestyle of the unbelievers. I wish to make a sharp contrast between light and darkness, wisdom and folly, etc., not to mention that most of the invectives that I use are either directly taken from Scripture, or are derived from Scripture.

³⁰ To illustrate, one can lose more faith listening to William Lane Craig defend the faith than one might gain. He makes his own arguments sound so uncertain. Everything is soft and merely probable, but nothing is certain, nothing is absolute and irrefutable. This is not humble – it is just pathetic. In terms of attitude, Norman Geisler is much better.

means that when I declare that a given position is invincible and irrefutable, I have already applied a much greater skepticism against the position than any of my critics and opponents could ever muster.

12. Excluded by Necessity

My friend has asked one of the most commonly raised objections to Christianity, and I've soberly realized that since I never took the time to read through any critiques of this argument, I find myself unprepared to answer him adequately.

His simple objection is this: why does the Christian God have to be the one true God, and not the God of any other religion/myth? I realize I could go through and point out the insufficiencies of each major religion's god, but is there also a way to positively demonstrate Christianity's sole claim to truth?

Your ministry has been an unimaginable blessing for me as I prepare to go off to a nominally conservative Christian university where liberal theology abounds in disguise. I've just bought two of your books (*Presuppositional Confrontations* and *Apologetics in Conversation*), and am absolutely anxious for them to arrive. I thank God for your writings and pray that your ministry will continue to be blessed.

For any true proposition, there is literally an infinite number of possible errors related to it or deviations from it. For example, if " $1 + 1 = 2$ " is true, then the possible errors or deviations would include $1 + 1 = 3, 4, 5, \dots, n$.

Therefore, it is impossible to make a specific refutation of every individual possible error or deviation from the truth. Instead, what we need is a positive claim or argument that excludes all errors or deviations by logical necessity.

In our case, if Christianity (the Bible) is true, and this same Christianity declares that all non-Christian claims and worldviews are false, then all non-Christian claims and worldviews are therefore false by logical necessity.

Now, to eliminate all non-Christian claims and worldviews by logical necessity would demand that your positive demonstration be correct by logical necessity. Supposing that we have such an apologetic, the situation would become thus:

1. Christianity is true by logical necessity.
2. Christianity excludes all non-Christian views.
3. Therefore, all non-Christian views are false by logical necessity.

So the key is (1) – the rest are easy and automatic. And to attain (1), you will have to read my works on apologetics and learn how to skillfully apply the method. I recommend reading *Ultimate Questions* (at least chapters 1 and 2), *Presuppositional Confrontations*, and *Apologetics in Conversation*, probably best in this order.

Then, this forces your opponent to interact with the Christian's positive construction, rather than allowing him to evade the force of your presentation just by throwing mere

possibilities at you – since you have destroyed those possibilities, not by specific refutations, but by logical necessity.

Now, if you are dealing with someone with a specific non-Christian worldview, you might also perform a refutation of his particular belief system. This would function to show that you are not trying to avoid his own positive arguments, and (since some might be confused about elimination by logical necessity) to show him that you are not hiding behind mere sophism.

13. "God is Logic"

I am trying to wade through your different books and documents, so please forgive me if I have not gotten to this issue yet or if I have missed it altogether.

I am presently having a discussion about God and logic. One premise has been made that "God = logic" and "logic = God." From your viewpoint, is this a valid premise? Or is it better stated, "God is logical"?

To give a little context, we're discussing the Trinity and how it is logical – the same for the hypostatic union of Christ.

One person has said, "I would disagree with the statement that God is logic. This is contrary to biblical revelation. Logic has as its target a truth statement. It is important to recognize that logic is a tool, not truth."

Do you have any thoughts on the matter?

I have said something about this in my books, but I will give you a brief answer here.

There are different senses in which we may use the word "logic," and when answering the question, we should specify the meaning.

It is wrong to flatly say that "God is Logic" is contrary to biblical revelation, because John 1:1 says that Christ is the "Logos," which is just as easily translated "Reason" or "Logic" as "Word." In fact, in the context of this verse, which presents Christ as the true "Logos" of Greek philosophy (the principle of rationality that structures, regulates, and upholds all things) – but in the correct and personified sense – it is probably preferable to translate it "Reason" or "Logic" rather than "Word."

Therefore, in this sense, it is true that "God is Logic." However, we are using the word in a personal or personified sense – or in the fullest sense. "Logic" or "Reason" in this sense is a person, and includes intellectual content (all that God knows). The emphasis, then, is on the rationality of Christ the Logos – that all things are consistent in his mind and his works, that his wisdom and power structures, regulates, and upholds all things in accordance with his perfect rationality.

We more often use the word "logic" in a narrower sense – as in the "laws of logic." When we are using the word in this sense, then I would not say that "God is the laws of logic"; rather, the relation between the laws of logic and God is that these laws are descriptions of the way that God thinks and operates.

When we are using the word in this sense, then "logic" is indeed void of content; however, they are still not mere "tools." When we think logically (in accordance with the laws of logic), we are not using mere "tools" of thought, as if they are detached and independent from the mind of God, but we are imitating the way God thinks and

operates. To call the laws of logic mere tools might convey the idea that they are something that God has merely given or even invented for us to use, instead of necessary rules of thought that we must follow in order to imitate God's pattern of thinking and acting.

The above distinction between the personal and impersonal senses can be expressed simply by capitalizing the words "logic" and "reason" when we are using them in the personal sense. This is why I sometimes use the word "Reason" in my books and articles when referring to Christ the Logos.

14. Christ the Reason

I came across today a letter written by Bahnsen regarding some issues he had with John Robbins.

At one point, Bahnsen says, regarding Clark, "Who can forget his exegetically atrocious rendition of John 1:1 ("In the beginning was Logic")?" Why does he say this? Does he think that "In the beginning was the Logic" is a wrong translation? If so, why?

I thought you, Clark, Bahnsen, and Robbins were all on the same page with respect to that verse. Any help that you can offer to clear this up would be helpful.

Bahnsen disagreed with translating "logos" as "Logic" in this verse. Here Clark was right and Bahnsen was wrong. Depending on the context, "logos" can be translated by a number of English words, such as "word," "speech," "proposition," "sentence," "reason," "logic," and several others.

In John 1:1, the verse is declaring the pre-existence of Christ the Logos and his relation to God (the Father) and to creation. In its historical context, John is declaring that Christ is the fulfillment of the Logos of Greek philosophy – that is, the principle of Reason that structures and regulates the whole universe. Of course, John is not saying that Christ and the Greek Logos are the same thing, but he takes the word or concept and fills it with Christian meaning.

Given this context, "Word" is in fact probably an inferior translation to "Reason" and "Logic." At the least, we can say that "Reason" and "Logic" are not wrong. Even without the historical context, the immediate context of the passage should also allow this translation. Also consider the relevance of the personified "Wisdom" in Proverbs.

Sometimes I refer to "Reason" with a capital "R" in my books and articles. This is what I have in mind. I am speaking of Christ, who is Reason personified – and to reject him is to reject all rationality.

There is no legitimate exegetical reason to forbid translating "logos" as "Reason" or "Logic" in John 1:1. People shrink back from it probably due to an anti-intellectual prejudice.

Since I will probably never devote an entire article especially on the book, I might as well include a brief statement about Bahnsen's *Van Til's Apologetic*, in which he made a number of criticisms against Clark.

I agree with several of Bahnsen's criticisms – he quotes several statements from Clark's writings that I in fact reject. However, in most of those cases, I nevertheless do not adopt

Bahnsen's alternatives. In other words, in most of those cases where I think Bahnsen correctly criticizes Clark, I reject both Bahnsen and Clark, and hold my own position on the subject.

But then, the rest (that is, the majority) of Bahnsen's criticisms against Clark are outrageously wrong. While I expect a follower of Van Til to misunderstand and misrepresent Clark on some points, I was astounded at how poorly Bahnsen had misunderstood and misrepresented Clark in most of his criticisms. Those portions of his book reflect far inferior scholarship than what I believe Bahnsen was capable of. If I were to misrepresent Bahnsen or Van Til in a similar way, I would probably never get away with it. The problem is that most readers of Bahnsen might never look up the corresponding references in Clark's works, and thus they will come away with an impression of Clark that is *way, way, way, way* off.

Moreover, even in cases where Bahnsen correctly represents Clark's position in this book, his objections are extraordinarily feeble and irrational. And in many of these instances, it seems that Bahnsen has no logical refutation or rational alternative at all; rather, it appears that he rejects Clark's position just because he doesn't like it.

These lapses in scholarly judgment and rationality on Bahnsen's part might be due to an inherited anti-Clarkian prejudice – a prejudice that never had received a proper rational justification. But I cannot tell whether this is the true or main reason, or how much it explains.

My suggestion is that readers should ignore all the criticisms of Clark in Bahnsen's book until they actually look up those quotations from Clark, and read them in their full contexts.

15. Man's Innate Knowledge³¹

I affirm that man has an innate knowledge of God, with enough clarity and content so that he is without excuse in denying or disobeying God.

However, I deny that a system of theology can be founded on our innate knowledge of God. Or, to say it another way, I deny that our innate knowledge of God can be the first principle of a biblical worldview – there is insufficient content, clarity, and objectivity, among other reasons.

This is why I never appeal to intuition to justify any part of my theology or to perform apologetics. An accurate understanding of the content and the extent of our own innate knowledge of God comes from verbal revelation in the first place.

To say this yet another way, although I affirm that we have an innate knowledge of God, we do not base our faith and assurance or our theology and apologetics on this innate knowledge; rather, we must base these things on verbal revelation.

I do refer to man's innate knowledge in my writings, but I never do this as if the truth of Christianity rests on this as its foundation, or as if this innate knowledge is itself proof that Christianity is true. Otherwise, this would become an appeal to man's intuition, and the argument would become subjective.

Rather, I appeal to this innate knowledge only to explain why biblical presuppositions are not denied in practice but are implicitly assumed even by unbelievers, and to explain in what sense we have common ground or a point of contact with the unbelievers when preaching the gospel to them.

So, although I affirm that Scripture is indeed logically undeniable, when I use "undeniable" in the context of discussing man's innate knowledge, the emphasis then is not on the *logical* undeniability of Scripture, but that some core biblical premises cannot be denied *in practice* despite the unbelievers' claim to the contrary.

Thus, we refer to man's innate knowledge not to prove Scripture (rather, it is Scripture that proves the innate knowledge), but only to explain why we can communicate with unbelievers and how to properly relate to them.

In other words, when we are speaking of the innate knowledge of God, we are considering the *strategic* aspect of apologetics, and not the strictly *rational* aspect. That the Scripture is logically undeniable is demonstrated by engaging the contents of Scripture itself, and not man's innate knowledge.

³¹ The following is an edited response to a question from a reader. The question has to do with a point I made in my *Systematic Theology*.

Some people have failed to note this distinction in my writings (or mistakenly think that I have failed to make this distinction in my writings), so that they falsely accuse me of being incoherent on this point (that is, as if I deny intuition and then appeal to it anyway). Rather, in my system of theology and apologetics, (if not for the fact that Scripture teaches it) we can throw out man's innate knowledge altogether and it will remain essentially unaffected (although some practical adjustments will be needed), since it does not depend on man's innate knowledge.

Then, you wrote, "Maybe what is suppressed is the innate knowledge of God that is written on every man's heart." This is exactly right. But you would like to know why this is still called knowledge, if it is suppressed to the point of being denied. The explanation is that just because you know something does not mean that you consciously think about it all the time. However, if you know something, it does imply that it can potentially be recalled.

This has similarities to what people mean when they refer to "repressed" memory, although I am wary of the implications that can come from using the word. When it comes to our innate knowledge of God, Scripture teaches that sinners know God in their minds, but they have, in a morally culpable way, suppressed or repressed this knowledge. Greg Bahnsen called this the sinner's "self-deception."

In regeneration and conversion, the elect sinner is awakened from his intellectual and moral slumber (in which he has sunk into deep irrationality and depravity), and into the light of Christ and Truth:

But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." (Ephesians 5:13–14)

To read more about man's innate knowledge of God, and its implications and uses, please see my *Systematic Theology*, *Ultimate Questions*, and *Presuppositional Confrontations*.

16. Common Ground

I am most interested in a point that you put forth in your book, *Presuppositional Confrontations*. My hope is that you will further expound upon this point for me:

"The real common ground that the Christian has with the non-Christian is that they are both made in the image of God. However, the non-Christian suppresses and denies this common ground in his explicit philosophy. Therefore, in terms of our explicit philosophies, there is no common ground between the Christian and the non-Christian. But the knowledge of God is inescapable, and surfaces in distorted form at various points of the non-Christian's philosophy. Thus the Christian argues that the non-Christian already knows about the true God and denies it, which means that the non-Christian is without excuse and subject to condemnation."

We must never say that there is absolutely no common ground between believers and unbelievers, but we can say that there is no explicit common ground, since unbelievers deny what they already know about God. But since they already know something true about God, then there is common ground at least in this sense, although unbelievers suppress or deny this in their explicit philosophy.

If there is absolutely no common ground in any sense, then unbelievers would not even be human. However, we have at least the image of God in common with them, and also the universal and inescapable knowledge about God and his moral laws.

There is no explicit agreement between Christian and non-Christian philosophy, and in this sense, there is no common ground. This is in opposition to classical and evidential apologetics, which say that unbelievers have "common ground" in the sense that they do not even need to reject their basic principles to reach God, and that they just need to use those principles a little better.

But there is really zero common ground in our explicit philosophy, because even $1 + 1 = 2$ means something different to me than to an unbeliever. I think of it in relation to God, but the unbeliever doesn't, and it is possible to write out this "relationship" in propositional form. Therefore, " $1 + 1 = 2$ " is a shorthand for something that has different meanings and implications for the believers and unbelievers. In this sense, there is no common ground. Thus the unbelievers must give up their basic principles to convert.

17. Axiom and Proof³²

The innate knowledge mostly has to do with how we can have any common point of reference with the unbelievers, so that we can communicate with them, and press them concerning the fact that they implicitly acknowledge biblical premises even though they explicitly deny them. It is not strictly related to the self-justifying nature of biblical revelation. That is, even if there is no innate knowledge, and even if there are no human beings at all, the Bible would still be objectively true, and self-justifying, being a revelation from God.

As for how a first principle can be self-justifying, first consider the law of non-contradiction. This law is self-justifying in the sense that it is logically undeniable – you must affirm it in the very attempt to deny it. However, as a *first principle* it would be insufficient, because it does not contain enough (any) information, including the very information that you need to tell you how you could know about the law in the first place (a theory of epistemology).

So, when I say that a first principle must have the content to justify itself, I am saying that it must coherently supply all this missing information – on metaphysics, epistemology, linguistics, ethics, etc. – otherwise, the first principle itself would not have enough information to make itself possible.

The content of our first principle, of course, is the Bible, and it is systematically expressed in Christian theology, and this is the basis upon which we think about the world and interact with the unbelievers.

Now, Clark says that every system must begin from an *unprovable* axiom or first principle. Properly understood, this is true, since *by definition* a "proof" involves reasoning to a conclusion from previous premises. And if we can have a "proof" for our first principle in this sense, then our first principle would not really be *first* (since it would be a conclusion derived from previous premises), and we would be contradicting ourselves to call that a "first" principle.³³

So Clark is right, but because many people do not use this technical definition for "proof," when you say that your first principle is "unprovable," then they tend to think this means that it is arbitrary, or that it cannot be rationally defended. Strictly speaking, the fault rests with these people who misunderstand, and not with Clark, since they fail to understand what a "proof" means.

³² The following is an edited message sent in response to a reader who asked about the first principle of a biblical approach to philosophy and apologetics.

³³ The same point applies to the words "indemonstrable" and "demonstration."

I usually do not call the Christian first principle "unprovable" because I wish to avoid this misunderstanding, that is, as if we cannot rationally defend our first principle. But even Clark affirms that we can defend our first principle, but just not by what is *technically* called a "proof." For example, in *A Christian View of Men and Things*, he shows how our first principle can successfully deduce an adequate intellectual system, and at the same time, how other options have failed.

My difference with him on this point (although I do not *contradict* him here) might be that I emphasize more than he does the self-justifying and undeniable nature of our biblical first principle, as well as how this first principle logically rules out all others. This way, our starting point would not appear arbitrary (since it is necessary), even though, as I stated, Clark's explanation would not appear arbitrary to those who rightly understand what he says.

18. Protecting Your Faith³⁴

I am a 20-year-old university student at a secular university. I want to thank you for your ministry. Your works are a blessing to me. Your writings have been challenging me greatly. I find your apologetic methodology enlightening and biblically convincing. You have also challenged me to develop a more consistent Calvinism.

I am going to major in philosophy for my Bachelor of Arts degree. Your writings have influenced me in this direction. When I first started university I was fearful of pagan philosophy. I wasn't sure if my faith would be able to hold out against all the pagan thinking. After completing two years of university I am beginning to see how irrational non-Christian systems of thought are. I would never have dreamed that I would be able to challenge my professors in front of an entire class and demonstrate that what they are saying is irrational. Rarely a class goes by where I'm not taught something that makes no sense. It is becoming easier for me to see through non-Christian thought.

Thank you for helping me to see the superiority of the Christian worldview. I am still in the process of digesting your main writings. I know I will be consulting your writings for the next two years of my studies. I am looking forward to digging into your works more fully.

Thank you for your comments, and for taking the time to introduce yourself.

Yes, once you understand the rational superiority and necessity of the biblical worldview, you have nothing to fear from non-Christians. No argument is going to be nearly good enough to touch you.

Nevertheless, I will offer you one bit of important advice.

The biblical worldview in itself, being a revealed portion of the mind of God, is rationally invincible, so that no matter how high of a view you have of it, you can never overestimate it. However, we often underestimate the noetic effects of sin, so that we overestimate ourselves. Consider the false confidence that the disciples had before they abandoned Christ.

Thus, a general principle for your Christian life should be to guard your faith as God's precious gift to you, and even though it is secure in Christ, and even though you should boldly express and exercise it, you should not be careless with it or deliberately subject it to abuse.

³⁴ The following is an edited correspondence between a student and me. I gave him some advice that I would like to share with other university students. High school students and parents should also pay special attention, and then take time to consider the subject in greater detail, beyond what is said below.

Therefore, although to major in philosophy at a secular university is one legitimate option on your way to building a life that glorifies God, I urge you to do adequate preparation.

For example, you should look into the curriculum and course requirements for a philosophy major in your university, and get a list of some of the essential works that they will have you study and interact with. Then, over the summer, you should read some of these books to make sure that you can "handle" them.

This approach has several advantages.

First, you will be reading the books, perhaps for the first time, at your own pace and in an environment of your choice. You will have the time you need to carefully construct refutations to all the non-Christian arguments in them, and to look up relevant Christian resources to help you with this, without the rush and the pressure that often accompany the pace of the regular school year.

Second, this will also help you with your performance once school begins again, especially if you take some decent notes while you read during the summer.

Also, while you read during the summer, if you find that your faith cannot yet handle these non-Christian works, you might still have time to reconsider whether it is best for your spiritual life to pursue a major in philosophy. Judging from what you wrote, this should not be a problem, but this way, you will have time to find out and make sure.

19. The Futility of Pragmatic Arguments³⁵

Here is the completed essay on drug use. I have added some new information. It is complete except for the final editing.

I think it is a good essay. It is written in what I have dubbed the "Vincent Cheung" style. What I mean by this is that you have a deadly logic in your books, and it has rubbed off on this young man.

Regarding your essay on drugs, I haven't had time to read it as carefully as I would like to, but I wanted to get back to you about it quickly.

I think the essay is fine in general. Your quote from John Frame is particularly interesting:

Legalizing drugs is, in my mind, a live option. The "war on drugs" doesn't seem to have been successful, and it is unlikely to succeed in the near future. Legalization would lower the cost of drugs and therefore the crime rate. I'm inclined toward a position that would legalize drugs for adults but provide harsh penalties for those who sell to children. This parallels the regulation of alcohol and tobacco. I'm inclined to think that adults should have to take responsibility for their own choices in this area.

I have not read this before and was surprised that he used such a poor pragmatic argument. By now I shouldn't be surprised by bad arguments, but sometimes they are so obviously bad that I am still taken by surprise, especially when they are asserted by people who are supposed to know better. Perhaps I should lower my expectation even more.

Now, even if we could agree that the "war on drugs" doesn't work, pragmatic arguments are weak because there are often ways to make something work that doesn't work – it's just that people won't make it work.

Regarding the policy of punishment against drug use, I suspect that if we make even minimum drug use a capital crime punishable by immediate shooting on the spot regardless of age, then the war on drugs would indeed "work" better. Better yet, if it is the policy that the government would immediately kill the drug user, all his friends, and all his relatives, I am pretty sure that there would be fewer drug users.

³⁵ The following is an edited correspondence. One reader sends me an article in which he tries to provide a biblical perspective on drug use. My response focuses on the futility of pragmatic arguments.

Of course I am not suggesting that this should be the policy, but I am saying that when a person uses a pragmatic argument against something, I can often make a suggestion that turns the conclusion around.

Another example is the death penalty. Those who oppose the death penalty often say that it is no good because it fails to deter crime. This assumes that punishment is only for the purpose of deterrence, but ignoring that for now, we must ask *why* capital punishment does not deter. Maybe it is because after we catch and convict the criminals, we feed them, make them comfortable, let them repeatedly appeal for 10 years, give them all kinds of rights and privileges, and then after all that, we kill them with a painless injection.

I am pretty sure that capital punishment would work to deter if we kill all convicted criminals within six months, and with the most painful and gruesome punishment imaginable – and do it on public television.

Again, I am not suggesting that this ought to be the policy, but only that the pragmatic argument is no good, because if the argument is that it doesn't work, then all I have to do is to suggest something that would make it work. When you base an argument on whether something works, the opponent can often just give a counter-example.

Besides this, of course, there are many other problems with pragmatic arguments. For example, it identifies the good or the "ought" with the practical. Also, it assumes that the end by which the means are judged is indeed the end that ought to be desired.

20. Not Enough "Faith" to be an Atheist?

In the context of defending Christianity, believers sometimes would say something like, "I don't have enough *faith* to be an atheist." Even some presuppositionalists abuse the word by saying that every worldview must begin by taking its first principles on "faith."

However, this is both biblically false and strategically unwise.

When non-Christians make the accusation that we affirm Christianity based only on "faith," they are not using the biblical definition of the word, but by it they mean something like, "belief by pure assumption without any rational justification." Some Christians then make a rational case for Christianity, and conclude, "It takes even more faith to be an atheist, and I don't have enough faith to be an atheist."

When used this way, faith means mere credulity, and this implies that Christianity is affirmed by credulity, only that it takes even more credulity to be an atheist. This unbiblical use of the word encourages our audience to have a little credulity, so that he will become a Christian, but not too much, lest he becomes an atheist. But if this is what "faith" means, then why not renounce all credulity and have no faith at all?

The problem is further aggravated when Christians assert *in the same context* that faith is not mere credulity, but that it is rational. But if we plug this back into the statement, "I don't have enough faith to be an atheist," then it becomes an admission that atheism is more rational, which is exactly what we denied when we first said, "I don't have enough faith to be an atheist."

In the biblical context, faith is always a good thing, and it is always good to have more of it. But suddenly, in the very context of defending "faith," we assert that atheism must also begin with "faith," and that atheists in fact have more of it, since it takes even more "faith" to be an atheist.

Then, in the same discussion or debate, we also say that "faith" is rational, and that the atheists don't have it at all because it is a gift of God. Or are we saying that a little of this divine gift would make us Christians, but a lot of it would make us atheists?

If we are using the biblical definition – if we are talking about the kind of faith that we have and want our hearers to have – then, the truth is that if I have any faith at all, even as small as a mustard seed, I would not be an atheist. The atheist has no faith, not more faith. If we are using the biblical definition of the word, then if you have any faith at all, you are already a Christian.

So, this use of the word "faith" may seem clever to some, but it is in fact unbiblical, foolish, confusing, and self-defeating. At least in the context of a biblical discussion, we should never use the word this way, that is, to denote credulity.

Rather than saying, "I don't have enough of a *good* thing to be an atheist," we should say, "I don't have enough of a *bad* thing to be an atheist." Thus, it is much more appropriate to say, "I am not *stupid* enough to be an atheist."

It also follows that we should never say, "We must all begin with faith." No, we don't. We all begin from some first principle as the logical starting point of all our thinking. Christians affirm Scripture as their starting point by faith-reason (a divine gift of assenting to truth that is eminently rational), but non-Christians affirm their various false and irrational first principles by their wickedness and credulity.

21. When There are Multiple Perspectives

I have given away your books to Christians on several occasions.

From the comments that I receive from people, it seems that they are quite resistant to certain teachings, although they don't always explain.

Sometimes their objection is based on the fact that various preachers have different opinions, so that they are unsure what they should believe.

In the case of Calvinism vs. Arminianism, one lady who had attended a Pentecostal seminary said that she once read a book that contained fifty points supporting Calvinism and another fifty points supporting Arminianism. So which should she believe?

She just gave up and said, "I will just forget about the whole thing and still keep preaching the gospel" – perhaps implying that she would stick to Arminianism since, in her thinking, Calvinism somehow eradicates evangelism.

I suppose the doctrine of election would not be the only thing that they dislike, since I affirm many things that are against popular opinion, even if they are biblical and rational.

But if they disagree with something, they must have actual arguments against those points that I make, and these arguments must actually refute me. Unless they have these arguments, then a stubborn disagreement is dishonest and sinful. When appropriate, you must press this point, since it might not be obvious to them.

Truth is not subject to their preference. If their disagreement is strong, unfair, and stubborn enough, it might even mean that they are not really Christians, since they are rejecting the clear biblical truth and insist on believing in what is false regardless of what the Bible says.

Of course, this is true not just when people read my books, but it is true when one reads the Bible or any Christian work. That is, if one disagrees, then he must have a good reason, and if he stubbornly disagrees with what is really a biblical teaching, then it is sinful, and in some cases, it might even indicate that he has never been converted.

You have already implied that a person who claims to be unable to decide based on the fact that there are arguments on both sides nevertheless does not (and really cannot) remain neutral. In this case, this woman cannot say that she will give up investigating and "just keep preaching the gospel," since, especially in the case of Calvinism and Arminianism, the very nature of the gospel is the issue being debated. So what is the gospel?

It is foolish to refuse to decide just because there are multiple perspectives. There are arguments for and against many religions. If she cannot decide between Calvinism and Arminianism because there are arguments on both sides, then neither should she be able to decide for or against Christianity. So how did she decide for Christianity, and how does her decision stick?

Also, she says that there are arguments for both sides, but do both sides have good arguments? For example, Arminians often argue that Calvinism (especially regarding its doctrine of election) teaches something that is unfair. This may carry strong persuasive power for many irrational and careless people, but this does not mean that it is a good argument. As you now know, there are some simple and conclusive answers to this objection. Those people just don't know about them, or in some cases, refuse to respond to them out of sinful intellectual dishonesty.

In around one minute, I can make up ten arguments asserting that I am the US President, but they won't be very good arguments. I can say, "I want to be the US President, therefore I am the US President." This is a real argument, just not a good one. Another one: "My mom says that I am a good boy, therefore I am the US President." This is also a real argument, with one explicit and one assumed premise, leading to the conclusion. But this argument is also fallacious and easily destroyed. It is not much harder to destroy every argument for Arminianism. In any case, it would be supremely stupid for someone to say that now she is unsure whether I am really the US President, since there are arguments on both sides!

So, one of the things that we should do with people who say that they cannot decide between Calvinism and Arminianism because there seems to be arguments on both sides is to sit down with them and actually examine those arguments.

Your task would then be to show that Arminianism doesn't really have even one good argument in its favor. The truth is specific and exclusive, and there are no good arguments for falsehood. So it is not good enough if Calvinism wins ten points and Arminianism wins two – if you handle things right, Calvinism should have all the points and Arminianism should have zero.

This also applies when it comes to scriptural arguments. If Calvinism is true and Arminianism is false, there should not be even one verse of Scripture that supports Arminianism. We affirm Calvinism not because there are more biblical passages that support it, but because all relevant biblical passages either explicitly teach it, or are at least consistent with it, whereas there are no biblical passages that teach Arminianism.

Nevertheless, in a book where there are fifty arguments supporting Calvinism and fifty supporting Arminianism, there are probably quite a few bad arguments for Calvinism among those fifty points, and some of those bad argument will be based upon inconsistent Calvinism. Whatever the reason, all bad arguments for Calvinism should be discarded. But then, if you will examine the fifty arguments for Arminianism, you should be able to easily destroy all fifty of them.

It makes no sense that a person should be confused about an issue just because there are multiple perspectives. For every truth, there is logically an infinite number of possible falsehoods or deviations relating to it.

For example, if the truth is $1 + 1 = 2$, then, we can deviate from this by saying $1 + 1 = 3$, or 4, or 5, or 6, and so on to infinity. This is the case regarding any truth. It is a sign of an irrational and unstable mind to be bothered just because people disagree and offer arguments for different views.

On the other hand, even if everyone agrees on something, it doesn't mean that the position that they agree on is correct. So, whether something is popular or controversial is logically irrelevant.

22. Apologetics for Christian Students³⁶

I am a philosophy major at a university in Texas. The school is associated with an incredibly liberal church, and the philosophy department is made up of six atheist professors.

Last semester I took a class on modern epistemology and found myself somewhat disappointed by the lack of Reformed Christian materials in that area. It was a rough semester for me being constantly bombarded by my professors.

Your essays have given me hope and courage once again. They are straightforward, easy to read, and in no way sugarcoat or compromise the truth. My summer reading so far has been so exciting and full of joy.

Praise God for the amazing gifts he has given you as well as your boldness to stand up for the truth. I just wanted to let you know how extremely valuable I have found your books.

I have just ordered your *Systematic Theology*, *Ultimate Questions*, and *The Light of Our Minds*. I stumbled upon *Apologetics in Conversation* a few weeks ago and have since been reading your essays virtually everyday.

What other books of yours would you recommend I get?

First, I recommend that you *master* the approach, and the very way of thinking, that I outline in my books. Just by doing this, you will become forever invincible to any unbelieving professor or philosophy that you will encounter.

Remember that a complete and effective approach to biblical apologetics demands that you become increasingly knowledgeable about your own biblical worldview. So studying reliable systematic theologies and biblical commentaries is a big part to becoming a better apologist.

Besides those books of mine that you listed, I recommend that you also read, *Presuppositional Confrontations*, *The Sermon on the Mount*, *Prayer and Revelation*, *Commentary on Ephesians*, and *Commentary on Philippians*, perhaps in this order, but that's up to you.

Then, since you are a philosophy major, I also recommend Gordon Clark's *Thales to Dewey* in addition to my usual recommendations on apologetics.

Thanks so much for writing me back!

³⁶ The following is an edited correspondence. I hope that it will encourage high school and college students to study my works on theology and apologetics.

I just can't explain to you what a blessing your books have been to me so far this summer. You are definitely the master apologist that I pray and dream to become, and I say that not to feed your ego but rather to give *God* the glory for it.

I also find it kind of funny that you use the word "moron" in your work and provide justification for doing so. I actually got in trouble in my existentialism class for calling Nietzsche a moron in my final paper. I did my paper on Nietzsche's view of Jesus (he believed he was an awesome teacher who never claimed to be a savior, God, or Lord). I used Scripture and wrote about how Nietzsche was not at all justified in making his claims about Jesus and how his entire worldview did not hold any water. Needless to say, the professor didn't like my paper and my use of terms like "moron."

I will definitely get those books you recommended.

Thanks.

The Bible is the ultra-rational infallible Word of God, so anyone can more or less become a master apologist when he firmly stands on it and faithfully argues from it. As I wrote in *Presuppositional Confrontations*:

Christians today are too quickly embarrassed by the intellectual challenges thrown at them by the unbelievers. Although we are not divinely inspired like the prophets and the apostles, if we will wholly depend on the revelation of Scripture, we will indeed be the master philosophers of this world. Because we have revelation as the foundation of our philosophy, unbelievers are not in fact competing against our own wisdom, but the very wisdom of God. Thus if we will only learn to apply divine revelation with skill when answering their challenges, there can be no real contest, but we will be able to destroy every unbelieving argument, and embarrass the gainsayers.

Any believer can become invincible against unbelief because of the inherent superiority of the biblical worldview. You just need to learn how to unleash the overwhelming rational power of divine revelation in writing and in conversation.

Now, in some contexts, it is doubtless biblically acceptable to call someone a moron, or to call someone like Nietzsche a moron in a paper. As I show in my article, "A Moron by Any Other Name," passages like 1 Peter 3:15 have been universally misapplied, in a way that would condemn even the prophets and the apostles, and also Christ himself. The error also results in a weaker confrontation against unbelief.

If you have argued your case, and calling Nietzsche a "moron" is the proper conclusion of your presentation, then it would be irrational for a professor to reject it. "Name-calling" is a fallacy only if it is unsupported by rational argument, but if a derogatory label is the product of a valid argument, then it is a logical conclusion, not a fallacy. The argument must be refuted before the label can be rationally rejected. Still, calling him "moron"

might not be the only way to state your conclusion, so you will have to exercise wisdom as to whether this is the best way to say it in a college paper.

In any case, as I show in the same article, there is indeed a proper application of 1 Peter 3:15, and that is when you are dealing with authority figures. College professors would qualify (as would parents, government officials, employers, etc.), so even as you seek to boldly confront unbelief in the university, take care that you do not challenge your professors in an unbiblical manner, and even unnecessarily jeopardize your grades. Nevertheless, some offenses are necessary and unavoidable, and in these cases, you must not compromise even if it damages your grades.

Additional Comments

The biblical system is inherently rational and invincible. You don't need a whole lot of add-ons to patch it up or to support it. It cannot be successfully attacked, but it contains all the needed ingredients to destroy all other worldviews.

So if a person understands the content and the structure (as in the relationships between its various parts) of the biblical system, and if he is able to grasp the content and the structure of his opponent's worldview, then he will always be able to seize a decisive victory in every debate.

There is no chance that this person will lose, or even fail to decisively win, against anyone in all of human history – or against all of them combined. He will be able to crush the devil himself in debate, for the devil is not greater than the mind of Christ. This is the person that you can become, and must strive to become, through diligent study and persistent prayer, and by God's grace.

On this matter, parents can help their children by starting to teach them early about biblical doctrines and about rational thinking. The non-Christian world will not wait until they are in high school before teaching them evolution, trying to desensitize them to homosexual relationships, or brainwashing them in other ways.

One of your advantages as parents is that you have ready access to your children while they are yet young, so you should teach them to think biblically now. And teach them the whole package – the whole Christian life – that is, including biblical reading (Scripture and Christian literature), spiritual habits (prayer, meditation), and such traits as compassion, boldness, contentment, and humble service. One reason that you should teach your children biblical apologetics in the first place is to preserve faith, and training them in all aspects of the biblical lifestyle will do much to further this end.

23. Half Empty, Half Full

I have been reading your book, *The Light of Our Minds*. I must admit, I never knew that there was so much to the Christian worldview.

I was dialoguing with someone and he stated that "truth is just a matter of one's own perception."

He explained with an illustration. Take a glass of water which is half full. One person looking at the glass may say it is half full, and another person looking at it may say it is half empty. Which person is right? That was his line of argument.

Please show me how to answer something like this.

I have addressed relativism (and subjectivism, etc.)³⁷ in several places in my books, so you should review what I have already written on the subject. You should also read my *Apologetics in Conversation* to learn how to deal with people in conversation.

A basic response to relativism is that it is self-refuting. If he says that "truth is a matter of perception," then even *this* statement is only a matter of perception, so that it cannot be universally true that truth is a matter of perception. In other words, that truth is a matter of perception is nothing more than the person's perception. It does not mean that it is necessarily the case, and it does not mean that you have to accept it.

Then, the illustration consists of statements that are too ambiguous to prove his point, since they leave out vital information such as the reference point and the objects being considered, but once you insert the missing information, the statements become clearly absolute. That is, considering the full capacity of the glass, half of it contains water, and half it contains non-water (let us just say air). I am referring to only the water when I say, "The glass is half full," and I am referring to only the air (non-water part) when I say, "The glass is half empty," but both are absolute statements.

The claim is also sophistical. You mean something definite and different by "truth" (X) and "perception" (Y), and all he does is to change the meaning of "truth" so that it attaches to Y rather than to X. In other words, he is saying, "The word that you use to designate X should be used to designate Y instead." But then, what about X? Is there such a thing as X or not? Is X coherent or not? You see, he has evaded it without refuting it. And in effect, his illustration merely explains to you what he means by Y, rather than refuting your very conception of X.

Yes, it is possible to change the word "car" so that it now refers to a bicycle (by declaring, "a car is just a bicycle"), and then you can describe a bicycle to illustrate your

³⁷ For the sake of convenience, I will just say "relativism" for the rest of this article.

meaning, but this has nothing to do with whether or not there are four-wheeled motorized transportation devices in this world. Taking away the word "car" from you does not actually take away the car.

Now, once he has affirmed this premise, that "truth is a matter of perception," from now on everything that he says should be taken as just "a matter of perception." This is the logical consequence of his philosophy.

You should not just tell him that, but you should really act like it and treat him by this standard in all your conversations and interactions with him. That is, argue with him according to the logical implications of his philosophy, and then treat him according to its practical implications.

Stick with this even when there will be serious or even dangerous consequences for him, for example, in matters that have to do with money, legality, or safety, and each time, remind him that you are only following his standard. He must either surrender, or suffer the consequences of his own philosophy.

Although I will be the first to tell you that only logical consequences matter in intellectual debate, and that practical consequences never amount to a logical refutation, he should indeed endure these consequences if he stands by his philosophy of relativism. If he will not heed rational arguments, perhaps this irrational (practical) means of persuasion will make him reconsider the rational merits of his position.³⁸

On the other hand, since he has yet to prove this premise (and he can't, because any proof would just be a matter of perception), and since you have not affirmed it, the things that you say do not need to be taken as just a matter of perception.

Depending on his attitude and response (he might not surrender so easily), sometimes you might even need to shock and offend him.

So, with tape recorder in hand, you can ask him to restate his premise, that "truth is only a matter of perception." Then, you can say, it follows that it is only a matter of perception that his mother is not a slut and a whore, and that from a certain perspective, it is indeed "true" that his mother is a slut and a whore. Force him to admit it without evasion and qualification. After that, call his parents and play the tape back to them. I am not joking – really do it.

³⁸ To argue from the practical consequences of a position commits the fallacy of affirming the consequent. Even if a person suffers and dies because of his philosophy, this does nothing to *logically* refute it – all it might mean is that the *true* philosophy is nevertheless unliveable. Many philosophy textbooks, including those by Christian philosophers, will tell you that one crucial test for a philosophy is its "liveability," so that a true philosophy must be liveable, that it must be possible to be practically implemented. But there is no rational argument for this principle or assumption; it is just an arbitrary test imposed by an irrationally pragmatic mindset. A practical test cannot indicate a true philosophy, and a true philosophy never needs a practical test. Now, the biblical worldview is indeed practical, in the sense that it is liveable and that by it one can faithfully follow God's wise precepts and commands; however, it is true not because it is practical, but because of purely rational grounds.

After that, repeat the same procedure. This time make him admit that it is only a matter of perception that he is not stealing company property at his place of employment, and that from a certain perspective, it is indeed "true" that he is stealing company property. Then, call his employer and play him the tape.

You can repeat this over and over again. Make him admit that he is an adulterer and that his wife is an ugly pig (as a matter of perception, of course), and then play the tape back to his wife. Make him admit that he is a murderer and a rapist, and that he wants to murder and rape his own children (again, as a matter of perception), and then play the tape back to his children, or also to everyone who knows him.

Of course, before you do anything, you should tell him that you are recording him and what you are going to do with the tape, so as to give him a chance to recant his philosophy. If you have done that, then you would not be doing anything wrong. You are not trying to trick him, or to make him admit anything that is contrary to his own explicit philosophy. You are not really the one saying these things (since you *deny* that truth is just a matter of perception), but you are asking him whether these are some of the things that he would say, as he should, given his philosophy. He ought to be fine with the consequences, brought upon him by his own philosophy. Perhaps he should defend himself to those he thus offends by teaching them relativism.

Note that if anything bad happens to him, he has done it to himself by his philosophy. If trouble befalls him because of all of this, then it is still just "a matter of perception" that all these consequences are undesirable. He doesn't have to be a relativist, and he can surrender at any time when you confront him as above. So it is his fault if he remains stubborn.

In any case, note that this procedure is a pragmatic method (making his life unliveable by his philosophy), and nothing in it amounts to a logical refutation of relativism.³⁹ Thus, even if he surrenders under these circumstances, it does not mean that you have logically refuted relativism by pragmatism, since pragmatism cannot refute anything. However, by employing this irrational method (pragmatism), you might successfully force an irrational person (the relativist) to engage you again in debate, and to reconsider the rational merits of the opposing positions.

³⁹ The logical refutations were presented toward the beginning of this article; the procedure described here is only to shock him back into a rational discussion.

24. The Practical and Existential in Evangelism

Is it always preferable to do evangelism using the approach taught in your *Ultimate Questions*, rather than appealing to the existential values and the practical advantages of coming to Christ?

In *The Light of Our Minds*, I show that, technically speaking, apologetics and evangelism can be distinguished from each other, but they have such an intimate relationship that there is often no need to speak of them as separate and different – that is, unless we are involved in a discussion that requires greater precision, and thus the distinction.

With that in mind, *Ultimate Questions* is more about apologetics and philosophy than evangelism.⁴⁰ The method espoused there is always the best way to do apologetics, since logically speaking, your opponent can evade anything other than valid deductive arguments, often just by saying, "I don't care," "That doesn't prove anything," or "So what?"

But since most people are irrational, they often respond better to non-rational or irrational methods. For example, a personal testimony is often quite effective (at least in producing superficial effects in the hearers, but not in producing faith), although it doesn't really prove anything. Then, although the apostles mainly emphasized God's grace and purpose, and man's need to repent and believe, they did mention some of the existential benefits of coming to Christ.

It depends on your audience as to the kind of effects that you can expect from non-rational or irrational approaches. If you were to argue that Islam is a false religion because it instructs its adherents to murder those who oppose it, this might carry weight with some people, but I would reject the argument right away, since I would realize that it is fallacious. It is logically invalid to assert that Islam is wrong because violence is wrong; rather, it should be the other way around – if Islam is right, then violence is right. If Islam truly reveals the mind of God, then whatever Islam teaches is true, including violence; but if Islam is wrong, then the violence that it teaches is unjustified. We cannot begin from the violence that it teaches to determine whether or not Islam is wrong.

Yet we encounter similar irrational arguments all the time – that is, the kind that puts things in the wrong order – and it is effective with many people. Sometimes this is because there is an innate knowledge of God and his moral laws in every person's mind. Thus, for example, there is an instinctive moral opposition to murder. Some cultures or people groups may have suppressed this more than others, but then other parts of their innate knowledge is more evident with them.

⁴⁰ See *Presuppositional Confrontations*, chapter 2, where I blend together apologetics and evangelism.

Because of this innate knowledge of God and his moral laws, even presentations that are not strictly valid (with conclusions deduced from established premises by logical necessity) are often effective, since they still appeal to something that is already innate in the hearers. That is, these invalid presentations might be applying some premise or information that the hearers already know, even as they try to suppress it in their minds. Of course, this doesn't mean that we should tolerate or encourage these invalid presentations.

But because people are irrational, they are often deceived by outright false premises and by false inferences, so that even arguments that are completely void of truth⁴¹ are often effective, that is, if they appeal to some sinful preference in the hearers. One important effect of regeneration and sanctification is to rescue man from this stubborn and pervasive irrationality.

The deductive/presuppositional approach is always preferable in apologetics – it is the only rational route. And if you think about it, opportunities for evangelism often arise out of apologetic encounters – that is, from discussions in which the differences of worldviews generate disagreements.

Your Christian worldview will often generate disagreements with other people about politics, science, ethics (abortion, adultery, etc.), world religions...and just about everything. But if the deductive/presuppositional approach is always better in an apologetic encounter, and evangelistic opportunities often arise from the clash of worldviews, then the need for the deductive/presuppositional approach comes up just about every time you do evangelism. Even if the encounter begins from a non-argumentative presentation of the gospel, if someone has a question or objection (which is common), you are back at apologetics.

The deductive/presuppositional approach is a necessary part of preaching the gospel, since much of it involves presenting the teachings of the Bible, knowledge that is necessary for salvation. The apostles themselves employed deductive/presuppositional arguments in their preaching, to both believers and unbelievers. Reading the preaching of the apostles, some people can see only personal testimony, since they are predisposed to notice these things, but they don't do a very good job even when relating their personal experiences. And of course, their personal experiences are nothing like the apostles', who were with Jesus for several years, and who were with him in his death and resurrection.

Nowadays, when people talk about personal testimony, they often have in mind a feeling of ecstasy or exhilaration (which is not even conversion), a moral reformation (but they are still not very moral), even a vision or some other special experience (but the "gospel" they attach to it may not be biblical), or otherwise some silly story that doesn't really contribute to the case for the gospel. Do not assume that someone is doing what the apostles did when he gives his personal testimony – it is usually nothing like theirs.

⁴¹ These arguments are invalid and contradict both biblical revelation and man's innate knowledge

Then, if you present some sort of a pragmatic argument, so can the atheist, the Communist, the Mormon, and just about anybody from any belief system. Just about anybody from any belief system can tell you about what he considers to be a positive change in his life that resulted from that belief system.

Thus pragmatic arguments are logically worthless, although they are often psychologically compelling. How rational is your audience? The more rational your audience, the more you risk being laughed at by using a pragmatic argument.

If a Buddhist says to me that Buddhism changed in his life, I would not challenge the claim – I would just laugh at him. It does not prove that Buddhism is true. Even a movie or a novel can change a person's life or inspire moral reform, but it says nothing about whether or not the philosophy behind the movie or the novel is true.

An argument based on effect or personal experience works like this:

1. If X, therefore Y
2. Y
3. Therefore, X

This type of reasoning is called "affirming the consequent," which is always fallacious. But it is the exact reasoning process employed by every argument that appeals to the empirical and the pragmatic, and it is the very core of science.⁴²

Jesus says, "you will know them by their fruit"; however, apart from biblical revelation, we cannot even specify what is a good fruit and what is an evil fruit. Of course Jesus knew this, and he was certainly not telling us to evaluate a person by our own non-biblical opinion or standard.

Similarly, when you give a personal testimony about your faith, or when you enumerate some of the existential benefits of coming to Christ, the testimony and those benefits could be considered positive only because they are specified as such from the biblical perspective. So, rationally speaking, if the pragmatic and existential were to worth anything at all, they must still be derived from a biblical/deductive/presuppositional foundation, for by themselves, they are irrational and irrelevant.

Thus, although it is often acceptable to present your personal testimony or to discuss the existential benefits of coming to Christ, you must not attribute to them a higher rational status than they deserve, and you must firmly base them on the foundation of biblical revelation, and discuss them only within such a context. You should give them relatively minor roles in your overall presentation, since in themselves they do not even present the gospel; they do not communicate the word of life, or the power that saves.

In short, it is best to preach the gospel through biblical expositions, clash with your opponent using the deductive/presuppositional approach, and then as optional

⁴² See Bertrand Russell, "Is Science Superstitious?"

illustrations (not as strict rational arguments), perhaps relate your personal experience and some of the existential benefits of faith.

Of course, these are not necessarily done in the above order, but they can be flexibly blended together in the course of your conversation with the unbeliever. In addition, one aspect of your presentation must not contradict another. For example, after you have completely destroyed the rational standing of induction, sensation, intuition, and science as part of your apologetic, do not then elevate your personal experience or self-knowledge to the undeniable rational certainty that can be attributed only to Scripture.

Finally, although non-rational or irrational approaches sometimes appear more effective because most people are irrational, it does not follow that we should tolerate this. In fact, as long as one's faith is not mainly or only based on the biblical/rational, but on the personal, practical, or existential, that faith might even be spurious, or at least forever feeble. Part of our presentation, then, should be to challenge the irrational standards of our hearers. Why should they respond better to personal testimonies, or to practical or existential arguments, than to biblical/rational arguments? They should not, and this is precisely one of the things that we should get across while preaching the gospel and defending the faith.

25. Morey, Islam, and Apologetics

Do you have the book, *Islamic Invasion*, by Dr. Robert Morey? Do you think that his theory about the "moon god" is correct?⁴³ I must say that I have deep respect for Dr. Morey – he is a man who is willing to boldly stand up for the truth of Christianity.

Morey is bold against Islam, and we need people like that. He certainly understands Islam better than we do, so that he can make more specific criticisms against it.

Yes, I have *Islamic Invasion*, and I tend to think that his "moon god" argument is correct, having also examined similar arguments from other sources.

However, like all empirical arguments, it cannot rise above the limitations imposed by its epistemology. So, I would never use this as my main argument against Islam. Although it might be helpful at strategic points during a debate, it is not necessary to use it to refute Islam.

As I explain in my books, I do not oppose the use of evidential and historical arguments, such as what Morey would use against Islam. However, I insist that we must correctly perceive their place as only *ad hominem* arguments that function relative to a false epistemology. That is, if for the sake of argument, both the Christian and the Muslim temporarily adopt the false and irrational epistemology of empiricism, then the moon god argument can function to undermine Islam relative to this false and irrational epistemology. But it cannot do more than this.

The above refers to a fatal *rational* defect in evidential and historical arguments, but there is also a crippling *practical* defect in these arguments. That is, unless the opponent is stupid and gullible, it is always impossible to win the debate right then and there with evidential and historical arguments; however, in most situations (personal conversations, formal debates, etc.), it is important to quickly gain the intellectual dominance.

For example, if I were a Muslim, and Morey presents his "moon god" argument to me, whether in a personal conversation or a formal debate, I would demand that he presents the relevant evidences *right there* where we are standing. Am I just supposed to trust him and his research? I would be stupid to do that. Rather, even if I were to trust evidential and historical arguments, I would want him to show me the artifacts and documents that he refers to *right there* where we are having the debate, and not merely claim that they exist, or just show me the photographs and copies of the actual objects.

⁴³ The "moon god" theory refers to Morey's argument that the God of Islam was originally a moon god, and not at all the same as the God of Scripture/Christianity.

And even if he were to bring the original artifacts and documents with him, I would demand him to demonstrate their authenticity *right there*. Or am I just supposed to believe they are authentic without proof? I would already be stupid enough to be a Muslim and an empiricist, but I would be even more stupid to let him get away with this.

But in practice this is always impossible to produce all the evidences on the spot, so as a Muslim, I would always be able to bring the debate to a stalemate as long as Morey depends on this type of arguments.

Suppose a person is the best knife-fighter in the world – he is so good that, as long as he has a knife, he can even defeat someone with a machine gun. Now, what if he gets into a fight and doesn't have a knife with him? His ability becomes irrelevant.

Similarly, even if I were to go insane and adopt empiricism, empirical arguments are effective only if my opponent can show me the empirical evidences *right there* at the debate; otherwise, I have no reason to believe anything he says.

In practice, this means that empirical arguments are completely useless – that is, unless your opponent is stupid and gullible. That said, there are more than enough stupid and gullible non-Christians, so that this method is often more effective than it should be.

On the other hand, one advantage of my biblical/presuppositional approach⁴⁴ is that it is never necessary (even if preferable) to have any prior understanding of your opponent's beliefs and the relevant evidential and historical data.

From the standpoint of presuppositional apologetics, the only things that you must have when entering a debate are (1) a systematic understanding of Christian theology, and (2) the ability to map out and navigate any noetic structure (including your own). The latter means that you need to find out what the other person believes right then and there by asking the right questions and by listening carefully. You need to discover the major propositions within his worldview and their relationships with one another. Then, you are ready to demolish him.

Of course, I am referring to the times when you wish to do a thorough refutation. Otherwise, the presuppositional approach can in fact always prevent the opponent from even moving beyond his starting point. In any case, the point is that with this method, you are never completely unprepared for a debate.

When we leave the subject of Islam and look at Morey's general competence in apologetics – for example, by examining his *Introduction to Defending the Faith* and *The New Atheism and the Erosion of Freedom* – his approach is a bad mixture of

⁴⁴ I say "my" approach because something like Van Til's approach is also called presuppositional. However, his philosophy is severely crippled in that he embraces irrational elements such as induction, empiricism, and science. Nevertheless, it is often successful against unbelievers because these irrational elements are almost never exploited by the opponents, who affirm the same irrational things. In any case, it is best to repudiate all irrational elements from our philosophy.

evidentialism and presuppositionalism. His reasoning contains numerous gaps, and his responses to objections and challenges are often weak and poorly worded.

Also, his theology (including his theological reasoning) is not always that good, but in many aspects, he is not worse than the typical Reformed scholar.

For example, in his *Worship is Not Just for Sundays*, he writes, "Since all believers are priests, this means that all jobs are holy." This is, of course, an attempt to refute the "sacred" and "secular" distinction. However, if he says this, then he cannot make an exception (let alone *many* exceptions) and say that something like prostitution is not also holy, that is, as long as it is done by a Christian.

Does the priest do whatever he wants, and whatever he does automatically becomes holy, or does the priest not rather do what God commands, because whatever God commands is holy? The right thing to say is, "Since all believers are priests, they must do only that which is holy," but this does not eliminate the "sacred" and "secular" distinction, since it leaves room for affirming that the "secular" is not "sacred." One cannot infer more from the priesthood of all believers, and thus the premise "all believers are priests" cannot be used to eliminate the "sacred" and "secular" distinction. If it is possible to refute the distinction at all, one must at least have additional premises and use another direction of reasoning.

Morey has something so simple completely in reverse, and similar fallacious statements pervade his writings. But again, this is not a unique flaw, since this is also true regarding almost all of the Christian writers that I have read, although I try to read only the best. It is not unusual to find several such fallacious statements on every page of even some of the better Christian books. Sometimes the problems are less severe; sometimes they are much worse. In any case, Christian writers need to be more logical and precise.

Besides this, Morey's theology also seems to be a bad mixture of various perspectives.

As a side note, when dealing with a Muslim, it is often insufficient to make specific criticisms against the Koran and the Hadith. This is because many Muslims call themselves Muslims without believing or even knowing what the Koran says. So if you refute the official version of Islam, they will just think that you are refuting something else, and misrepresenting Islam, when they are the ones who fail to understand their own religion.

This is similar to how many professing Christians call themselves Christians but have no idea what the Bible teaches, or if they do, they actually reject its teachings. This pattern holds true with the adherents of every religion – many professing adherents do not in fact affirm or even know the official teachings of their own religions.

Therefore, when dealing with a professing Muslim, you must ask the right questions to draw from him answers that will help you mentally reconstruct his noetic structure, or his personal worldview, no matter what he calls it. Then, you can refute both his personal

worldview and the official version of his professed religion. This is true with refuting almost any member of any religion, since very few believe exactly as the official version affirms. Speaking to a Catholic would be another example.

I do not dislike Morey; in fact, I respect his understanding of Hebrew and Islamic beliefs and culture. Also, he is one of the few who understand that, in various situations, it is biblical to mock and insult non-Christians and heretics, and their beliefs, following the holy examples of the prophets and the apostles, and the Reformers.

In contrast, rather than speaking in a way that reflects the superiority of God and his Son, most Christians today are politically correct sissies, brainwashed to address the unbelievers according to the rules of social etiquette defined by the unbelievers.

Moreover, I commend Morey for publicly making the suggestion that our government should threaten to destroy Mecca as an attempt to curb Islamic terrorism.

Nevertheless, there is much room for improvement in his theology and apologetic.

26. God and Language⁴⁵

Briefly, my position is that language is always adequate to express anything – the problem is whether the mind can conceive it. If you can think it, you can always designate any arbitrary sign to represent it. Thus in principle, you can use X to represent the contents of an entire book. There is nothing inherently contradictory or impossible about that.

It follows that language itself is always adequate to say anything about God – I am sure that God always knows how to verbalize something about himself. Again, "X" is language, and it can represent any thought, so the limitation is in one's mind, not in language itself. Thus I do not say that we can always think everything about God (he is "incomprehensible"), but whatever we can think, we can say of him.

As for positive and negative language about God, there are those who insist that at least some things about God can be expressed only in negative language. However, so far it seems that I can easily turn into positive language any example that they give in support of this assertion.

R. C. Sproul once said that to say that God is "immutable" is negative language, that since we are human, we know only what "mutable" means, and that God is not "mutable," so that it is impossible to express this divine attribute in positive language. This was awfully careless of him – what about saying, "God always *stays the same*"? That's positive language, and we know what it means.

Some people might think that it sounds more pious or reverent to say that we cannot talk about God in positive terms, but this is both biblically and philosophically false and unnecessary.

⁴⁵ The following is an edited message sent in response to a question on the topic.

27. Christ and Crossan

I have heard a small part of a debate that Crossan had with William Lane Craig about "The Historical Jesus." Crossan sounds dangerous. He obviously does not believe in the inspiration or inerrancy of Scripture.

Please, can you direct me to some of your writings, or the writings of others, that could help a layperson like myself to provide some kind of a response to a person who is influenced by Crossan's views?

There is *Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up?* which is the debate with William Lane Criag.

But the more useful books would be those that positively deal with the historical reliability of the Bible, whether or not they interact with Crossan. This is because there are many people like Crossan attacking Scripture, and their theories sometimes vary slightly, sometimes widely. So the preferred strategy is to learn the positive historical evidences for the Bible, and then when the need arises, you can also study the direct refutations against a specific person.

Some of the books that you might read include:

Jesus Under Fire

Jesus' Resurrection: Fact or Figment

Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*

F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?*

Norman Geisler, *A General Introduction to the Bible*

I am just writing down the books that come to mind at the moment, so you might want to investigate further, as there might be some even better or more relevant choices.

This is the historical and empirical approach. However, the way to quickly shut down the whole range of attack would be for you to attack historical and empirical arguments themselves. Make Scripture the logical starting point of your intellectual system, and interact with your opponent on this basis. But get to the root of your opponent's opposition against you by going straight for his epistemology. That way, you will completely and immediately shut him down, logically forbidding all kinds of anti-biblical arguments at one stroke.

For this, I recommend my *Ultimate Questions, Presuppositional Confrontations, and Apologetics in Conversation*.

28. A Moron by Any Other Name

INTRODUCTION

Someone recently wrote me and asked about the harsh language that I sometimes use when referring to non-Christians. Specifically, he questions the propriety of addressing the unbeliever with biblical invectives. Although I have already addressed this topic in several places in my writings, I thought that it would be helpful to share my answer to this inquirer with my readers.

Since my purpose is to aid understanding and not to preserve the question and answer in their original form, I have edited the question and expanded the answer.⁴⁶ The question serves to provide a context with which the answer can interact. And since the question and answer are no longer in their original form, note that the "you" in the answer portion no longer addresses the original inquirer.

QUESTION

I have read a few of your works and I have to say, I had never really considered apologetics and the mind of Christ in that manner – that the "wisdom" of unbelievers is utterly moronic and foolish, and completely irrational. I totally agree with all your conclusions.

However, is it the best thing to tell them this, with words like "moron," "intellectual feces," and so forth? I want to understand how you interpret 1 Peter 3:15 and Colossians 4:5-6 in light of the way you debate non-believers.

ANSWER

First, we should consider whether the descriptions are biblical. You say that you already agree with me on this, so I do not need to spend time establishing it here, although I will still give some attention to several specific words below.

Then, your question becomes whether we should *tell* the unbelievers what the Bible says about them. But the more appropriate question is whether we have any biblical justification to say that we must *hide* certain truths from the unbelievers. My position is that rather than hiding any biblical truth from the unbelievers, we should thoroughly disclose, expound, and *apply* to them all that the Scripture teaches.

⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the answer does not represent a complete biblical exposition on the topic. For more information, see Vincent Cheung, *Systematic Theology, Ultimate Questions, Presuppositional Confrontations, Apologetics in Conversation, Commentary on Ephesians*, and "Professional Morons"; Douglas Wilson, *The Serrated Edge: A Brief Defense of Biblical Satire and Trinitarian Skylarking* (Canon Press, 2003); Robert A. Morey, "And God Mocked Them" (audio); and James E. Adams, *War Psalms of the Prince of Peace: Lessons From the Imprecatory Psalms* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1991).

Consider the prophets, the apostles, and Christ himself. They all used very strong and even scathing words to criticize hardened sinners. Probably the only counter-argument that I have heard on this point is that they were the infallible *exceptions*. Well! This is certainly convenient. But why were they the exceptions in *this* area? Why does it require infallibility to use harsh words? And why were they the exceptions only when it comes to using harsh words and not when it comes to using kind words? No, I refuse to accept mere opinion or speculation on this, but I demand a biblical, exegetical response.

Their principle seems to be that whenever you find certain things in the Bible that you do not approve, or that you do not want to practice, just call them "exceptions." The blatantly anti-Christian element in their use of Scripture is that, not only do they say that the prophets, the apostles, and Christ were the exceptions in the sense that I have no right to *originate* these invectives, but that I do not even have the right to *apply* or *repeat* the same invectives that they used to the same type of people to whom they used them.

1 Peter 3:15

Of course, 1 Peter 3:15 is frequently used to assert that we must be "nice" when doing apologetics. The verse says, "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this *with gentleness and respect*...." But what does it mean to do apologetics with "gentleness and respect"? Does it mean what the *unbelievers* tell us it means? Does it mean to be non-offensive, non-confrontational, non-threatening, and to be soft-spoken and sheepish? Or is it *infallibly* explained and demonstrated by the words and examples of the prophets, the apostles, and Christ himself? We should not assume that the apostle is referring to what the *unbelievers* consider to be gentleness and respect; rather, we must pay close attention to the context of the verse.

The context of this verse is mainly about Christians who are facing persecution and interrogation *from the authorities* (government officials, masters, etc.); it does *not* directly address public preaching or ordinary discourse among peers. Matthew Henry writes that the verse is referring to "the fear of God" and "reverence to *our superiors*."⁴⁷

Indeed, when we read the Acts of the Apostles, we see that the disciples were *usually* more polite when defending themselves before government officials. Even then, Jesus called Herod "that fox" (Luke 13:32). There is a more detailed example from Paul in Acts 23:

(3) Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck!"

(4) Those who were standing near Paul said, "You dare to insult God's high priest?"

⁴⁷ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1991).

(5) Paul replied, "Brothers, I did not realize that he was the high priest; for it is written: 'Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people.'"

Note that Paul said, "God will strike you" and "you whitewashed wall." He essentially cursed the person in the name of God and called him a hypocrite and law-breaker to his face. But then, in relation to what I said about the context of 1 Peter 3:15, when Paul discovered that he was speaking to the high priest, he implied that he would not have said what he said if he had known (v. 5).

Thus, verse 3 illustrates that my approach to the unbelievers is similar to Paul's, and verses 4-5 illustrate that my understanding of 1 Peter 3:15 makes Peter and Paul consistent. The way my critics and many other believers distort 1 Peter 3:15 would make Peter condemn Paul on verse 3, unless Paul is somehow an "exception," and thus excused from obeying 1 Peter 3:15. On the other hand, my understanding of 1 Peter 3:15 means that Paul did not necessarily contradict 1 Peter 3:15 in verse 3 (since he did not know that he was speaking to the high priest), and he even indicated his agreement with 1 Peter 3:15 in verses 4 and 5.

Now, I am guessing that my critics would disapprove if I am the one saying something like what Paul said in verse 3. Yet, here it is – Paul did it himself. But of course, Paul was the exception, right? But the exception to what? The exception to "gentleness and respect"? If my critics were to use 1 Peter 3:15 against me, and then call the prophets, the apostles, and Christ the exceptions, then they must also affirm that the prophets, the apostles, and Christ himself were exceptions *to gentleness and respect* in numerous instances, and that in those cases, they showed *no gentleness* and *no respect*.

Colossians 4:5-6

As for Colossians 4:5-6, there is nothing about these verses that contradicts my approach. The verses read as follows: "*Be wise* in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always *full of grace, seasoned with salt*, so that you may know how to answer everyone."

My critics falsely apply these verses against my approach. They assume that to use invectives against unbelievers is to not act wisely toward outsiders, and to speak without grace and without salt. But what is the "wisdom" referred to here? What is "grace" and what is "salt"? Why do these things mean what my critics say they mean – that is, to be "nice," soft-spoken, polite, non-insulting, non-offensive, non-critical, and so forth? What does the Bible mean by these words, and in this context?

Matthew Henry writes, "Grace is the salt which seasons our discourse, makes it savoury, and *keeps it from corrupting*."⁴⁸ He seems to think that the passage is emphasizing the moral quality or the purity of our conversation, even if other things are implied. So rather than just assuming that Paul is here saying what they want him to say, my critics should offer at least a basic exegetical argument before making accusations.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

In any case, if the instruction to "be wise" and to speak with "grace" and "salt" contradicts my approach, then it also contradicts the prophets, the apostles, and Christ himself. Of course, my critics will say that they were the exceptions. But the exceptions to what? The exceptions to "grace" and "salt"? The exceptions to "be wise"? So are they saying that Christ at times spoke with *no grace* and *no salt*? And are they calling Christ *stupid*, that at times he behaved foolishly toward outsiders? I demand that they look up to heaven and repeat this blasphemy to God's face before applying these verses against me.

In contrast, I dare not and wish not blaspheme. I affirm that Christ was consistently wise in his conduct and conversation, and that he always spoke with grace and salt, and that he always maintained an attitude that was pleasing to God. And I submit that my critics have imposed upon Scripture their own anti-biblical definitions of these words and concepts, and thus at least indirectly blasphemed Christ and directly slandered me.⁴⁹ For this, I charge them with sin and urge their repentance. I plead with them to stop defying the Word of God, and condemning those who follow it, but instead to adopt the biblical method and tone in proclaiming and defending the gospel against unbelievers.

Morons and Feces

As for "moron" and "feces," even these are biblical words. The word "moron" is derived from the Greek *moros*. Paul uses it in Romans 1:22. There it is translated "fools," but of course that means the same thing as "morons," and indeed could have been just as easily and correctly translated as such. As for "feces," Paul uses a word that is translated "dung" or "refuse" to refer to his former life as an unbeliever in Philippians 3:8. Thayer's Lexicon explains that the word can refer to "any refuse, as the excrement of animals." Both the meanings of these words and the contexts in which they appear agree with the way I use them against the unbelievers.

In addition, if "moron" and "feces" are so bad, why do we call unbelievers "sinners," and call them "sinful" or "wicked"? Even my critics use these words when preaching the gospel and when speaking to unbelievers. Do the biblical passages 1 Peter 3:15 and Colossians 4:5-6 suddenly cease to apply? Are my critics infallible exceptions too? How about the words "depravity" and "adultery"? Are these words full of "grace" and "salt"? How about telling someone that abortion is "murder"? Does that make someone feel all cozy from your "gentleness and respect"? Do you think that *these* words are not offensive to unbelievers? Do you think that *they* would prefer to be called "murderers" rather than "morons"?

Here we have come to the real issue – some Christians disagree with my use of invectives mainly because it offends *them*, and not because they are unbiblical (I have shown that they are biblical) or even because they offend the unbelievers (all biblical teachings

⁴⁹ These critics have also slandered the Reformers, who in the service of God and the Church, so faithfully and effectively employed invectives against unbelievers and heretics. Do you think that they were ignorant of 1 Peter 3:15 and Colossians 4:5-6? No, they did know about them, and wrote sermons and expositions on these verses. But unlike my critics, they also knew the contexts and the proper applications of these verses, and they also knew the rest of the Bible.

offend unbelievers anyway). And these Christians are offended because their minds have not been taught and renewed in this area, so that their standards are still very much like those of the unbelievers; therefore, they are offended by the same things that offend the unbelievers. Another possibility is that at least some of these critics are still unconverted themselves, and since their priority is still man's dignity and not God's glory, then of course they are offended.

Because my critics have imposed their own definitions of these words on Scripture, they have created for themselves numerous theological problems and contradictions, and we have already mentioned their slanders and blasphemies. On the other hand, I have enough reverence for God to let the Scripture interpret itself; therefore, I affirm that using these *biblical* words (morons, feces, sinners, adulterers, murderers, etc.) in contexts similar to those in which they appear in Scripture is in complete accord with 1 Peter 3:15, Colossians 4:5-6, and all other related passages.

According to Scripture, unbelievers are nothing but spiritual and intellectual fecal matter. Otherwise, why in the world do you think they need to convert? Why do you think that they are helpless apart from God's sovereign grace?

CONCLUSION

Under biblically-approved conditions, we are permitted, and at times even duty-bound, to use biblical invectives against unbelievers and heretics. We do not call them "morons" or "feces" out of personal vindictiveness, but to proclaim what Scripture says about them, and to declare to them that they are not the rational and decent people that they imagine themselves to be.

A moron by any other name is still an idiot, and there is really no reason to use other words and expressions unless it is to hide our true meaning and to reduce the offensiveness of the biblical message. But what perverse reason is there to obscure biblical teachings? The truth is that the critics of this approach are poor interpreters of Scripture, compromisers with the world, and traitors to Christ and his cause. They defy that which Christ approved and practiced. I dare not and wish not to defy my Lord, but I will crush his critics any day.

My critics select biblical passages containing words that *they think* agree with what they already consider as the right approach to apologetics (that is, non-offensive, socially polite discourse), rip them out of their original contexts, and try to bury me with them. Their teaching in this area is indeed very ingrained into the thinking of many believers, and it will take some deliberate effort for many to recover the biblical way of thinking and speaking. In a day when everything about Christianity is being diluted to nothing, I call upon all believers to recover the *proper* use of biblical invectives, and to learn how to integrate it into a faithful and effective system of biblical theology and apologetics.

I understand that my position on this issue is unpopular, but it is indeed biblical, and what is biblical is often unpopular. Although I am often criticized on this, I am not ashamed of biblical expressions and descriptions, and I will absolutely refuse to budge an inch on this

issue. It is a believer's duty to carefully examine what he has been taught on this matter, and to reconsider the contexts of the verses traditionally used to oppose the invectives employed by the prophets, the apostles, the Lord Jesus, the Reformers, and that I now use.

Moreover, it is important to note that I try to use harsh words and insults only under similar contexts in which Scripture uses them. But in accepting the non-Christian standard of social propriety and in distorting a number of biblical passages, many Christians have come to the conclusion that this approach should never be used under any context, and thus they indirectly (but just as certainly) condemn the prophets, the apostles, and Christ himself, and in doing so, they have really condemned themselves.

The truth is that when I call someone a moron, I have at least momentarily spared him from the worst insult of all, an insult that represents all that is stupid, evil, filthy, and vile, and that speaks of someone who has no hope of getting better and no chance of escaping everlasting hellfire except by the sovereign grace of God. I am, of course, referring to the name "non-Christian." And once we have already used the greatest of insults, the rest are almost compliments.

29. Professional Morons

MORONS AND PROFESSIONAL MORONS

According to Scripture, all non-Christians are morons.⁵⁰ Even some professing Christians resent such a blunt and negative characterization of God's enemies, and so they disown and criticize me for speaking this way. However, as hard as they try to portray this as something that I have taken upon myself to assert, I am merely repeating what Scripture teaches. If they have a problem with it, then rather than disowning or criticizing me, they should face reality and disown Christ and criticize Scripture.

Some Christian writers are very courteous. In fact, they are so courteous that they allow their critics to haunt them to their deaths while patiently explaining again and again their unpopular but biblical views. Of course I believe in cordial discourse, especially in contexts in which Scripture commands such. However, these critics are often not interested in hearing what Scripture really says, but in protecting their own unbiblical opinions and beliefs, all the while insisting that they are genuine believers.

My policy is that, while I respect and even prefer polite theological discussions, when my critics try to use me to attack Scripture by proxy, I will expose them as the spiritual hypocrites that they are, and slam them down by the power of Christ the Logos, that is, by the very Scripture and Reason that they try to undermine.

It is important for us to realize that non-Christians are morons and that I am right in stating this as an integral part of the biblical approach to apologetics. This is because if we are going to face our intellectual enemies with Scripture as our weapon, then we better first accept Scripture's own description of the unbelievers, that they are stupid and depraved. No wonder many Christians are such feeble apologists! They have rejected Scripture's own description about the situation from the start.

I have often said that the person who affirms the biblical worldview and who practices the biblical apologetic can easily and conclusively defeat any non-Christian. It does not matter whether the non-Christian is an atheist, a Muslim, a Buddhist, or a Catholic, and it does not matter even if the non-Christian is highly educated. In fact, I have even stated that even a toddler who has been trained in biblical apologetics can crush any professor of science or philosophy. Here I will go even further. I will assert that even a person who is mentally limited or damaged in some way, but who can nevertheless communicate in

⁵⁰ I have provided biblical justification for this statement in numerous places in my writings, so I will not repeat it here. See Vincent Cheung, *Systematic Theology, Ultimate Questions, Presuppositional Confrontations, Apologetics in Conversation, Commentary on Ephesians*, and "A Moron by Any Other Name"; Douglas Wilson, *The Serrated Edge: A Brief Defense of Biblical Satire and Trinitarian Skylarking* (Canon Press, 2003); Robert A. Morey, "And God Mocked Them" (audio); and James E. Adams, *War Psalms of the Prince of Peace: Lessons From the Imprecatory Psalms* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1991).

fragmented statements (e.g. a person with Down's Syndrome), can still defeat any non-Christian scientist or philosopher.

Of course, some of us are able to argue with more finesse than others. And if you are a child, or a person with severe mental disabilities, or just a person who is unfamiliar with technical expressions, you might have to ask your non-Christian opponent to express his ideas and arguments in simpler language. Nevertheless, when it comes to the substance of the debate, as long as you can grasp the fundamental principles of the biblical worldview and the biblical apologetic, you too can be an invincible apologist for the Christian faith against any non-Christian opponent.

In connection with this, I have also said that although a non-Christian scientist or philosopher might give a better presentation of his views, the substance of his arguments are never really better than any other non-Christian, including the retarded and the insane. That is, a non-Christian scholar might be able to argue his case with greater precision, coherence, and thoroughness, but when it comes to the rational merits of his arguments, his case is just as foolish and fallacious than that of any uneducated and even mentally disabled non-Christian.

This is true not just when they are speaking about God or religion, but it is true about everything that they say. One's view on the ultimate reality, being ultimate, necessarily affects every area of his worldview; therefore, because the non-Christian is wrong about the ultimate reality, he is wrong about everything.

I say all of this not just because I enjoy insulting and belittling the unbelievers (although that also has its place; 1 Kings 18:27); rather, this is a scriptural teaching that few Christians are faithful to emphasize. Those who say anything about it at all usually obscure the teaching by their almost poetic language, making human depravity and wickedness, and the effects of sin on the mind, sound almost beautiful. But the Bible is blunt and unambiguous on this matter. It teaches that God has made "moronic" non-Christian philosophers and scholars, along with all their ideas (1 Corinthians 1:20). On this word, even the basic and popular *Strong's Concordance* yields the definition, "to make as a simpleton," so that there is no excuse in failing to understand the verse this way. Therefore, on the authority of Scripture, I charge any Christian with sin who distorts or hides this teaching, or who tries to undermine the efforts of others to proclaim it.

TEACHING NONSENSE FOR A LIVING

Since I interact almost exclusively with the works of professionals, in my writings I have already provided a number of examples on how even the most educated of non-Christians never rise above the stupidest of humanity in the substance of their arguments. Here I will offer yet another example from the debate between William Lane Craig and Walter Sinnott-Armstrong.

Sinnott-Armstrong is Professor of Philosophy and Professor of Legal Studies at Dartmouth College. Even if he is not among the very best of contemporary thinkers, his credentials and achievements are at least equal to many professional philosophers. In

addition, one with the fame and stature of William Lane Craig thought it worthwhile to debate him. So let no one say that I have deliberately chosen an inferior specimen to criticize.

One atheist is just as easy for me to refute as another, so I do not have to use Sinnott-Armstrong as an example. But let me tell you why I have chosen him. I had obtained the book containing the debate some time ago, and among other things, took notice of the fallacious statements written by him that I will shortly show you below. I thought that I could use them in some future writing project as illustrations.

Then, one day my wife came home and said that she heard William Lane Craig in an interview on a Christian radio program. The interview was mainly to promote this book, and the host of the program asked Craig about several of the issues that were discussed in the debate. My wife thought that Craig's responses were too uncertain, too tentative, and she wondered whether such weak answers do more damage rather than good for the Christian cause.

I could understand her sentiment, because even when we overlook the flaws of classical apologetics, I had always thought that Craig's arguments and conclusions are typically so "modest" that they are at best sub-biblical, and fail to exude the confidence and certainty that a Christian leader should exhibit in both his attitude and arguments, let alone instilling this same confidence and certainty in other Christians. Anyway, I will not let this article turn into a critique of Craig's presentation; I am only explaining why my wife and I were dissatisfied with it.

In any case, as I flipped through the debate again, I realized that it would be too inefficient to write a complete alternative response to Sinnott-Armstrong's arguments. This is because many of his challenges are directed toward the arguments of classical or evidential apologetics, and do not even touch the biblical or presuppositional arguments, so that even if his arguments were successful, it would not at all affect the biblical approach that I teach and practice. Moreover, his essays are presented in the context of his debate against Craig, so that unless my readers have already read the debate, I would have to explain the context from scratch before presenting my own response.

Therefore, as much as I would like to do it, I will not present a thorough critique of Sinnott-Armstrong's arguments. Instead, I will criticize one particular aspect of his thinking and presentation; it mainly concerns his arguments surrounding the problem of evil. Although the product does not amount to a total destruction of all his arguments, it is sufficient to show that, although he is a professor in philosophy, his reasoning ability does not rise above that of the average atheist, and so a professional moron is a moron still. With all of this in mind, let us now consider the case of Walter Sinnott-Armstrong.

In one place, he explains why he cares enough about the topic to participate in a public debate. He writes as follows:

My answer is that I am a teacher, so my job is to educate. I am also a philosopher. Philosophers question common assumptions and inspect the reasons for and against those assumptions. That is why I want to help readers get clear about the evidence for and against the existence of God, so that they can decide for themselves.⁵¹

This assertion about his motive is very helpful to our analysis, because it commits him to a certain intellectual policy against which we can compare his actual arguments. And when he fails to live up to what he states above, it will make his hypocrisy and incompetence all the more obvious.

We then note that although his stated policy is to "question common assumptions," he nevertheless depends on numerous subjective/intuitive premises and common assumptions throughout his presentation.

For example, on page 34, he writes, "Craig still might ask, 'What's immoral about causing serious harms to other people without justification?' But now it *seems natural* to answer, 'It simply is. Objectively. Don't you agree?'" No, I do not agree. His response amounts to saying, "It *seems* objective," but if a belief is based only on "it seems," then it is by definition subjective, not objective. When you say "it seems" in a context like this, you are telling us something about yourself, and not about anything that is outside of your own mind.

I demand more than "it seems natural"; I demand a rational justification. What if what "seems natural" to you seems *unnatural* to me? What if what seems natural to a normal person seems unnatural to an insane person? Now what is normal and what is insane? And who is normal and who is insane? How do we know? Is "it seems natural" an adequate justification in any argument? If not, when is it adequate and when is it inadequate? How do we know? This "it seems natural" *seems* quite irrational, not to mention outright lazy.

Then, he writes, "Similarly, if *we look* long and hard at a natural evil, such as an intestinal blockage, and *we find* nothing to suggest any adequate compensation, then *we are justified* in believing that there is no adequate compensation for that evil."⁵² This pattern of argument occurs throughout his presentation; that is, our subjective intellectual investments into the situation are supposed to suffice in producing a rational justification for making an inference about objective reality. Sinnott-Armstrong appears to think that rational justification consists of our subjective satisfaction, and not necessary inferences.

In another place, he writes, "I am trying to show that *common sense* commits you to the premises of my argument."⁵³ Whether or not it is true that "common sense" commits us to his premises, how does he know that what we believe according to our "common sense"

⁵¹ William Lane Craig and Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, *God? A Debate Between a Christian and an Atheist* (Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 81.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

is true? He neither challenges nor establishes our "common sense" as a reliable way to truth, but simply assumes it in his arguments.

On page 145, he says, "It might sound neat to say that God is not subject to our standards, but this ploy leaves it unclear what it is that makes God good. In the end, we need to use our own standards, because we cannot understand any others." But it is not automatically true that if God is not subject to our standards, then this leaves it unclear what it is that makes God good. The biblical doctrine of God's goodness answers the question, and Sinnott-Armstrong must confront the doctrine before making such a statement; that is, he must establish that the Bible is not God's written revelation.

Then, notice he says that "we need to use our own standards, *because* we cannot understand any others." But this is a purely pragmatic reason, and not a logical one. It amounts to saying, "We need to pretend that this is true because we have nothing else." And who is he to speak for all of us? Just because *he* cannot "understand any others" does not mean that the rest of us cannot; just because he is stupid and ignorant does not mean that he can drag the rest of us down with him. But even if we really cannot "understand any others," it does not mean that we must pretend that what we have is true. Why not resign ourselves to skepticism and ignorance? Moreover, philosophers constantly argue about what "our standards" should be in the first place. I contend that biblical standards should be "our standards."

Sinnott-Armstrong concludes the debate by saying, "In contrast, I tried to base my arguments on commonsense standards of reasonable belief and adequate compensation."⁵⁴ Thus throughout the debate he appears completely oblivious to the fact that he has said, "I am also a philosopher. Philosophers question *common assumptions* and inspect the reasons for and against those assumptions."

The only way to reconcile his stated intellectual policy (to question common assumptions) with his actual debate strategy (to appeal to common sense) is if he makes a sharp distinction between common assumptions and common sense. That is, common *assumptions* refer to certain shared beliefs, while common *sense* refers to a shared intellectual ability or intuition that is in itself without content. But if this is what he does, then for a professional philosopher to leave this point unstated when the two are so easily confused or even identified is still inexcusable.

In any case, numerous problems remain even if he makes a sharp distinction between common assumptions and common sense. For example, if common sense refers to only a shared intellectual ability or intuition without content, then how could this "sense" that is so common produce these common "assumptions" that he now challenges using common "sense"? That is, if the "sense" and the "assumptions" contradict each other, then how can both be "common"?

Perhaps the common assumptions (that Sinnott-Armstrong challenges) were adopted because people failed to use common sense, in which case, common sense refers to a

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 149.

common ability or intuition that is not commonly used. Or, the common assumptions were produced by a common flaw in thinking that caused people to deviate from their common sense. But then what is this "flaw"? Is the "flaw" not part of the "sense"? Why or why not? And how does he know? Both of these views have problems, but we are already complicating the matter too much.

The truth is that Sinnott-Armstrong does *not* make a sharp distinction between common assumptions and common sense. He writes:

In contrast, I tried to base my arguments on *commonsense standards* of reasonable belief and adequate compensation. *These principles* are not peculiar to atheists. Most Christians also use the same standards in their everyday lives. More importantly, these principles are accepted by almost everyone who is not committed in advance either for or against the existence of God. That makes them neutral starting points.⁵⁵

He identifies the "commonsense standards" with "these principles." In other words, by common sense, he is not referring to a shared intellectual potential or ability apart from any content, but he is referring to actual common *beliefs*. In other words, in his mind, the commonsense standards *are* common assumptions. But if the task of the philosopher is to "question common assumptions," then why in the world does he not question the very common assumptions ("principles," "standards," etc.) that he is using, and on which his arguments depend?

He has stated that he is arguing against the existence of God because it is his job as a philosopher to question common assumptions, but then he turns around and argues as if truth is a matter of agreement and popular opinion. In another context, he might challenge the same fallacy in his opponent, but when he has no case, he employs the "everybody knows" strategy. Note that his error is not hidden, but both sides of his self-contradiction are explicitly asserted. On the one hand, for him the very purpose of the debate is to question common assumptions, but on the other hand, he bases essential parts of his arguments on common principles ("assumptions," "standards," etc.) without first questioning or justifying them.

Although glaring errors pervade his entire presentation, this illegitimate appeal to popular opinion is the only philosophical blunder that I intend to document. However, since the above quoted paragraph contains additional claims by him, I will briefly deal with them before moving on.

He says that the common principles on which he bases his arguments are affirmed not only by atheists, but also by Christians. Even if this is true, it does not show that his arguments are true, since he has yet to establish these principles, so that they can at best serve as the basis for an ad hominem argument. That is, perhaps these common principles are false, so that both atheists and Christians are wrong in believing them. But I say that they can "at best" support an ad hominem argument because they cannot even do that,

⁵⁵ Ibid.

since these are only principles that we supposedly agree on in our "everyday lives." He has yet to establish that those principles that apply in our "everyday lives" necessarily apply to the current debate.

But his case is even weaker than this. Since he appeals to these supposedly common principles as essential premises of his arguments (and not as mere personal opinion that does not affect the soundness of his arguments), this means that it is also essential to his arguments that these principles indeed be common. This he fails to show or even attempt to establish; rather, he just asserts again and again the commonality of his premises. In other words, he says "everybody knows" when in fact nobody knows if everybody knows. How does he know what "most Christians" believe? Does he even know what most atheists believe?

At least equally problematic is the next statement, "More importantly, these principles are accepted by almost everyone who is not committed in advance either for or against the existence of God. That makes them neutral starting points."

He says that his premises are accepted by almost every neutral person. How does he know this? And who are these neutral people? Where are they? How does he know that it is possible to be neutral about God's existence? And how does he know that these people are neutral? Also, if there are so many atheists and neutral people out there, then why are the beliefs of Christians considered "common assumptions" that he claims to be his task to challenge as a philosopher?

He speaks as if almost one hundred percent of the human population already affirms his essential premises, but if so, this makes his premises much more common. But then, should he not start by challenging *those* common assumptions, instead of the Christians' assumptions, which now do not seem so common after all? And even if there are such things as "neutral starting points," why are they exempt from critical examination? Are they not much more dangerous, since they are so common and seemingly neutral, and so easily overlooked?

To assert that one should argue from neutral starting points entails another problem, namely, we can ask whether one's view toward neutrality is itself neutral. For Sinnott-Armstrong, to be "neutral" is to be not "committed in advance" (at least concerning the current topic of debate), but is he neutral about neutrality, or is he "committed in advance" to neutrality? If he is "committed in advance" to neutrality, then why should we trust him when he talks about neutrality?

If I make this the very point of debate – that is, if I propose to argue about whether we should be neutral about neutrality, and if I propose to first settle this issue as a necessary logical precondition to the debate about the existence of God – then will Sinnott-Armstrong appeal to neutral starting points again to establish his preference for neutral starting points? That is, will he appeal to the common assumptions of people who are neutral (not "committed in advance") about neutrality (if there are such people) in order to argue for his preference for neutrality?

According to his standard, he must find people who are neutral about neutrality, then discover what these people believe about things that are relevant to neutrality, and then use *these* beliefs as so-called neutral starting points to argue for his preference for neutral starting points. But do you know what happens after that? I will propose that as a necessary logical precondition to the debate about being neutral toward neutrality, we must first argue about whether those who are neutral toward neutrality were neutral about being neutral toward neutrality, and so on. This makes an infinite regress, and it also means that Sinnott-Armstrong has no rational right to his so-called neutral starting points when debating the existence of God in the first place.

Look how far the human race has fallen, that someone can be this stupid! Like all other non-Christian scholars, Sinnott-Armstrong is an intellectual fraud. He passes himself off as a professional philosopher, and claims to be one who examines the assumptions behind people's beliefs. Yet, at essential points in his arguments, he resorts to subjective intuition, common sense, and popular opinion. Professor of philosophy? I would not trust him to teach even elementary school debate. He is better off roaming the streets and picking up soda cans – at least then he would be making an honest living. Where are the scholars? Where are the philosophers? Where are the professors of this world? Has not God made intellectual mincemeat out of them?

You might exclaim, "What?! He calls himself a philosopher, and *this* is how he argues? What's wrong with him?!" I already told you – he is a moron. And remember, he is a trained and experienced professional philosopher, not just some drunken bum. But as long as he remains an unbeliever and rejects divine wisdom, all he can do is to dress up his stupidity a little. Although some philosophers might manage a more careful presentation, none of them are rationally superior in the substance of their arguments. If I can demolish them, so can you. What you need is to learn how to think biblically and logically, and to gain confidence in the superiority of divine wisdom.

YOU CANNOT GET THERE FROM HERE

Why do non-Christians reason like Sinnott-Armstrong and think that they are still practicing valid reasoning? It is because they cannot reach their desired conclusions by necessary inferences, and so they simply agree among themselves to redefine the standard of rational argumentation to something much lower, that is, something that is outright *invalid*. "Valid" reasoning is thus defined by agreement, and not by logical necessity.

Early on in his debate against Craig, Sinnott-Armstrong writes:

If we were not allowed to reach any conclusion without being completely sure, then we would never be allowed to reach any conclusion on any important matter, since we can never be completely

sure about anything important (at least if it is controversial). The demand for certainty leads to ignorance and inaction.⁵⁶

This is a significant admission. He concedes that *he* "can never be completely sure about anything important."⁵⁷ That is, the conclusions of his arguments are never reached by necessary inferences from the premises, but by logical leaps, and this is what makes his conclusions "uncertain," or as I would say, invalid and irrational, to be dismissed in rational debate.

Although he adds, "at least if it is controversial," this does not help him at all; rather, it confirms that he regards validity and certainty as directly related to agreement, and not logical necessity. The implication is that a conclusion is more "certain" the more it is agreed and non-controversial; its certainty is not measured by the logical rigor by which it is reached. On the other hand, he later says that a philosopher is supposed to "question *common* assumptions"!

Of course, some non-Christians still insist on defining valid reasoning by logical necessity, but then they face the problem of not being able to formulate valid arguments. Some of those who are aware of this dilemma give up on the possibility of attaining positive knowledge of anything, and they become skeptics and agnostics. However, as I have shown elsewhere, they cannot logically remain in these positions, since skepticism and agnosticism are self-contradictory. Rather, they must either adopt the biblical worldview or become insane. Most choose the latter.

Sinnott-Armstrong realizes that he cannot logically establish "anything important,"⁵⁸ and thus he makes logic and certainty a purely pragmatic matter. That is, he says that if we must be completely sure, then we would never reach any conclusion on any important matter. Then, instead of saying, "Therefore, we can never reach any conclusion on any important matter," he in effect says, "But we want to reach some conclusions no matter what, so let's just change the rules." That is, "If we follow the rules, then we will never get there; but we want to get there, so let's just change the rules." Although he cannot logically escape skepticism, he stays away from skepticism just because he dislikes it, and because he wants to retain the right to make assertions about various things, even when he has no such right.

Non-Christians are not just practicing this pragmatic redefinition of rationality, but they are actively teaching it. Again, we are aware that some non-Christians still think that they can establish their conclusions by logical necessity, but in reality they really cannot. In fact, none of their arguments are rationally superior to Sinnott-Armstrong's arguments in substance. The difference is that they refuse to admit it; it is a different kind of self-deception than what people like Sinnott-Armstrong is practicing. Therefore, one of the things that we should do when debating against them is to show that their arguments are

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 95.

⁵⁷ He applies the "we" to all of us, but I would reply, "Speak for yourself!" He does not represent us when our worldview and arguments are different from his and immune to the problem.

⁵⁸ I would remind the reader that he can speak only for himself.

just as fallacious. However, right now we are discussing those non-Christians (much more numerous than you might think) who admit that they cannot establish "anything important" (I would say "anything at all") by logical necessity, but who still wish to consider themselves rational, so that they simply redefine rationality and valid reasoning.

In what follows, I will use David Zarefsky as an example. Among his numerous credentials and achievements, Zarefsky is Professor of Argumentation and Debate and Professor of Communication Studies at Northwestern University. Therefore, as with Sinnott-Armstrong, let no one say that I have deliberately chosen an inferior specimen as an example of non-Christian foolishness.

In his syllabus for a course on argumentation,⁵⁹ he refers to deduction and induction, and he expresses his view on logical validity in these terms, so it would be helpful to briefly define them, and review their differences.

Deduction is the process of reasoning by which the conclusion is inferred from the premises by logical necessity; on the other hand, induction is the process of reasoning by which the conclusion is *not* inferred from the premises by logical necessity. In deduction, the conclusion includes only information that is already contained in and necessarily implied by the premises; but in induction, the conclusion includes new information that is *not* already contained in and necessarily implied by the premises.⁶⁰

In other words, an inductive argument yields a conclusion that is *supposedly* but *not necessarily* implied by the premises. For this reason, induction is always a formal fallacy; that is, the conclusion is never certain, never rationally established. In fact, since the conclusion is not necessarily implied by the premises, there is no way to logically show that there is any necessary relationship at all between the conclusion and the premises.

With the above in mind, he writes, "Formal reasoning is not seen as the prototype of argumentation in recent scholarship."⁶¹ By "formal reasoning," he is referring to deduction, when "one actually reason[s] in syllogistic form."⁶² In his view, "Most argumentation is not represented by a form in which the conclusion contains no new information."⁶³ But he does not conclude, as I would, "Therefore, most argumentation is fallacious." Instead, he says that argumentation "involves enabling an audience to move from what is already known and believed to some new position," and "This movement involves a *leap of faith* that the arguer seeks to justify."⁶⁴

He goes on to say, "*Judgment* is needed because absolute proof is not possible, *yet decisions must be made*."⁶⁵ In other words, subjectivity is introduced into the process

⁵⁹ David Zarefsky, *Argumentation: The Study of Effective Reasoning, Part 1 and Part 2* (The Teaching Company, 2001).

⁶⁰ Zarefsky agrees with these definitions (*Argumentation, Part 1*, p. 13-15).

⁶¹ *Part 1*, p. 15.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

because of pragmatic concerns, that is, because "decisions must be made." He continues, "Judgment is sought by giving sufficient reason that a critical *listener* would *feel* justified in *accepting* the claim."⁶⁶ Instead of being objectively and logically demonstrated, the claim is "accepted" if the listener "feel" that it is justified. Thus for Zarefsky, "Adherence of the critical listener becomes the *substitute* for absolute proof."

In other words, realizing that for them deduction is unrealistic and often impossible, non-Christian philosophers have chosen to abandon deduction, and instead they have decided to rely on subjective judgments toward inductive arguments.

But then, this means that all of their arguments are logically invalid. Zarefsky admits, "Applying the concept of validity beyond formal logic is tricky."⁶⁷ Why? "Because the claim does not follow from the evidence with certainty, we cannot say that if the evidence is true, the claim *must* be true."⁶⁸ We may ask, "If it does not follow *with certainty*, then does it follow *at all*?" In any case, what does he do? Does he then write, "Therefore, we must concede that our arguments are invalid, and we must be honest and admit that our conclusions are mere subjective non-rational or even irrational opinions and speculations"?

No way! Instead of saying that all their everyday arguments are invalid he says, in effect, "Let's *redefine* validity! Let's *agree* that even our leaps of faith are logically valid!"⁶⁹ You might say, "But we still must have a 'check on the process of reasoning,'⁷⁰ don't we?" "Of course," Zarefsky replies, "This function is achieved by focusing on *experience* rather than form."⁷¹ That is, rather than thinking of validity as a matter of necessary inference, he proposes that "A general tendency develops over time for certain reasoning patterns to produce good or bad *results*."⁷² Like Sinnott-Armstrong, he makes reasoning a purely pragmatic endeavor rather than a rational one. It is also suggestive that his course is entitled, "Argumentation: The Study of *Effective Reasoning*," whereas if I were to teach a course on argumentation, I would instead entitle it, "Argumentation: The Study of *Necessary Inference*."

You see, non-Christians have given up on rationality, because they cannot live up to its demands. Still, they want to go through the motions of reasoning, and they want to consider themselves rational. So they have redefined rationality as a matter of agreement rather than logical necessity. They cannot get from "here" to "there," but they still want to get "there," so they decide to just take a leap of faith. If this sounds irrational and invalid, then they will just agree to *define* it as rational and valid.

Therefore, to put it plainly, their strategy is that, "If you can't get from here to there, just cheat. And if everybody cheats, then we will all look fine to one another. Although our

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ *Part 2*, p. 8.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 8-10.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 8.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 9.

⁷² Ibid.

conclusions are reached by leaps of faith, we would still like to think of ourselves as rational, so let's just *agree* that we are rational no matter what." In other words, it is rationality by agreement or by pure fantasy, and not by logical necessity or necessary inference.

You might exclaim, "What?! Are they stupid or something?" Yes, they are stupid, and these are the same morons who attack your faith and call you irrational. They are desperate and dishonest. They are finding it impossible to remain rational apart from reliance on God's revelation, but they refuse to admit it. The pragmatic approach stems from the realization that they cannot arrive at the conclusions that they wish to prove by deduction, because given their non-Christian epistemologies, it would be impossible to begin from self-authenticating premises from which they can deduce true conclusions by logical necessity. And even though there are still some non-Christians who try to live up to the standard of deduction, they cannot do it on the basis of their non-Christian epistemologies and first principles. Therefore, either way, we win.

CHRIST OUR REASON, REASON OUR WEAPON

The Bible tells us that Christ is the Logos of God – that is, he is the Word, the Wisdom, the Logic, or the Reason of God (John 1:1). Therefore, whoever rejects Christ rejects Reason itself. Those who attack Christianity war against Reason, so let it never be said again that the unbelievers employ reason or logic to challenge Christianity – that *never* happens. Rather, their strategy is to attack our faith with irrational and unwarranted assertions and speculations. On the other hand, Christ is our champion, and Scripture/Reason is our weapon.

The non-Christians will claim that Reason belongs to them, and this confuses many misinformed Christians. But as I have illustrated above, although they may try to place the Rock of Reason on their own shoulders, and proclaim it as their God and them its servants, they cannot bear its demands, and ultimately Reason suffocates and crushes them. They slither from under it and try to excuse themselves from it and to redefine it. Then, they hit upon the idea that they could patch together a huge ball of dung and call *that* Reason and Logic – it is much lighter, and surely no one would notice! But the biblical apologist will crush both them and their ball of dung with the Rock of Reason, from which they have tried so hard to escape.

I have used Sinnott-Armstrong and Zarefsky only as examples, but all other non-Christian thinkers are just as mentally feeble. Whether it is Michael Martin, Kai Nielsen, or some other non-Christian in the past or present, it makes no difference. Their irrationalism is necessarily connected with their rejection of the biblical worldview; anyone who plays in dung would stink. And since their way of arguing is not just unknowingly practiced, but deliberately and systematically taught to their students, future generations of non-Christians can only become worse and worse.

This brings us to an important point mentioned earlier. Can even children defeat these non-Christian professors in debate? They certainly can, if they are properly trained by their parents and their pastors. God has already made the unbelievers foolish (1

Corinthians 1:20), and he delights in using the lowly things to humiliate the proud (v. 28). Although we should all participate, who better to embarrass non-Christian scholars than the children, the mentally disabled, and the uneducated? But to succeed, they must embrace Christ as their Reason and they must affirm the whole Scripture as God's revelation. Thus they must be properly taught.

Parents, teach your children systematic theology and biblical apologetics. You should start as soon as they begin to understand language. Train them to think biblically and logically. From the beginning of their lives, teach them to esteem that which God esteems, and to despise that which God despises.

Pastors, preach about the foolishness of the unbelievers – expose them! Use them as public examples and show your people how to rationally demolish them and reduce them to nothing. You will find the worst arguments even in their best works. Impart to your people the skill, the knowledge, and the confidence that they need to engage the unbelievers and win. Our goal is the total humiliation and annihilation of non-Christian scholarship; our purpose is to beat its back and crush its head with Reason until it bows before the throne of Christ. To do that we must labor to raise up an army of biblical apologists, capable of demolishing any non-Christian in debate at the drop of a hat.

Of course, some of you are still hesitant; you are still shackled by the standard of social discourse and propriety that the non-Christians have imposed upon you.⁷³ This is a defense mechanism that they have installed in your mind to protect themselves against Reason. Stop being stupid! Stop being weak! Stop flattering and romancing that which God has condemned. Instead, get in line with the biblical method and tone of gospel proclamation and defense. Rise up and take your place in the army of God, and fight for his cause.

⁷³ See Vincent Cheung, "A Moron by Any Other Name."