

Apologetics is essentially the enterprise of trying to win men and women for Christ by obeying Scripture's own command to "be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Pet 3:15).

Neglected or avoided today –

- 1) Liberal acceptance of other religions – more worried about offending others than bringing them to the Truth
- 2) Conservatives
 - a. Do not argue because they fear that human reason is a Leftist tool invented in Pagan Athens or Boston – mostly Protestant fundamentalists
 - b. Some argue, but for a narrow political agenda
 - c. Many traditionalists tend to argue so arrogantly and joylessly that they win no one over, or so abstractly and scholastically that only a philosopher would be interested.
- 3) It is also hard to find unbelievers willing to argue their case today either. Most ignore rather than try to refute the Faith.

But among students and the ordinary people, we find no less interest and no less hunger for reasons today than ever.

Apologetics is necessary in any age because it is commanded in Scripture and the unchanging human heart still seeks reasons. Young people today need apologetics to defend their minds and their faith against the subtle and incessant propaganda from the secular environment, especially the media.

Today's generation is starved for reasons. They need apologetics more than previous generations because their faith is constantly challenged.

Seven Practical Tools:

- 1) Don't be afraid of being "unpopular." Mother Teresa said, "God did not call us to be successful but to be fruitful."
- 2) Don't avoid hard questions, especially regarding morality.
- 3) Much work in our modern culture must be preevangelistic. The typical modern mind does not believe in objective truth or objective values. Your work is to prepare rather than to convert. When the time is right, you withdraw and let God take over.
- 4) You must be passionately in love with Truth and totally honest.
 - a. Great classics of Christian apologetics – Augustine's *Confessions*, Aquinas's *Summa*, Pascal's *Pensees*, and in the 20th century, C.S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity* and G.K. Chesterton's *Orthodoxy*.
- 5) Listen! This works because, first, truth will out. Upon investigation and exposure to the light of day, falsehood will show itself and die in the sun. You needn't squash them with a hammer. Second, only listeners are listened to.
- 6) Let go and let God. Logical argument can't prove all the truths of the Faith, but it can answer all objections to it. To Truth through reason and faith.
- 7) Be optimistic. The present age has not heard and rejected; it hasn't really heard it!

Reasons to Believe: Arguments for the Existence of God

There are many arguments for God's existence, but most of them have the same logical structure – the basic structure of any deductive argument.

- 1) Major premise, or general principle
- 2) Minor premise, or particular data which comes under that principle
- 3) Conclusion follows from applying the general principle to the particular case.

1. The Argument from Design

Major premise: Where there is design, there must be a designer

Minor premise: The existence of design throughout the universe

Conclusion: There must be a universal *designer*

Is it possible that design happens by chance without a designer? Possible, maybe, but not probable.

Principle of Causality – You can't get more in the effect than you had in the cause.

2. The First-Cause Argument

St. Thomas Aquinas's "five ways" – Aside from the Argument from Design, there are four others. All are versions of the First-Cause Argument.

Principle of Sufficient Reason – Nothing just is without a reason why it is. Everything has some adequate or sufficient reason for being. Even if we do not it, there must be a cause for everything that comes into existence.

The universe is a vast and complex chain of causes, but does the universe as a whole have a cause? A first cause – an uncaused cause – a transcendent cause of the whole chain of causes? If not, there is infinite regress of causes with no first link in the great cosmic chain.

Why must there be a first cause? If not, the whole universe is unexplained and the Principle of Sufficient Reason would be violated. It would be an endless "passing of the buck."

The four ways / four different kinds of cause:

- 1) Cause of motion
- 2) Cause of beginning to existence
- 3) Cause of present existence
- 4) Cause of goodness or value

What can we prove? That logically, there must be a transcendent, eternal, uncaused, immortal, self-existing, independent, all-perfect being.

3. The Argument from Conscience

Meaning of *conscience* – 1) The modern meaning tends to indicate a mere feeling that I did something wrong (or am about to); 2) The traditional meaning in Catholic theology is the knowledge of what is right and wrong: intellect applied to morality.

Conscience is an intuitive knowledge rather than a rational or analytical knowledge. It is the knowledge that I am supposed to be good and do right not wrong.

First, admit the premise of the authority of conscience.

Major premise: Conscience has an absolute authority over me.

Minor premise: The only source of an absolute authority is an absolutely perfect will.

The conclusion follows that such a being exists.

Is there an alternate source or basis for our conscience? Maybe an idea? Maybe instinct? Is there a natural law without a law-giver? Does herd instinct account for our guilt when we do wrong? Should all of our instincts be obeyed? Conscience is the thing that keeps instinct in check! Is society the source of our conscience? If so, what kind of authority does it have? Should a German have obeyed society in the Nazi era?

Only a perfectly good, righteous divine will has this authority and a right to absolute, exceptionless obedience. Therefore conscience is the voice of the will of God.

We do not always obey our conscience and our obligations are two-fold: 1) Form our conscience rightly by seeking the truth, esp. what God has revealed; and 2) Strengthen our will in order to rightly obey our properly formed conscience.

4. The Argument from History

There are many, at least eight, arguments from history. History is a bit stronger than the other arguments because its evidence are facts – things that have happened – not just principles or ideas. Though stronger psychologically, it is weaker logically because we do not proceed from a major premise to a deductive argument. We instead reason inductively by gathering evidence from history and drawing a conclusion based on the facts.

- 1) History is not random – there is a storyline. There is meaning. All stories have a story-teller, which brings us back to the argument from design.
- 2) Similar to the argument from conscience, we see a moral design in history. Where conscience refers to individuals, this argument uses the justice revealed in history, the obligation of society.
- 3) Providential “coincidences” bring us at least to the suspicion, if not the conviction, that an unseen divine hand is at work. This is God working through the second causes of natural agents.
- 4) Miracles, on the other hand, lack any natural explanations, and are therefore even stronger evidence for God. The unbeliever, if he truly sought after truth, would investigate miraculous claims rather than simply dismissing them as impossible.

- 5) Christ Himself is an argument from history. If He really thought he was God and was not, He must have been crazy. If He knew He was not God, but still claimed to be, then He would have been a liar. So, Jesus must be the Lord, or else he must be either a lunatic or a liar. The character revealed through historical record (i.e. the Gospels written by men who knew Him personally) is utterly unlike that of a lunatic or a liar.

Logical order: First prove the existence of God, then prove the divinity of Christ, then prove the authority of Christ's Church.

Actual order: The individual meets Christ through Christians (Apostles who wrote the Gospels and saints past and present), then he meets God through Christ

- 6) The saints – the good Christians – are the sixth historical argument. If God is only an illusion, how can an illusion cause life's greatest joy? If not God, then who put the smile on the lips of martyrs? "By their fruits you shall know them." Illusions do not have the staying power that the Faith has.
- 7) The conversion of the world – Worldly men pin their hopes on otherworldly goals consistently, en masse, century after century. Christianity spread across the Pagan Roman Empire and then the world.
- 8) God promised that all who seek shall find Him. In the story of our own life, we can find God, if only we seek Him out. How? Not just by talking *about* him, but by talking *to* him – by praying. If the skeptic really wants to know whether God exists, he should ask Him directly. Whoever sincerely prays the prayer of the skeptic and asks God to reveal Himself, honestly seeking the Truth, shall find God no matter how hard, long, or complex the road. "All roads lead to Rome" if only we follow them.

5. The Argument from Pascal's Wager

Either God is, or He is not. How would you wager? If God does not exist, it does not matter how you wager, for there is nothing to win or lose after death. If, however, God does exist, your only chance of winning is to believe.

Something either exists or it doesn't. There is no in between. Therefore, it is a 50/50 wager. The odds are 2:1. How will you bet? What do you have to lose if you choose to believe? What do you stand to gain? What do you have to lose if you choose not to believe? What do you stand to gain?

If you choose to believe and you are wrong, you've lost nothing. But if you are right, you may gain eternal happiness. If you choose not to believe, and you are right, you will still have nothing when you leave this world; but if you are wrong, you will gain eternal damnation and lose everything.

Pascal's Wager is the "last resort" argument.