



THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IN THE WORLD AND THE WORD

An Introduction to
CLASSICAL APOLOGETICS

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The Knowledge of God in the World and the Word

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CHAPTER 1

WHAT IS CLASSICAL APOLOGETICS?

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is apologetics and what Scriptures support it?
2. What is distinctive about classical apologetics?
3. What is natural theology?
4. What are the biblical texts that support natural theology?

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CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL OBJECTIONS TO APOLOGETICS

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Which of the theological objections to apologetics do you find compelling, if any? Why?
2. Discuss any objections to apologetics not mentioned in this chapter and respond to them logically and biblically.
3. If someone thinks apologetics is unbiblical, how might this affect their witness and spiritual life?

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CHAPTER 3

PHILOSOPHICAL OBJECTIONS TO APOLOGETICS

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Explain the difference between a philosophical objection to apologetics and a theological objection to apologetics.
2. Do you find any of the objections cogent? If so, why?
3. Might there be other philosophical objections to apologetics that are worth considering?

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CHAPTER 4

THE COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is the basic idea of a cosmological argument that unites all the various versions of this argument?
2. Which version of the cosmological argument trades on scientific theories, and how does it do so?
3. How does the principle of sufficient reason cosmological argument differ from the kalam cosmological argument?

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CHAPTER 5

THE ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. How does the ontological argument differ from cosmological arguments?
2. Do you think the God of the ontological argument is too abstract to be identical to the God of the Bible?
3. Sometimes people claim the ontological argument is illicit because it simply posits an idea of God as existing without giving a real argument. Respond to this charge.

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CHAPTER 6

THE MORAL ARGUMENT

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is the basic two-stage approach to the moral argument?
2. What are the best arguments against relativism, and why must relativism be defeated for the moral argument to work?
3. How do you respond to the question “But what makes God good”?

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CHAPTER 7

THE ARGUMENT FROM DESIGN

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Why might the argument from beauty have more existential punch than the fine-tuning argument?
2. How do we know the universe is fine-tuned for life?
3. Would life on other planets refute the fine-tuning argument?
4. How do we address the skeptic's response, "Who designed the Designer?"

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CHAPTER 8

THE BIBLE'S TRUSTWORTHINESS

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Why is it important for apologetics to argue for the Bible's reliability?
2. Must we argue for the inerrancy of the Bible to do good apologetics? Explain your answer.
3. What are the basic logical stages in defending the reliability of the Bible?
4. How do you respond to the allegation that since the Bible contains miracle claims, it cannot be true?

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CHAPTER 9

THE TRUTH ABOUT JESUS

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. How does Jesus differ from other religious teachers, according to the Bible?
2. What are the salient truths about Jesus that make him unique and matchless in his identity?
3. Explain the “God or a bad man” argument.
4. What is the apologetic significance of Jesus’ death on the cross?

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CHAPTER 10

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is the significance of Jesus' resurrection?
2. Do we need to assume the inerrancy of the New Testament to give a good apologetic for Jesus' resurrection?
3. What is the basic strategy of this chapter in defending the resurrection of Jesus?
4. Do you know of other apologetically solid ways to defend the resurrection of Jesus in history?

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CHAPTER 11

APOLOGETICS IN LIFE AND MINISTRY

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. How is apologetics related to evangelism?
2. How is apologetics related to discipleship?
3. In what ways can a Christian start to do apologetics?

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GLOSSARY

Chapter 1

1. **Special revelation.** A class or type of God's self-revelation that includes the Bible, the person and work of Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Special revelation is the primary and definitive material from which we understand the truth about God, humanity, the good life, the world, and any other topic it addresses.
2. **General revelation.** A class or type of God's self-revelation that includes the natural world, in logic, and in the human conscience, given generally or universally to all humanity. This revelation does not determine Christian doctrine and practice, but it does confirm special revelation. This forms the primary source material for arguments for the existence of God.
3. **Apologetics.** The ministry of defending and commending the knowledge of God that is revealed in the Bible and in the world around us. Apologetics shows how Christianity is true, rational, and pertinent to every area of life.
4. **Natural theology.** Rational reflection on God's general revelation. Natural theology employs deductive and inductive argumentation and inferences to the best explanation. In particular, natural theology develops arguments for God's existence, including ontological arguments, moral arguments, design arguments, and cosmological arguments.
5. **Reductio ad absurdum.** A Latin phrase meaning "reduction to absurdity." This is an argument form that takes a claim and shows that this claim leads to an absurd conclusion, which must be false. Therefore, the initial claim is false. For example, if atheism leads to nihilism, and nihilism is absurd, then atheism is false. Formally: If P, then Q.

Q (which is absurd). Therefore, not-P. This is a form of *modus tollens* reasoning. It is also called *denying the consequent*.

6. **Negative apologetics.** The activity of showing that non-Christian worldviews are illogical or do not fit the facts.

Chapter 2

1. **Fideism.** The idea that true faith is contrary to or, in the least, makes no reference to reason.
2. **Justification.** This is a necessary condition for knowledge. It is the idea that one must have good reasons for a belief. Along with the truth of the belief (for example, that your belief is the case), justification is necessary to have knowledge.
3. **Epistemology.** The branch of philosophy that is concerned with knowledge and truth.
4. **Modus tollens.** This is an argument type that means, in Latin, “in the method of denying.” Formally it denies the consequent in a logical argument. If P, then Q. Not-Q. Therefore, not-P.
5. **Common ground.** Any beliefs that Christians hold with those who are outside of the Christian faith that can serve as a way to help those outside the faith to embrace the gospel. For example, belief in one God, belief in objective morality, or belief in logic are kinds of common ground that Christians can discover and build on to help others to embrace the gospel.
6. **Reductio ad absurdum.** A Latin phrase meaning “reduction to absurdity.” This is an argument form that takes a claim and shows that this claim leads to an absurd conclusion, which must be false. Therefore, the initial claim is false. For example, if atheism leads to nihilism, and nihilism is absurd, then atheism is false. Formally: If P, then Q. Q (which is absurd). Therefore, not-P. This is a form of *modus tollens* reasoning. It is also called *denying the consequent*.
7. **Theological liberalism.** The general tendency to deny the truth and sufficiency of the Bible and the uniqueness and divinity of Jesus Christ. This is not typically related to political liberalism or classical liberalism.

8. **Particularism.** The perspective that Christian truth claims are uniquely true and that the truth claims of other religions that conflict with Christian truth claims are false.
9. **Law of noncontradiction.** This is the logical principle that two conflicting truth claims cannot both be true at the same time and in the same respect. This also refers to the principle that something cannot both be and not be at the same time and in the same respect.
10. **Ontotheology.** The sin of using philosophy to attempt to control and manipulate the concept of God. Christians who hold to the ontotheology objection claim that the god of natural theology is not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Chapter 3

1. **Category mistake.** A logical fallacy in which the wrong category is used to assess a truth claim. To ask who created a being defined as uncreated is, thus, a category mistake.
2. ***Ex nihilo*.** A Latin phrase meaning “out of nothing.” This applies to the biblical doctrine that God created the cosmos out of nothing. That is, he did not use preexisting materials, nor is the cosmos an extension of his own being (as in panentheism). See especially Genesis 1:1; Psalm 90:2; John 1:1–2; and Revelation 4:11.
3. **Methodological naturalism.** A way of approaching questions in which the very possibility of a nonnaturalistic explanation is ruled out in principle. This approach is used by Darwinists in biology to foreclose the possibility of intelligent design by an immaterial agent as the best explanation for some features of nature, such as molecular machines.
4. **Presuppositionalism.** An apologetic approach that presupposed the truth and rationality of the Christian worldview instead of seeking outside evidence from reason, history, and science to confirm the truth of Christianity. Presuppositions focus on negative apologetics, not natural theology, evidence for the resurrection, and so on.
5. **Red herring.** A logical fallacy that diverts attention from the real issue by injecting something having only a superficial relationship to the matters at hand and which is argumentatively moot. If an apologist gives an argument for creation *ex nihilo* and an atheist responds by saying that Christians cannot agree on the age of the universe,

this fallacy has been committed. This is because the dispute among Christians about the age of the universe has nothing to do with whether or not it came into being a finite time ago.

Chapter 4

1. **Actual infinite.** A completed totality that is unlimited. The kalam cosmological argument argues that an actual infinite is logically impossible or that it cannot exist in actuality.
2. **Ad infinitum.** A Latin phrase meaning “and so on forever”; that is, it continues without an end.
3. **Big bang cosmology.** A colloquial name for “the standard model” in cosmology that claims that the universe began to exist a finite time ago. At this point, space, time, matter, and energy all began to exist.
4. **Contingent truth.** A statement that corresponds to reality, but which might not have been true, such as my dog’s name is Sunny. I might have named him Coltrane, or I might not have had a dog at all.
5. **Kalam cosmological argument.** A particular version of the cosmological argument that is deductive in form and argues that if the universe began to exist, it must have a cause outside of itself, and that cause is God.
6. **Necessary truth.** A statement that corresponds to reality and which must be true, such as the basic laws of logic and the validity of deductive argument forms, such as: If P, then Q. P. Therefore, Q.
7. **Potential infinite.** A series that ever increases but never reaches a terminal limit, such as the set of all positive numbers.
8. **Principle of sufficient reason (PSR).** A logical principle that holds that for any positive state there must be an explanation (known or unknown) for why it exists. Atheists who believe the universe is just there without any explanation deny this principle as having universal scope.

Chapter 5

1. **A priori.** A Latin phrase that refers to knowledge gained through internal rational reflection.
2. **A posteriori.** A Latin phrase that refers to knowledge gained by observing or experiencing something in the external world.

3. **Scientism.** The philosophical idea that knowledge is gained only through the sciences.
4. **Possible world.** A concept used by philosophers to consider a complete set of states of affairs that could all exist in a coherent reality.
5. **Methodological naturalism.** A way of approaching questions in which the very possibility of a nonnaturalistic explanation is ruled out in principle. This approach is used by Darwinists in biology to foreclose the possibility of intelligent design by an immaterial agent as the best explanation for some features of nature, such as molecular machines.
6. **Reductio ad absurdum.** A Latin phrase meaning “reduction to absurdity.” This is an argument form that takes a claim and shows that this claim leads to an absurd conclusion, which must be false. Therefore, the initial claim is false. For example, if atheism leads to nihilism, and nihilism is absurd, then atheism is false. Formally: If P, then Q. Q (which is absurd). Therefore, not-P. This is a form of *modus tollens* reasoning. It is also called *denying the consequent*.
7. **Necessary and contingent truths.** A necessary truth is one that could not have been otherwise. A contingent truth is one that so happens to be the case but could have been otherwise.

Chapter 6

1. **Modus tollens.** This is an argument type that means, in Latin, “in the method of denying.” Formally it denies the consequent in a logical argument. If P, then Q. Not-Q. Therefore, not-P.
2. **Objective moral values and duties.** Objective moral values are things that are good or bad regardless of people’s opinions about them. Objective moral duties are actions that are right or wrong regardless of people’s opinions of them.
3. **Moral subjectivism.** The idea that what is moral differs from person to person.
4. **Cultural relativism.** The idea that what is moral differs from culture to culture.
5. **Nihilism.** From the Latin *nihil*, meaning “nothing.” Nihilism is the idea that there are no such things as moral values, and that our moral choices have no objective meaning.

6. **Reductive naturalistic moral realism.** This phrase means that only naturalistic or physical explanations are necessary to describe and justify belief in objective moral values and duties.
7. **Godless normative realism.** The belief that there are real and objective moral values and duties that do not require a divine foundation. These values and duties simply exist and do not have an explanation.
8. **Occam's razor.** A philosophical virtue in which, all things being equal, one should prefer simpler explanations over more complicated ones. It is also known as parsimony.

Chapter 7

1. **The two books of nature.** A concept developed in Christian philosophy to indicate that the same God is the author of the Bible and the author of nature (or his creation). Both books, when properly interpreted, reveal God.
2. **Irreducible complexity.** A phrase coined by biochemist Michael Behe to refer to a system in which each part is required for the whole to operate in a biologically successful manner. If anything is irreducibly complex, it cannot be formed in a slow, purposeless, and incremental fashion, as Darwinism claimed is the only explanation for any living organism (except the first, which Darwinism did not address as a theory). Behe takes the bacterial flagellum to be irreducibly complex.

Chapter 8

1. **Minimalist view.** The view that Jews living in Palestine in the fifth through the third centuries BCE compiled an imagined history of their past in the lands of Palestine that legitimized their claims to the land and their particularities as a people unique from their neighbors. They cobbled together what eventually took shape as the Hebrew Bible (what Christians refer to as the Old Testament), with its origin stories of the children of Israel, its wisdom writings, and its prophetic literature. It entails that the Hebrew Bible is primarily a fiction, an imagined national history used to legitimize the status of a people over and against their powerful neighbors.
2. **The bibliographic test.** This method of evaluation helps us to determine how closely the text that we have today matches with the

original text that ancient peoples read and heard. It tends to examine the number and age of manuscripts and variants of passages within the manuscripts.

Chapter 9

1. **Truth.** An indicative statement is true if and only if it corresponds or matches the reality to which it refers. Thus, the statement “Jesus is Lord” is true only if, in fact, he is Lord in reality.
2. **Propitiation.** To make peace or to atone through an action wherein two parties are reconciled. In relation to the work of Jesus, it means that he atoned for our sins through his sacrificial death on the cross, taking our punishment and thus giving us peace with God. The atonement involves more aspects than propitiation (such as adoption, reconciliation, deliverance from the devil, etc.), but propitiation is at the center of the atonement.

Chapter 10

1. **Karma.** The teaching that one’s deeds determine one’s fate in the next lifetime (reincarnation). Held by Hinduism and Buddhism.
2. **Miracle.** In the biblical sense, an event that cannot be explained by natural means alone but requires a supernatural cause. The pivotal miracle in the Bible is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead in space-time history.
3. **Reincarnation.** The idea that living things die and return to life in another living form over and over until they ascend to liberation beyond this karmic cycle. This is contrasted with the biblical teaching of final judgment and resurrection (1 Cor. 15; Heb. 9:27).