

## **How To Use Apologetics**

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Christian Apologetics is a powerful system of communication. This power is enhanced when a person becomes acquainted with the Tools of Apologetics. However, the mere possession of tools does not make him powerful. On the contrary a tool in the hands of an unskilled person would only make it destructive. Witness the proverbial Monkey With A Razor In His Hand.

Possession of a tool does not guarantee the ability to use, and ability to use does not guarantee proper use. Just as some Lawyers, doctors, and policemen misuse their profession, some Christian Apologists also misuse the tools in their possession. However, since they are under God's supervision, misuse of a spiritual capacity brings divine discipline. If a person causes even the smallest one in the spiritual world to stumble, God is displeased. Thus the Apologist needs to be careful. Further, since a careless exercise of apologetics can hurt others (when the apologist becomes harsh, egotistical, or sarcastic) every apologist should seriously consider the areas where he can go wrong. He should tailor his approach to match with what God expects from him.

### **Have The Right Attitude And Perspective**

In the classic passage on Christian Apologetics, the Holy Spirit says, "Set apart Christ as Lord in your hearts. And be ready to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason concerning the hope that is in you, but with meekness and fear". Obviously, the attitude is an integral part of Christian Apologetics. First, every defense should come as a consequence of placing Christ on the throne of one's mind. Second, humility and fear of God should also be an integral part of one's ministry. This can be expressed as follows:

**a. Not For Competition:** People compete against each other in games and in business. There is legitimate place there for healthy competition. But the same attitude would be wrong as a motivation for practicing Christian Apologetics.

**b. Not To Establish Superiority:** Once a person acquires the tools of Apologetics, he is in a superior position compared to a many who attack the Christian faith. He can answer their question easily and disarm them quickly. While he might need to do both, these are not the sole purpose of Apologetics. On the contrary, they are only the first few steps in the long process of sharing the gospel and removing the doubts.

**c. Not Merely To Defeat or To Silence People:** There are occasion when a noisy, troublesome, or irritating opponent needs to be silenced. But that should not be the only goal. On the contrary, the debater should be silenced so as to lead to a more conducive atmosphere in which the genuine process of inquiry can take place.

In other words, though all the elements of conventional debates might be present on an apologetic discussion or debate, Christian apologetics is not merely a debate. The purpose is not merely to defeat or silence the critic. On the contrary, the apologist tries to silence people so as to create an atmosphere where the gospel can be proclaimed openly, authoritatively, and without unnecessary intrusion.

**d. Not An End In Itself:** While the Christian apologist does try to defeat and silence the opponent that is not the final goal. If he leaves it at that, then the goal of apologetics is defeated. The goal and purpose is to help the unbeliever accept the gospel and the believer to be strengthened in his faith.

Thus once the apologist is able to silence the critic, and once he is able to get the attention of the inquirer, he should begin concentrating on the inquirer who will have many genuine questions which hinder him from accepting Christ. The new believer will have many questions that challenge his new-found faith. The more mature believer would have serious questions that puzzle him. All of them need answers, and the apologist should help them all. That is the

ultimate goal of Christian Apologetics.

**e. Not To Prove The Bible Rationally:** Since Christian Apologists speak of the uniqueness of the Bible, and since they try to defend its historical and scientific accuracy, many people erroneously think that the apologist's aim is to "prove" that the Bible is God's word. Such a proof does not exist, as this is neither a mathematical subject, nor an empirical topic. On the contrary, the divinity of the Bible is an inter-disciplinary subject in which the Apologist uses a vast array of information.

One deduces the divinity of the Bible using a combination of empirical, mathematical, historical-legal, and relational proofs. When all of them are put together, and when the result is combined with objective faith, one arrives at the "deduction" that the Bible is God's word. This is a logical process totally different from the conventional proofs. Thus the Christian Apologist does not "prove" the Bible, but rather leads sincere inquirers to objectively come to the deduction that the Bible is the Word of God. Thus the Apologist should never arrogantly think that he can, or that he is cable to, prove directly that the Bible is the Word of God. Nor should he ever brashly claim to anyone that he would be able to "prove" such a thesis. On the contrary, he should always tell the inquiries that he can prove the uniqueness of the Bible, which would lead them to the deduction that the Bible is God's unique message for mankind.

**f. Not To Prove God's Existence Rationally:** Rational proofs are possible for things that empirical or mathematical in nature. However, entities that are not mathematical or empirical are not easily proved rationally. On the contrary they can only be examined rationally to arrive at deductions that are highly accurate or highly probable. Information related to historical subjects, sociological subjects, and relational subjects fall into this category. The existence of God also falls into this category.

No empirical methodology can prove or disprove God's existence. Similarly, mathematical or geometrical methods cannot be used to prove or disprove the existence of God. On the contrary, people make an informed deduction about God's existence based upon a matrix of proofs that includes empirical, mathematical, historical-legal, and relational proofs. Thus no Apologist should brashly claim that he can rationally prove the existence of God. On the contrary, he should only claim that he would present a whole matrix of rational information, using which any thinking person would come to the conclusion that God exists. Proof is possible only in mathematics and empirical science. When it comes to the existence of God, what we offer is a rational deduction that He is real and that He exists.

### **What Is The Purpose of Christian Apologetics**

Christian Apologetics is a spiritual ministry, born to meet the needs of the curiosity and inquisitiveness which God himself has kept in man. Man's natural tendency to explore for truth results in him asking "is this so" about everything, including objections that people raise against the Bible. Such questions shall always be asked of Christian communicators because the common man shall always be flooded with statements against God and the Bible. For them the only source of hope is the knowledgeable Christian communicator. When the Christian tries to help a genuine inquirer, that is Christian Apologetics.

Apologetics has both the endorsement as well as the encouragement of the scripture. When the scripture says that the "Heavens declare the glory of God" it reminds that God Himself is the originator of Christian Apologetics, because He made His creation in such a way that it declares the glories of God. The Christian Apologist uses Apologetics in two ways to help inquirers.

First, every successful Apologist uses the Tools of Apologetics to silence the critic and also to gain the attention of the inquirer, In the second stage he handles the questions of the inquirers in a sympathetic manner, and tries to answer him as accurately and in as simple a manner as possible. By doing so, he helps the unbeliever to find reasonable answers to questions that have been hindering his quest for truth about the Christian Faith. Once his questions are answered to a reasonable level, he would become ready to take a leap of faith and accept Christ as his personal Saviour. On the other hand if the inquirer is a believer, the apologist answers his doubts and helps him to overcome his anguish about whether the Christian faith is objective truth or mere subjective fabrication.

Once the Apologist helps him to see the objective truth of the Christian faith, the believer is strengthened in his faith. Barriers to growth are removed, and he begins to take a strong stand for the Christian faith. In these ways Christian Apologetics works as a ministry of counsel that helps people to trust the Bible and grow in their spiritual life.

### **Stages In An Apologetic Confrontation**

The word "confrontation" upsets many, including Christians, today because activities like taking a stand, showing the difference, separation, etc. are anathema to the present generation steeped in Moral Relativism. However, the Scripture commands God's children to discriminate between good and evil, and to confront and oppose evil. Thus the Christian Apologist should be ready for confrontation, but in the spirit of meekness and humility. With that in mind, the Apologist should take the following steps:

**1- Assess The Opposition:** Every battle requires strategy and Apologetics is no different. Success requires that we launch a counter-offensive that would be proportional to the offensive. Also, we must assess the terrain and climate. What is conducive to those who oppose the Christian faith might be totally hostile and harmful for the Christian Apologist. For example, an irreverent and jeering crowd would highly suit a critic of the Christian faith, but would not allow the apologist to move an inch. Any attempt at defending the Christian faith would be met by the mockery of an irreverent and uninterested crowd, and the net result would be loss. Only exceptionally capable speakers with unusual powers of rhetoric might be able to silence such a crowd for a short period of time. A shrewd move by the opponents can shatter this peace and attention in moments, and therefore position. When the scripture asks believers not to cast their pearls in front of swines, it is a warning that an unworthy recipient might not only reject good counsel, but might even turn against the speaker to tear him to pieces.

The apologist should check the opposition (individuals or groups) to see if the spirit of inquiry is there, or whether they are at least willing to listen carefully and peacefully. He should also check if they have the capacity to appreciate the subject proposed for discussion. Even the stupidest person can ask questions the answer of which he cannot understand. Also, Christian Apologetics is made up of a broad spectrum to topics that range from the most simple to the extremely complex and specialized topics. He should also check if officially designated moderators would be available if needed in a large group. In smaller groups he should check for similar factors that would be conducive to an open and honest discussion.

Whether the opponent is an individual, a small group, or a crowd, the Apologist should be wary of situation that would be hostile or an atmosphere that would promote mockery. He should also assess the energy, courage, and time that would be needed to effectively face the question. He should never forget that unfinished discussion and partially answered (or unanswered) questions will always hurt the Christian Apologist by creating a false impression that he was defeated in the argument, or that he was not able to rise to the occasion.

**2- Assess The Opponent:** In addition to the atmosphere and opposition, the nature, attitude, and intellectual capability/training of the opponent plays a substantial role in Apologetics. For example, if he is a trained person, but who inclines towards mocking the opponent, the dialog or debate cannot succeed, and it would be better to drop the idea of discussion.

The most important factor to check in the critic is whether he is honest. He might be biased towards evolution, rationalism, or other critical viewpoints. But if he is basically honest and willing to discuss with a spirit of inquiry, the discussion will in all likelihood prove fruitful. But if he is dishonest or evasive, then no meaningful discussion will ever be possible.

If the opponent is highly trained, inclined to a critical view, but basically honest, the discussion will be fruitful. However, the Apologist should also be of a reasonable intellectual caliber. Else he would only be able to put up a shallow show. I have seen many Christian Apologists who have a good rhetorical ministry among intellectually average Christians. The same people collapse like a house of cards when they face an intellectually bright and trained opponent.

Thus before deciding to get into a public discussion or debate, the Apologist should make sure that his opponent is sincere. If not, the results would be catastrophic. Similarly, he should make sure that he can rise to meet his opponent at his intellectual level. If not, it would bring only shame to the Christian community. These conditions can be relaxed somewhat in a private discussion and debate, but that does not mean that the Christian Apologist can become reckless.

**3-Know The Topic:** Christian Apologetics has to deal with an unbelievably large range of subjects, and that also from the simplest to the most complex technical level. Consequently, it is not possible for any Apologist to face all the possible opponents and all the critical topics. The field is as diverse as any field of study. Thus at least in any public discussion he should know in advance the topics which his opponent is going to present, lest he be embarrassed and lose face.

For example, consider a person with an exceptionally good background in Philosophy might be a cipher in Physical Sciences. He might have a great image as a thinker, and therefore his loyal followers might want him to debate a rationalist who uses an empirical scientist. The followers might not understand the difference between Philosophy and Empirical Sciences. For them an argument is just a debate which any brilliant person ought to be able to reply. However this kind of a discussion or debate would be disastrous for Christians and Christian Apologists. Rarely only can a philosophy-major handle the technical arguments of a Physics or Archeology major, and vice versa.

I remember two incidents. The first involved a British missionary, the author of an extremely popular apologetics book, who was highly in demand for his lectures. He had the image of an undefeatable Apologetics Superman everywhere, including India. Thus an Evangelical Christian organization fixed his programs in some of the top Colleges and Universities in India.

Professors, researchers, and intellectuals were invited in masses and also given a challenge to come and be undone by this carpet-bomb from the Christian community. Obviously, the academic community came in large numbers with great expectations of meeting an intellectual giant who was going to silence all their learned arguments against the Christian faith. Ten minutes into his first lecture, and most of them (who were teachers all their lives) realized that the man was shallow beyond belief. While he was good at rhetoric, there was no substance in his lectures. The question-answer session turned out to be a disaster, and he fumbled with questions an average science-student could have answered with confidence. Here was a big cipher, blown even larger by all that propaganda by Christians who did not realize that they were going to pit an expert in rhetoric against experts in science. All subsequent programs in Indian educational institutions were hastily canceled, and he was promptly shifted to small-group presentation of Christian apologetics among exclusively evangelical and thoroughly disciplined Christians.

The second case involved that of an Engineer-turned-apologist, but with no background in philosophy. Worse, while he was a skilled orator, he never had any formal training or reading in Christian Apologetics. His deepest acquaintance with this topic consisted of reading the latest best-sellers written by many journalist-cum-apologists, who were able to captivate readers with words, but who never touched the core of the issues. Nor did they ever grapple with the serious problems of Rational Apologetics. Compared to the missionary we mentioned earlier, this man was invited to speak in a more informal manner to groups of 50 to 150 seekers, most with a university background. However, this small-group informal setup created an atmosphere that none of the organizers had anticipated. Here the audience felt much more easy to ask questions and grill the Apologist without any hurry, and this turned out to be the undoing of it all. Once the questions become serious, the Christian started fumbling. He also refused to address the questions. Instead he would simply ask counter-questions. Finally some of the frustrated people stood up and told him on his face that they would any time prefer an ignorant Christian over a dishonest one. On both the occasions the Apologists were skilled speakers and committed defenders of the Christian faith, but only in a limited range of subjects. Neither they, nor the organizers, realized the perils when the opposition came from learned people in subjects which the Apologists were not competent to handle. The Christian Apologist should be careful to speak and challenge people only in those areas where he has as expertise. If a Neuro-surgeon is not embarrassed when he refuses to speak on Pediatrics, a Christian

philosopher should not be embarrassed in refusing to debate topics related to Physics.

**4. Know The Size Of The Hat:** Though Christians see specialization everywhere, and though they would not go to a General Practitioner when only a Super Specialist would do, they quickly forget this principle when it comes to Christian Ministry. In such meetings they try to make the hat of a single size to fit everyone. This is seen when they invite a highly trained Christian philosopher or scientist, asking him to present the latest Christian Evidence from his area of specialization, and then invite everyone with an IQ of 30 and above to come and "enjoy" the lecture. Worse, often the majority in the crowd would be made up of people in this low-IQ or low-education category, and then everyone insists that the presentation in the area of his expertise should be understandable to this crowd. In other words, the hat actually meant for the experts should now be made to fit every single person in the auditorium. This is simply not possible.

I had a sad experience of this type a few years ago. I was invited by a very large church in a cosmopolitan town. The meeting was held in the banquet hall of a large hotel, and it was attended by professors, research scholars, and medical doctors from the nearby educational institutions. My lecture was well received, and there was a demand for some more lectures.

The organizers announced their pleasure, and kept the meeting in their church with the assumption that this will enable them to attract these contacts to the church. Unknown to the organizers, some enthusiasts announced the meeting to the folk in the church also.

The next evening, three fourth of the church was packed with laborers and families: men, women and even children. At the back was my target audience, the university crowd. To make matters worse, some of the church people insisted that my apologetic presentation should be translated into the local language so as to benefit the laborers and families. The best English to Tamil translator available on that day never had anything to do with academics, and had never read even an article on Christian Apologetics. The result was disastrous. I was supposed to address the learned crowd, but the stupidities and antics of my translator so distracted everyone that all were frustrated. Worse, the laborers for whom this compromise was made did not grasp an iota of the lecture. Every single person including me had a depression. The only happy person was the naive translator who had no inkling of how thoroughly he had messed up everything.

One size never served everyone, more so in Christian Apologetics. To scholars it needs to be a scholarly talk, and to the common man it needs to be a popular talk. However, if an organizer tries to mingle both, the Apologist should not accept that recipe for disaster.

**5- Assess The Presentation:** Public Apologetics can range from very simple and friendly lectures up to extremely hostile and technical presentations. Each one requires a different strategy and even mood. While very simple and friendly lectures from critics can be handled in a similar fashion, most critics and criticisms requires a more serious confrontation and a more calculated strategy.

What's important is to decide what approach would yield the best results. This would vary with speaker, situation, and topic. At times a direct and immediate refutation might suffice, while at other times presenting a solid case first and then giving a quick and fast refutation might be a better strategy. Experience is a good teacher here, as it is in every practical field, and gradually the Apologist would develop an intuition about all this. His chief aim is not to win an argument, but rather to present a clear and convincing defense for the Christian faith, so as to lead people with questions and doubts into conviction and growth. Refute where refutation is needed, and expound where such detail is needed. Quotations, statistics, news, and even stories and humor should be used at appropriate places in the right proportion. However, the Apologist should not leave it at that. He should consolidate his position by giving them a glimpse of the very big field of Christian Apologetics. He should also guide them to resources in this field.

**6- Tell Them Of The World Of Apologetics:** Though Christian Apologetics is a subject as old as the Christian faith itself, not everyone knows this. You can safely assume that the majority of your listeners would be totally ignorant about it. Most of them would be under the false impression that this this is the first time that these questions have been asked, and also that

perhaps nobody has the answers. This causes them to continue in fear even if this particular session was helpful. Thus the Apologist must definitely give them a glimpse of the wider world of Christian Apologetics.

He should tell them something about the Jewish Christian Fathers of the bygone eras who defended the faith orally and also in writing. He should then tell about the current situation. At present more than 5000 small and large booklets and books are in print related to Christian Apologetics. There are at least two dozen technical and five times as many popular periodicals on some aspect or other of reason and revelation. There are several professional societies of Christian Apologists where only professionally qualified Apologists can become members. Then there are at least a thousand organizations, small and large, that work in Christian Defense.

What's more, there are at least a thousand high quality websites that offer information related to Christian Evidences. Among them they freely offer thousands of book-length manuscripts and tens of thousands of smaller but substantial articles. There are also over two dozen web-based Apologetics journals on the net.

Once the Apologist gives them a glimpse of these things, the confidence-factor of sincere inquirers takes a massive leap. The assurance that they are not the only people asking questions, and that thousands of highly qualified scientists and philosophers are there to answer these questions helps them to face critics with confidence.

**7- Introduce The Resources:** Though an unbelievably large collection of resources is available, most inquirers have no clue about the quantity or the source of materials. Thus the Christian Apologist should point to the sources from where they can obtain more material. This is essential for the success of the apologetic mission and there are at least two reasons for that.

First, there is none who has one and only one doubt. Attacks against the Christian faith come in clusters, and therefore the doubts also form a cluster. Just because one or two doubts from a cluster are solved in a given lecture, it does not wipe out the doubts that remain. People need their doubts to be solved up to a certain threshold (say, as much as 70% of all doubts) before they feel reasonably confident about the Christian faith. Unless solutions reach this threshold, these doubts keep gnawing at their faith and confidence. Thus a single exposure to Apologetics is usually not sufficient to fully strengthen and stabilize a person. He needs to be exposed repeatedly through conversation, lectures, books, and electronic resources till he reaches the level where he cannot be shaken easily.

Second, attacks against the Christian faith are not a one-time event. On the contrary, they are a continuing process which keeps nagging them. Old attacks often put on new clothes, and seemingly new attacks will keep cropping up. Thus an ongoing exposure to current apologetic resources that tackle both old as well as contemporary attacks would be needed to strengthen a person.

The world of Internet has done great favor to seekers in the form of thousands of reason/revelation websites. The apologist should select three to five sites on major topics such as evolution/creation, Bible/Science, Bible/Archeology, and other apologetic issues. None may ever visit all of them, but the large number of sites will ensure that each person would find sites that directly cater to his specific needs.

**8- Encourage Ongoing Study:** As mentioned earlier, most sincere inquirers need more than a one time exposure to Apologetics before a reasonable level of doubts are overcome. One good approach would be to subscribe to an apologetics magazine. A second one would be to subscribe to free electronic periodicals.

Listening to audio lectures would be another highly beneficial approach. Since many compressed formats are available for audio, many websites now offer series of audio on Christian Apologetics. You should encourage them to download and listen. Scores of hours of audio can now be carried on a single disk or audio device, and this capacity is only going to increase. The costs are also crashing down, bringing audio to the reach of everyone. The Apologist should keep searching the net for the best Apologetics audio, and he should keep such information on give-away sheets of paper that interested people can pick up.

**9- Do Appeal For A Verdict:** Unless an apologetic presentation leads to decisions, all the hard work of the Apologist results in little benefit. Thus every public and private presentation should include an appeal for a verdict. This need not be similar to the traditional alter-call, and it can be tailored to suit the more academic environment of Christian Apologetics.

Many Apologists wrongly assume that a powerful defense of the Christian faith is sufficient to lead people to decisions. While a few who were on the verge of making a decision would automatically make a decision, the rest may not. Their rush to go back to homes and jobs, the continuous assault of a busy time-table or demands of their profession can quickly push all of it out of their minds. Once that happens, there will be no "repeated exposure", and they would never get the full benefit of the Apologist's labors.

If the audience contains even a single unbeliever, the Apologist must give an appeal to accept Christ as their Saviour. Believers should be challenged to build apologetics into their study and witnessing. The precise appeal would depend upon the audience, but you must definitely make a strong, powerful, and even passionate appeal for a verdict.

### **Public Debate Or Private**

While private discussion plays a significant role in Christian Apologetics, every Apologist gets plenty of invitations for public debates. Many of them carelessly rush into debates without evaluating the occasion, place, topic, audience and freedom for presenting one's views.

Many Christian Apologists soon discover that in their haste they have painted themselves into a corner. This frequently happens when the program is organized and totally controlled by the critics. They then make the first presentation, steal the bulk of the time, leave little time for the Christian Apologist, and conclude the program before the Christian can complete even an introduction. Once the curtains are down, nobody will stop to listen to him. Even if a couple of them do stop, he will find the sound-system, lights, and the ventilation (AC) of the auditorium turned off. The security might also arrive to evict them and lock the hall. Christians expect fair play, but many an Apologist has discovered in the past that the world of the opponents is not controlled by such expectations. For them it is war, and they will try to win it, fair or foul -- probably foul.

I know many Christians who fell into this kind of traps. The great eagerness with which people approached them made them believe it would be fair play and an easy battle, only to discover that no combat is possible when the enemy controls the ground, communication, transportation, and supplies. Humiliated, many of them returned totally upset. I myself had a similar experience but in a controlled manner. Few years ago I was visiting a town for ministry when a Muslim Apologist happened to have a massive meeting close by in that place. That evening a few local Muslims came with a Coach and urged me to accompany them and listen to that man. I did accompany them as I was free that evening. However since they knew about my presence and also location in the auditorium, the organizers came to the stage towards the end of the program, announced my name, and declared that I was there to ask my doubts and get an answer from the Muslim apologist. This was an attempt to trap me to open my mouth, without giving me an opportunity to refute his statements. The only other option was to remain silent and be counted incompetent. The Lord gave me wisdom and I stood up, took the wireless mike into my hand, and said "you people brought me on a Coach as a guest to listen to the lecture and not to ask any question. I would appreciate if you would not play any tricks with me now". Everyone heard my comments because I was on the mike, and the organizers hastily came to apologize. The sound system was also promptly turned off lest I make any more comments.

Christian Apologists should be careful not to jump into public debates. They should carefully weigh everything before they accept an invitation. On the other hand, they can more readily get involved in private debates because nobody can invoke mob-mentality to create a difficult situation. Also, in private small-group discussions it is more easy to control the situation. One can always insist that the opposite side give answers and not evade pointed questions of the Christian apologist. Nobody can cut off the Apologist by turning off sound systems and things

like that.

The best situation would be for a skeptic or critic to discuss one-to-one with the Apologist. Another good situation would be where one to five inquirers and perplexed people ask all their doubts and discuss their questions with the Apologist. In such an atmosphere he can answer questions one at a time, completely answer a question under consideration, and then move on to the next question. That is always the best approach whether it is a one-to-one discussion or a small-group discussion.

### **The Troublemakers**

Every Apologist dreams of discussions and debates where a direct and straightforward discussion takes place, where everyone is courteous and also logical in their assessment. However, this never happens, specially when the audience is large. At least a few of them will disturb the meeting by whispering to those on their left and right, by giggling at the most inappropriate moment, and even by disturbing others. Experienced public speakers control such behavior in many ways and the same needs to be done here also. However, there is one kind of a troublemaker who can destroy the most well-crafted presentation. That is the Persistent Interrogator and cross-examiner.

The Persistent Interrogator makes his appearance in almost all public meeting. He thrives on asking questions and putting down the speaker. He might be a person who keeps studying all his life but who is never able to come to final answers about any topic. Or he might be one who has the outward form of a dedicated Christian, but who is a rebel deep inside. There are a lot of Christians of this kind whom everyone considers very dedicated due to the outward form of their Christians life, but who resent the Word of God deep inside their hearts. These people become miserable when the reliability of the Scripture is defended, and they lash out against the speaker. If anyone points to them that they should not have been so blunt or harsh, they escape using the pretext that they asked in such a manner and put forward such questions because "many others" have these doubts but that they could not gather the courage to ask these questions. There are also many pseudo-intellectuals who bring up a whole bunch of trivial or irrelevant questions.

The Persistent Interrogator can disrupt the smooth flow of the Apologetic presentation. He frustrates the speaker, irritates the audience, and creates the impression at the end that the Apologist is incompetent, and that he was no match for the challenge posed. All of this, because of a couple of irrelevant questions. Thus as soon an Apologist spots this type of a person, he should publically say something like this, "Your questions require personal attention from me. They also require more time than what is available here. So please meet me in private after this program is over, and we can discuss your doubts for any length of time. Others can also join us in this in-depth discussion " Once this person is silenced, the Apologist can concentrate upon the more genuine inquirers. What's more, the persistent interrogator (who does not want to be convinced anyway) will not turn up for a private discussion. He thrives upon public attention, and once the Apologist refuses to give him a chance to show off, he will lose the charm of discussion and will take his business elsewhere. However, there is a rare kind of persistent interrogator who will be delighted at the offer of private discussion and who will come for such a discussion. He is the genuine inquirer.

There are always a small number of genuine inquirers who wish to ask a load of questions. Trying to help them in a public meeting will distract others who wait for a chance to ask their doubts, but whose opportunity is denied by the incessant questions of the Persistent Interrogator. Thus it is always better to invite him for a private discussion, which he will appreciate. There might be many other kinds of troublemakers, and all of them are to be handled almost the same way. Do not give them an opportunity to show off in front of people, and their enthusiasm will vanish.

### **Handling Tough Questions**

Nobody can spontaneously answer all the Reason/Faith related questions posed to him, especially in the tense atmosphere of a public meeting. The difficulty is compounded by the fact

that even a fool can ask more questions than the wisest man can answer. Thus every active Apologist will face many questions which he cannot answer immediately or with sufficient authority on the spot. This is a professional risk in Apologetics, and denying the possibility of this happening to one is dishonesty. Worse, an Apologist who is dishonest about his limitations and boundaries will be so unprepared that he would be embarrassed at the most critical stage.

Every Apologist gets difficult questions, but the way he handles them will determine the outcome. He can be a winner even if he is not able to answer a few questions, provided he is open and honest. On the other hand, a dishonest Apologist can seemingly answer all questions, including the ones whose answer he does not know clearly, and yet become a loser. That is because in addition to the answers, people also look at the attitude of the Apologist. They respect a man who answers what he knows, asks for time to ponder over difficult questions, and guides people to experts or to resources that can answer questions which he cannot answer. I remember the initial days of my public ministry. I was at that time trained in Rational Apologetics, but not in Philosophy or Philosophical Apologetics. An outstanding Philosophy scholar, George David, used to be present in many of my more difficult public meetings. During question-answer sessions he started indicating to me his desire and willingness to answer questions that were strictly Philosophical in nature. Soon I started inviting him to tackle these questions by saying "that is a strictly Philosophical question, so George David the Philosopher can answer it better than me". Except for the Persistent Interrogators (who wanted to put me down) everyone wanted authoritative answers, and they welcomed this approach. They knew that nobody is an expert in all fields and therefore had no ill feeling that I referred questions of a strictly philosophical orientation to an expert in that field.

Whether it is Medicine, Engineering, Law or Christian Apologetics, no individual would have all the answers. Referring to an advanced textbook or an expert is the standard practice, and one need not be embarrassed about doing so.

## **Conclusion**

A person could work in any field a few centuries ago without much training and also without much of a professional approach. The town iron smith could also double as the plumber, and small town grocer could also double as the postmaster. However, increasing advancement, complexity, and professionalism has introduced so many changes that today a person can succeed only if he gets trained and adopts a professional approach and works in a systematic manner. This is true of Christian Apologetics also.

While a person does not need to get a professional degree in Apologetics, he needs to study the subject in some depth. He also needs to develop a system of effective refutation, defense, and exposition. Adapting the tools and insights developed by professional Apologists in the twentieth century is the best approach. And finally, he should recognize that in this era of specialization even Christian Apologetics has developed into many advanced branches so that a person trained in one branch of Apologetics may need help from a specialist in another branch of Apologetics. He will also need to conduct his public and private discussions in a calculated manner, so as to minimize distraction and maximize effectiveness.

## **About The Authors**

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## Appendix I

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### **A Fresh Agenda for Apologetics in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

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Apologetics remains an important tool for the church in the new millennium. It is a discipline that helps in the proclamation of the gospel by concentrating on the presentation of answers to questions and clarifications about Christian belief. As Avery Dulles' historical survey shows, in every generation apologists have had to address different kinds of questions and issues. This has meant that apologetic styles and methods have been reconfigured very often so as to effectively handle the spiritual problems of the day. Once again we find ourselves in circumstances where the apologetic challenges and questions are changing, and so it is appropriate that we pause to reassess and reformulate apologetics in order to create a fresh agenda for the discipline in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Christian apologist is presented with this opportunity as Western culture continues to change in response to global currents of thought.

Missiologist David Bosch stated that, "The mission of the church needs constantly to be renewed and reconceived." In the post-Christendom environment in the West, a new atmosphere exists far different from the Christendom culture in which evangelicalism was birthed. The move from modernism to a developing and increasingly influential postmodernism represents a significant cultural shift with major implications for church and ministry. In response to these changing cultural forces, apologists should be encouraged that apologetics remains a valid part of the task of the church, yet also be challenged by the need to create room for a "renewed and reconceived" apologetic agenda.

Apologists and apologetically-minded Christians are encouraged to consider various aspects of apologetics that might assist in the reformulation of apologetics for the new century. What follows are some indicators for fresh apologetic engagements.

**Contextualized apologetics:** American culture represents a patchwork mosaic of various subcultures. Each subculture holds to a variety of views on spirituality, values, attitudes, and behaviors that provide members or participants in a group with a sense of self-identity. In many ways our American experience of cultural and religious diversity is nothing new. The nation's slogan "E Pluribus Unum" - out of many, one - is a reminder that since colonial times America has been a haven for those seeking the freedom to practice their religion. While the first Western European colonists in general practiced Christianity, they represented a broad spectrum of denominations, traditions, and beliefs. As immigrants from around the world settled in America, such diversity was not confined to a variety of Christian denominations, but rather has a long pedigree in time where people groups have also opted for folk religion, esoteric beliefs, religions of Asiatic origin, and in many new religious groups.

Cross-cultural missionaries understand that in order for the gospel to be understood and to be relevant to differing people groups and subcultures, the gospel must be appropriately communicated for different cultural contexts. This process is known as contextualization. Harold Netland of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School has suggested that apologetics too must be "culture-specific" or contextualized appropriately in order to be effective. Netland affirms that the content of the Gospel transcends all cultures, but he highlights how apologetic styles must adapt and address the problems and questions of a given culture or sub-culture. In other words, apologists need to know what cultures and sub-cultures exist, and discover first-hand the questions and spiritual problems of these cultures. To do that apologists can no longer afford to be mere arm-chair observers of culture; rather they must do primary field-work research in meeting people in sub-cultures, observing how they live, how they apply their beliefs to life, and

discovering from the horse's mouth what their actual apologetic questions happen to be. There is little to be gained by trotting out answers to questions that nobody is asking any more.

With the need for a culture-specific apologetic in mind consider examples of contextualized apologetic approaches. In the first example, a rational emphasis will be appropriate in modernist circles where reason and logical argumentation are valued, whereas a relational approach will be more effective in postmodern contexts. This shift in emphasis should not be construed as an abandonment of reason or the use of apologetics as a capitulation to some form of irrationalism. Rather, it is an acknowledgment of shifting cultural realities in the West and strategic changes that should be considered in order for apologists to be effective communicators. In the modernist context great value was attached to arguments and evidences. In this context it was appropriate to provide "evidences that demand a verdict." In the postmodern context, reason is still valuable (since human beings are rational creatures created in God's image), but the place of reason in spirituality is different. For a postmodernist, truth and experience go hand in hand. There must be a combination and integration of the rational and the experiential. The use of a traditional evidential apologetic, with heavy emphasis on logic and evidence is often rejected by a generation interested in truth, but often looking for it in relational ways, and in ways that also make room for mystery and experience.

In another example, when dialoguing with a Latter-day Saint (popularly known as a Mormon), traditionally an apologetic approach is utilized which contrasts heresy with Protestant biblical orthodoxy. Apologists might reconsider whether a strong hermeneutical apologetic is appropriate in this context. While fidelity to Protestant biblical orthodoxy is of great importance to Protestant apologists, Latter-day Saints are more concerned with an epistemology of feelings where truth is determined by subjective experience. A contextualized and reformulated apologetic response would attempt to draw upon personal testimony and the language of experience in communicating the gospel and biblical truth. The apologist interested in utilizing apologetic methods appropriate for differing contexts will be sensitive to the need to formulate a "receptor oriented" apologetic for their cultural frame of reference.

**Globally-informed apologetics:** Netland has also noted that Western theology has come under increasing criticism in the non-Western world where apologetics has been understood as either counter-productive or irrelevant. Sympathetic to non-Western concerns in theology, Netland argues that if "properly construed, apologetics is ancillary to evangelism and is unavoidable in effective proclamation of the gospel." Even so, Netland also states that adopting Western apologetic methods in non-Western contexts is inappropriate. As the world continues to develop under the influence of globalization, Western theology and apologetics will have to adapt in order to be relevant to the concerns and challenges of the two thirds of the world that is non-western. A globally-informed apologetic is also relevant in the pluralistic West. With the increasing influence of non-Christian worldviews in Western nations, only an apologetic that reflects contemporary global concerns will speak with relevance.

**Ancillary apologetics:** In meeting the challenge of a new century, apologists might also consider rethinking the appropriate role and place of apologetics in Christian discipleship. Certainly the use of apologetics needs to be expanded in Western culture, yet when apologetic methods are utilized many times the defense of the faith becomes an end unto itself. When this happens the apologist is prone to a defensive self-identity wherein the refutation of false thinking is seen as the primary reason for ministry.

Prominent apologist Gordon Lewis has commented on this mentality in apologetics applied to new religious movements. He notes that, curiously, apologists working in the field of new religions envision their calling as a "counter" to various heresies, yet missionaries to world religions would never characterize their ministries as "counter-Buddhist" or "counter-Muslim." Lewis suggests that the remedy for this situation is for a new conception of evangelical ministries to new religions. This new conception is not primarily apologetic or "counter-cult," but rather in a positive and pro-active sense of frontier missionaries to unreached peoples in alternative spirituality. This new conception for apologetic ministry will only be possible to the extent that we recognize that apologetics is not an end unto itself, but is a tool that is ancillary

to the missions and evangelism calling of the church.

What some apologists should reflect upon is the need to distinguish between simply answering doctrinal problems (like refuting heresies) and the processes involved in proclaiming the gospel and making disciples. The refutation of someone's beliefs does not equate to evangelism and contextual mission. A negative debunking of heresy is not synonymous with missions. Missions involve understanding a culture, the people's beliefs and practices, and the questions and issues with which these people wrestle. To refute a person's beliefs is scarcely the equivalent of encompassing all that a missionary must do. Apologists need to embrace and apply the principles of cross-cultural missions in their work. Missions and apologetics are not antithetical, but can be used in a harmonious way to proclaim and commend the gospel and to nurture new disciples in Christ. Dealing with doctrinal objections then has its place, but it does not constitute the whole picture. If we can grasp a sense of ourselves as missions apologists this might be a prescription for a healthy apologetic agenda in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Diverse apologetics:** As traditionally formulated, Western apologetics has tended to be primarily the presentation of rationalist arguments. But a purely or largely rationalist approach to apologetics is neither faithful to the biblical example, nor appropriate in many segments of Western culture. David Wilkinson, an apologist with the University of Durham, notes that in Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman he did not merely present a series of rationalist arguments. Rather, he engaged her imagination in conversation (John 4:1-15). Wilkinson believes that a reformulated and relevant apologetic for the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be winsome and diverse, incorporating not only logical arguments but also "narrative, image, poetry, dance, music, and parable." Wilkinson suggests that the apologist's self-conception as artist in addition to scientist or lawyer is crucial to the success of contemporary apologetics that seeks to be culturally relevant.

**Humble apologetics:** A fresh apologetic agenda might also involve a reassessment of evangelical humility and empathy in apologetic ministry. Given the frequently confrontational and uncharitable nature of many Christian apologists, we might ask ourselves whether in our zeal for truth we have been caught up in a crusade against false ideas or whether we genuinely love "not-yet-Christians" and seek to communicate Christ to them. The reminder of the need for humility as we embody an appropriate apologetic is important, because as missionary statesman David Hesselgrave reminds us, "although missionaries have been commanded by Christ to preach the gospel, they cannot command a hearing. They must win a hearing by demonstrating that they are people of integrity, credibility, and goodwill."

Further, Christopher Partridge has noted the changing religio-cultural landscape of the West and the resulting missiological and apologetic implications for the church. He concluded,

Generally speaking, when communicating the Christian faith in the West, confrontational evangelism, rationalist apologetics, and dogmatically expressed exclusivist theologies are inappropriate. Rather, what needs to be appreciated is the value of genuine friendship, humility regarding one's knowledge of another worldview, and a palpable desire to understand.

Evangelical apologists may go a long way in demonstrating their willingness to learn, as well as to be empathetic and humble, by developing a greater willingness to listen, a lesson that may be difficult for some of us used to an apologetic of rebuke, argumentation, and proclamation.

## Conclusion

In our age of religious and cultural pluralism, apologetics still has a vital role to play. But as we have seen, apologetics must be reassessed and reformulated in order to serve more effectively in communicating the gospel with cultural relevancy. Those who take seriously Lesslie Newbigin's call for a genuinely missionary encounter with the post-Christian Pagan West will work to develop and apply appropriate apologetic methodologies to the challenges before us.

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## Appendix II

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# Christian Apologetics Manifesto

By Douglas Groothuis

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It is time to stop apologizing for apologetics, says Christian philosopher and author Douglas Groothuis, in this concise, powerful call to Christians everywhere to follow God's Word and use apologetics for supporting the faith of believers, defending the truth of Christianity, and evangelizing the lost. Christians, churches, and Christian schools (including universities and seminaries) cannot successfully compete with the claims of the world without using apologetics. The need for ministries like Answers In Action and authors like Groothuis has never been greater. Keep coming to Answers In Action during 2004 for the finest apologetics material you can find anywhere. Together we can make a difference for Christ in the world.

*Gretchen Passantino, Director*

This is a manifesto to ignite the holy fire of apologetic passion and action. It is not a sustained argument or a development of themes. (I have written and lectured about these matters elsewhere). It is, rather, a short series of interrelated propositions crying out for both immediate and protracted action. These challenges issue from convictions formed through twenty-five years of apologetic teaching, preaching, debating, writing, and Christian witness.

Because of (a) the waning influence of the Christian worldview in public and private life in America today, (b) the pandemic of anti-intellectualism in the contemporary church, and (c) the very command of God himself to further divine truth, I strongly advise that the following statements be wrestled with and responded to by all followers of Jesus Christ.

Christian apologetics involves the public presentation and defense of Christianity as true, reasonable, knowable, and existentially pertinent to both individuals and entire cultures. Apologetics involves rebutting unbelieving accusations against Christianity as well as giving a constructive case for Christian theism.

The fundamental issue for apologetics is not how many apologists one has read, or what apologetic method one embraces (although that must be worked out). Rather, the fundamental issue is whether or not one has a passion for God's truth—reasonably pursued and courageously communicated—and a passion for the lost because of the love of God resident in one's life.

One must be convinced of the truth, rationality, pertinence, and knowability of the Christian worldview—derived from Holy Scripture, logically systematized, and rightly harmonized with general revelation (truth knowable outside of Scripture).

In light of (1), (2), and (3), fideism—the claim that Christian faith has no positive connection to reason or evidence—should be rejected as unbiblical and harmful to the great cause of Christ's truth (Matthew 22:37-39; Romans 12:1-2).

Any theology, apologetics, ethics, evangelism or church practice that minimizes or denigrates the concept of objective, absolute, universal and knowable truth is both irrational and unbiblical. As such it must be rejected and repented of.

Any intellectual discipline or church practice that minimizes or denigrates the importance of apologetics is unbiblical and must be repented of (Acts 17:16-34; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; 1 Peter 3:15; Jude 3).

The artificial separation of evangelism from apologetics must end. Many evangelistic methods die when those evangelized ask questions related to apologetics. Therefore, all evangelistic training should include basic apologetic training as well.

Apologetics is meant just as much for believers with doubts and questions as it is directed toward unbelievers. Therefore, Christians with doubts should not be shunned or shamed, but given good apologetic arguments (as well as pastoral care) in dealing with their intellectual struggles (Matthew 11:1-11; Jude 22).

Since all Christians are called and commanded to have a reason for the hope within them (1 Peter 3:15), Christian teachers, pastors, mentors and educators of all kinds are remiss if they avoid, denigrate, or minimize the importance of apologetics to biblical living and Christian witness.

Those outside of the leadership positions mentioned in (9) should request that apologetics be made a constitutive part of these institutions if this is not already the case.

In light of (9) and (10), Christian colleges, seminaries, and churches should incorporate apologetics into their institutional/educational life, mission, and vision. Specifically, every Christian college, university, and seminary should require at least one class in apologetics for every degree in their curriculum. Moreover, every discipline should be taught from a Christian worldview, since all truth is God's truth. This has significant apologetic value in and of itself.

Because apologetics is meant to be the public presentation and defense of Christianity as true, reasonable, pertinent, and knowable, apologists should attempt to offer their arguments in as many public venues as possible. Therefore, qualified Christian apologists should learn to become public intellectuals: thinkers who have mastered their material and are willing and able to enter public discourse and debate in a way that challenges and engages the non-Christian mind as well as galvanizes other Christians to hone their apologetic skills. Areas of engagement include the following:

1. Letters to the editors of newspapers and magazines.
2. Op-ed pieces for newspapers.

3. Calls to talk radio programs.
4. Public debates and dialogues on religious and ethical issues.
5. Apologetic contributions to interactive web pages.
6. Lectures on college campuses on apologetic themes.
7. Books oriented to those outside the typical evangelical market, published by secular publishers if possible.
8. Any other creative outreach—drama, poetry, cinema, and more.

Young Christians with an aptitude in philosophy and academic pursuits in general should be encouraged that these disciplines are just as spiritual as anything directly church-related. For example, being a Christian philosopher at a secular college or university is just as godly and spiritual than being a pastor, missionary, or professor at a Christian institution (1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17). One may prudently apply one's apologetic skills in these settings and extend the Christian witness.

All apologetic endeavors should manifest the virtues of both humility and courage through the empowering of the Holy Spirit. If we have been bestowed by Almighty God with truth to defend rationally, this is because of God's grace, not our own goodness. There is no room for pride. If we have been bestowed by Almighty God with truth to defend rationally, we should take it to the streets and not shrink back from appropriate encounters with unbelief. There is no room for cowardice.

Apologetics must be carried out with the utmost intellectual integrity. All propaganda, cheap answers, caricatures of non-Christian views, and fallacious reasoning should be avoided. One should develop competent answers to searching questions about the truth and rationality of Christian faith. This demands excellence in scholarship at all intellectual levels, even the most popular. This cognitive orientation takes time, money, and sustained effort. It will not happen by watching television or by otherwise wasting our limited time.

All apologetics ventures—whether in writing, speaking, or dialogue—should be backed by personal prayer by the apologist and supporting prayer of the church (Ephesians 6:18).

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## Appendix I

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### **The Golden Rule Apologetic**

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Nearly everyone is familiar with the "Golden Rule" even if they don't realize that it comes to us in its perfect form as a command of Jesus: "In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 7:12). [\[1\]](#) This command to deal fairly with others should govern everything we do as Christians, including how we defend our faith.

Taken within the context of Jesus's other teachings, the Golden Rule is a *minimalist* argument, that is, the conduct commanded in the Golden Rule is the *least* one can do acting in imitation of the love of God. As a matter of fact, in many other places Jesus tells us that the superior commandment is not merely to be fair to others, to treat them as we would like to be treated, but even to *excel* in love toward others. He tells us to love our enemies (Luke 6:27, 35) and to forgive someone repeatedly (Matt.18:21-22). Jesus Himself provided the best example of this Better-than-the-Golden-Rule: He sacrificed Himself willingly for us while we were still sinners, deserving nothing better than God's condemnation:

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:6-8).

The *maximalist* argument we could call the "Platinum Rule," exemplified in Paul's command to the Christians in Philippi, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility *consider others better than yourselves*" (Phil. 2:3).

Whether minimalist or maximalist, the command to treat others fairly is a command Christians can't ignore, even when we are practicing apologetics, which is defending the faith. Years ago I was disturbed by the attitudes and arguments some Christians were using as they defended the faith, arguing with non-believers, cultists, and those of other faiths. Far too often I saw Christians making fun of the beliefs of others, taking unfair advantage of them in discussions, even misrepresenting the truth or their opponents' arguments if they thought they could get away with it. I began to encourage others to remember the Golden Rule when they were practicing apologetics. At first I called this the "Golden Rule of Apologetics" - the Golden Rule has a place in our apologetics. Although that is true and sufficient, I quickly began to see people respond to my encouragement by using the Golden Rule *selectively* in their apologetics - when it served their purpose and they thought they couldn't get away with anything else.

Over the years I have modified my principle and now I call it the "Golden Rule Apologetic" - the only apologetic system worth pursuing is the apologetic system that is governed by the Golden Rule. There is good biblical and philosophical precedent for this principle.

The passage we chose to exemplify the ministry of Answers In Action is 2 Timothy 2:24-25:

And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth.

Paul reminds Timothy to be kind and to gently instruct; in other words, to practice the Golden Rule with those who oppose the Gospel.

In 1 Peter 3:15b-16, which actually uses the word *apologia* (defense or reason), Peter says that one's apologetics should be governed by gentleness and respect:

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, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

Paul uses the Golden Rule Apologetic with the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers in Athens (Acts 17:16-31). Rather than merely mocking them for their polytheistic beliefs, he treated them kindly and fairly, commending them for their religious respect and using their own poets' statements as a starting point for declaring the truth of Jesus Christ and his resurrection from the dead.

Paul condemns religious hypocrites in Romans 2 for not following the Golden Rule Apologetic. He argues,

You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things (Rom. 2:1)

Paul contrasts this hypocrisy with God's Golden Rule by which he continues to extend his grace and mercy to sinners even though they deserve condemnation:

Do you show contempt for his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance? (Rom. 2:4).

In the Old Testament the principle I have applied to apologetics is applied to the every day activities of God's people. Deuteronomy 25:13-16 gives this command:

Do not have two differing weights in your bag - one heavy, one light. Do not have two differing measures in your house - one large, one small. You must have accurate and honest weights and measures, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you. For the Lord your God detests anyone who does these things, anyone who deals dishonestly.

Leviticus 19:35-37 parallels this teaching:

Do not use dishonest standards when measuring length, weight, or quantity. Use honest scales and honest weights, an honest ephah and an honest hin. I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt.

This is commonly referred to as the principle of "equal weights and measures." Remember, to deal fairly and honestly is our *minimal* obligation under the Golden Rule. To deal generously and better than expected is our *maximal* obligation which transforms the Golden Rule into the Platinum Rule.

In philosophy a general rule called the "Principle of Charity" reflects the Golden Rule. In philosophy, one should give the most generous understanding and weight to what someone says. For example, if someone states his argument poorly, rather than merely pointing out the logical mistakes he has made, the Principle of Charity demands that his opponent correct the flaws in the argument (if they can be), and then respond to the best form of the argument rather than his opponent's poor form of the argument. Another application of the Principle of Charity is to replace poor arguments with better arguments. If, for example, a Jehovah's Witness gives two poor arguments against the deity of Christ, the Christian has the responsibility to give that Witness the *best* arguments against the deity of Christ - and then show that those arguments do not overturn the truthfulness of the deity of Christ. Those who fail to follow the Golden Rule in philosophy end up refuting "straw man" arguments that don't properly represent the position we oppose in the first place.

An important part of the Golden Rule Apologetic is that you must not demand of your opponent what you are unwilling to provide. For example, if you are arguing with a Mormon that the Book of Mormon is full of contradictions, you must be willing not merely to cite those contradictions, but also to provide reasonable answers if the Mormon points to supposed contradictions in the Bible. If you launch ten quick arguments against your opponents' view and then don't give him time to respond, you cannot fairly complain if he does the same thing to you. On the other hand, if you bring up one argument at a time and spend the time necessary to be sure you both understand each other and where the evidence leads, you should feel free to ask your opponent to have the same patience and single mindedness with you.

You can even use the Golden Rule Apologetic to defend yourself. If your opponent makes fun of and misrepresents your view, you have every right to ask him if he would like you to act that way toward him. I am not saying that you *should* "pay him back" by mockery and misrepresentation (remember our Platinum goal), but that you bring out your Golden Rule principle to reason your opponent into a fair discussion.

If you apply the Golden Rule Apologetic every time you defend the Christian faith, you will find that those of opposing beliefs will listen more closely to what you say, respect your position even if they continue to deny it, give greater weight to your arguments, and be more willing to examine their own beliefs. You will not only give a good representation of Christianity, you will also be used by God to extend his mercy and patience to others, just as it was extended to you.

The next time you are tempted to perform sloppy apologetics, to mock someone with whom you disagree, or to dismiss opposing arguments without fair consideration, remember the Golden Rule and practice it until it becomes the Platinum Rule in your life.

[\[1\]](#) Other versions are in the Old Testament (see, for example, Leviticus 19:18) and in the

writings of other religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism).

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