

## Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

# Christian Apologetics

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**Christian apologetics** (Greek: ἀπολογία, “verbal defence, speech in defence”)<sup>1</sup> is the branch of Christian theological science which sets out to vindicate “Christian theism against any form of non-theistic or non-Christian thought” (Cornelius Van Til, *Christian Theistic Evidences*, 1951 Class Syllabus, 1). It is a broader term than *Christian evidences*. Apologetics is usually said to deal with philosophy, while Christian evidences deals with facts. They are not really divisible, since the facts which Christian evidences produces in support of the claims of Christianity can have no significance apart from a system of interpretation. However, the peculiar emphasis of each is pointed up by making apologetics refer to the system of interpretation, and Christian evidences to the facts adduced in that system to demonstrate the uniqueness of Christianity. Thus while apologetics defends Christianity from non-Christian philosophy, Christian evidences defends it from non-Christian science.<sup>2</sup>

Christian apologetics has taken many forms over the centuries, starting with Paul the Apostle in the early church and continuing among such Church Fathers as Origen, Augustine of Hippo, Justin Martyr and Tertullian, then continuing with writers such as Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, William of Ockham and Anselm of Canterbury during Scholasticism.

Blaise Pascal was an active Christian apologist before the Age of Enlightenment. In the modern period, Biblical Christianity was defended through the efforts of many authors such as G.K. Chesterton and C.S. Lewis, as well as G.E.M. Anscombe.

In contemporary times, Christianity is defended through the work of figures such as Norman Geisler, Robert Barron, Scott Hahn, Ravi Zacharias, John Lennox, Lee Strobel, Francis Collins, Alvin Plantinga, Hugh Ross, James White, Gary Habermas, Frank Turek, R.C. Sproul, Eric Mason, and William Lane Craig.

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<sup>1</sup> “ἀπολογία”. Blue Letter Bible-Lexicon. Retrieved 7 May 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Cairns, A. (2002). In *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 34. Belfast; Greenville, SC: Ambassador Emerald International.

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## History

### Jewish precursors

According to Edgar J. Goodspeed, during the first century AD Jewish apologetic elements could be seen in works such as *The Wisdom of Solomon*, Philo's *On the Contemplative Life* and more explicitly in Josephus' *Against Apion*.<sup>3</sup>

2

### Apostolic and post-apostolic period

Christian apologetics first appear in the New Testament (e.g., Paul's preaching on Mars Hill in Acts 17:22-31). During the subapostolic age Christianity was already competing with Judaism as well as with various other religions and sects in the Greco-Roman world. Christian apologetics can be first seen in the "Preaching of Peter" (*Gospel of Peter*)<sup>4</sup>, but the first explicitly apologetic work comes from Quadratus of Athens (c. AD 125) in which he writes a defense of the faith to emperor Hadrian. Only a fragment, quoted by Eusebius, has survived to our day:<sup>5</sup>

"But the works of our Saviour were always present, for they were genuine:—those that were healed, and those that were raised from the dead, who were seen not only when they were healed and when they were raised, but were also always present; and not merely while the Saviour was on earth, but also after his death, they were alive for quite a while, so that some of them lived even to our day." (*Church History* iv. 3. 2)

One of the first comprehensive attacks on Christianity came from the Greek philosopher Celsus, who wrote *The True Word* (c. AD 175), a polemic criticizing Christians as being unprofitable members of society.<sup>6</sup> In response, the church father Origen published his apologetic treatise *Contra Celsum*, or *Against Celsus*, which systematically addressed Celsus's criticisms and helped bring Christianity a level of academic

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<sup>3</sup> Goodspeed, Edgar J. (1966). *A History of Early Christian Literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 93-100. ISBN 0226303861.

<sup>4</sup> Note: *The Gospel of Peter* is Apocryphal.

<sup>5</sup> Goodspeed, *op. cit.*, 93-100.

<sup>6</sup> Ferguson, Everett (1993). *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (second ed.). Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 562-564. ISBN 0-8028-0669-4. Thomas, Stephen (2004). "Celsus". In McGuckin, John Anthony (ed.). *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 72-73. ISBN 0-664-22472-5. Olson, Roger E. (1999), *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition & Reform*, Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 101, ISBN 978-0-8308-1505-0.

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respectability.<sup>7</sup> In the treatise, Origen writes from the perspective of a Platonic philosopher, drawing extensively on the teachings of Plato.<sup>8</sup> *Contra Celsum* is widely regarded by modern scholars as one of the most important works of early Christian apologetics.<sup>9</sup>

Other apologists from this period are Aristides of Athens, the author of the Epistle to Diognetus, Aristo of Pella, Tatian, Justin Martyr, Melito of Sardis, Athenagoras of Athens, Theophilus of Antioch, Irenaeus, Origen, Hippolytus of Rome, Tertullian, Minucius Felix, Cyprian, and Victorinus of Pettau,<sup>10</sup>

3

## The Middle Ages and Early Modern Period

Anselm of Canterbury propounded the ontological argument in his *Proslogion*. Thomas Aquinas presented five *ways*, or arguments for God's existence, in the *Summa Theologica*, while his *Summa contra Gentiles* was a major apologetic work.<sup>11</sup> Aquinas also made significant criticisms of the ontological argument which resulted in its losing popularity until it was revived by Rene Descartes in his *Meditations*.<sup>12</sup> Blaise Pascal outlined an approach to apologetics in his *Pensées*: "Men despise religion; they hate it and fear it is true. To remedy this, we must begin by showing that religion is not contrary to reason; that it is venerable, to inspire respect for it; then we must make it lovable, to make good men hope it is true; finally, we must prove it is true."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> McGuckin, John Anthony (2004). "The Scholarly Works of Origen". *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 32–34. ISBN 0-664-22472-5. Olson, *op. cit.*, 101.

<sup>8</sup> Grant, Robert M. (1967). "Origen". In Edwards, Paul (ed.). *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. 5. New York City, New York: The MacMillan Company & The Free Press, 551–552. McGuckin, *op. cit.*, 32–34. Olson, *op. cit.*, 101.

<sup>9</sup> McGuckin, *op. cit.*, 32–34. Olson, *op. cit.*, 101. Gregerman, Adam (2016). "Chapter 3: Origen's *Contra Celsum*". *Building on the Ruins of the Temple*. Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism. 165. Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 60. ISBN 978-3-16-154322-7.

<sup>10</sup> Goodspeed, Edgar J. (1966). *A History of Early Christian Literature: Revised and Enlarged by Robert M. Grant*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 97–188. ISBN 0226303861.

<sup>11</sup> Dulles, Avery Robert Cardinal (2005). *A History of Apologetics*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 120. ISBN 0898709334. L Russ Bush, ed. (1983). *Classical Readings in Christian Apologetics*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 275. ISBN 031045641X.

<sup>12</sup> <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/descartes-ontological/>

<sup>13</sup> Pascal, Blaise. *Pensées [Thoughts]*, 187. Groothuis, Douglas (2011). *Christian Apologetics*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 25–31. ISBN 978-0830839353.

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## Late Modern Period

Christian apologetics continues in modern times in a wide variety of forms. Among the Roman Catholics there are Bishop Robert Barron, G.K. Chesterton,<sup>14</sup> Ronald Knox, Taylor Marshall, Arnold Lunn, Karl Keating, Michael Voris, Peter Kreeft, Frank Sheed, Dr. Scott Hahn, and Patrick Madrid. The Russian Orthodox Seraphim Rose is perhaps the best known modern, English speaking Eastern Orthodox apologist. Among the Evangelicals there is the Anglican C.S. Lewis (who popularized the argument now known as Lewis's trilemma).<sup>15</sup> Among Protestant apologists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was William Paley who popularized the Watchmaker analogy. In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many Christian fundamentalists became well known apologists. Some of the best known are R.A. Torrey and John Gresham Machen. Evangelical Norman Geisler, Lutheran John Warwick Montgomery and Presbyterian Francis Schaeffer were among the most prolific Christian apologists in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and into the 21<sup>st</sup>, while Gordon Clark and Cornelius Van Til started a new school of philosophical apologetics called presuppositionalism, which is popular in Calvinist circles.

Others include Douglas Groothuis, Josh McDowell, Hugo Anthony Meynell, Timothy J. Keller, Francis Collins, Vishal Mangalwadi, Richard Bauckham, Craig Evans, Darrell Bock, John F. MacArthur, Michael R. Licona, Ravi Zacharias and John Lennox.

## Terminology and Origin

The original Greek *apologia* (ἀπολογία, from ἀπολογέομαι, *apologeomai*, “speak in return, defend oneself”) was a formal verbal defense, either in response to accusation or prosecution in a court of law. The defense of Socrates as presented by Plato and Xenophon was an *apologia* against charges of “corrupting the young, and ... not believing in the gods in whom the city believes, but in other *daimonia* that are novel”.<sup>16</sup>

In later use “apologia” sometimes took a literary form in early Christian discourse as an example of the integration of educated Christians into the cultural life of the Roman Empire, particularly during the “little peace” of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century,<sup>17</sup> and of their participation

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<sup>14</sup> Chesterton, G K (2008). *The Everlasting Man*. Radford: Wilder Publications, 180. ISBN 978-1604592467.

<sup>15</sup> Lewis, C S (2001). “The Shocking Alternative” in *Mere Christianity* (HarperCollins ed.). San Francisco: HarperSan Francisco, 54–56. ISBN 0060652888.

<sup>16</sup> Plato, *Apology* 24b; compared to Christian apologetics by Anders-Christian Jacobsen, “Apologetics and Apologies—Some Definitions,” in *Continuity and Discontinuity in Early Christian Apologetics* (Peter Lang, 2009), 14.

<sup>17</sup> Butcher, Kevin, *Roman Syria and the Near East* (Getty Publications, 2003), 378.

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in the Greek intellectual movement broadly known as the Second Sophistic.<sup>18</sup> The Christian apologists of the early Church did not reject Greek philosophy, but attempted to show the positive value of Christianity in dynamic relation to the Greek rationalist tradition.<sup>19</sup>

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, apologetics was a defense or explanation of Christianity,<sup>20</sup> addressed to those standing in opposition and those yet to form an opinion, such as emperors and other authority figures, or potential converts.<sup>21</sup> The earliest martyr narrative has the spokesman for the persecuted present a defense in the apologetic mode: Christianity was a rational religion that worshiped only God, and although Christians were law-abiding citizens willing to honor the emperor, their belief in a single divinity prevented them from taking the loyalty oaths that acknowledged the emperor's divinity.<sup>22</sup>

The apologetic historiography in the *Acts of the Apostles* presented Christianity as a religious movement at home within the Roman Empire and no threat to it and was a model for the first major historian of the Church, Eusebius.<sup>23</sup> Apologetics might also be directed to Christians already within the community explain their beliefs and justify positions.<sup>24</sup> Origen's apologetic *Contra Celsum*, for instance, provided a defense against the arguments of a critic dead for decades to provide answers to doubting Christians lacking immediate answers to the questions raised. Apologetic literature was an important medium for the formation of early Christian identity.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to Origen and Tertullian, early Christian apologists include Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and the author of the Epistle to Diognetus.<sup>26</sup> Augustine of Hippo was a significant apologist of the Patristic era.<sup>27</sup> Some scholars regard apologetics as a distinct literary genre exhibiting commonalities of style and form,

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<sup>18</sup> Anderson, Graham, *The Second Sophistic: A Cultural Phenomenon in the Roman Empire* (Routledge, 1993, 2003), 203.

<sup>19</sup> Jacobsen, "Apologetics and Apologies", 6.

<sup>20</sup> Jacobsen, "Apologetics and Apologies", 8.

<sup>21</sup> Jacobsen, "Apologetics and Apologies", 14.

<sup>22</sup> Tillby, Maureen A., "North Africa", in *Cambridge History of Christianity: Origins to Constantine* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1:388, citing the *Martyrum Scillitanorum Acta*.

<sup>23</sup> Mitchell, Margaret M., "Gentile Christianity," 107, and "Emergence of the Written Record", 193, in *Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Jacobsen, "Apologetics and Apologies, 14.

<sup>25</sup> Jacobsen, "Apologetics and Apologies", 14 *et passim*.

<sup>26</sup> Dulles, Avery Robert Cardinal (2005). *A History of Apologetics*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 31–42. ISBN 0898709334.

<sup>27</sup> Dulles, Avery Robert Cardinal (2005). *A History of Apologetics*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press. ISBN 0898709334.

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content, and strategies of argumentation. Others viewed it as a form of discourse characterized by its tone and purpose.<sup>28</sup>

## Biblical basis

R.C. Sproul, quoting the First Epistle of Peter, writes that “The defense of the faith is not a luxury or intellectual vanity. It is a task appointed by God that you should be able to give a reason for the hope that is in you as you bear witness before the world.”<sup>29</sup> The verse quoted here reads in full: “but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.”<sup>30</sup>

Another passage sometimes used as a biblical basis for Christian apologetics is God's entreaty in the Book of Isaiah: “Come now, let us reason together.”<sup>31</sup> Other scriptural passages which have been taken as a basis for Christian apologetics include Psalm 19, which begins “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands,”<sup>32</sup> and Romans 1, which reads “For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”<sup>33</sup>

## Varieties

There are a variety of Christian apologetic styles and schools of thought. The major types of Christian apologetics include historical and legal evidentialist apologetics, presuppositional apologetics, philosophical apologetics, prophetic apologetics, doctrinal apologetics, biblical apologetics, moral apologetics, and scientific apologetics.

## Biblical apologetics

Biblical apologetics include issues concerned with the authorship and date of biblical books, biblical canon, and biblical inerrancy. Christian apologists defend and comment on various books of the Bible. Some scholars who have engaged in the defense of biblical inerrancy include Robert Dick Wilson, Gleason Archer, Norman Geisler, and R.C. Sproul.

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<sup>28</sup> Jacobsen, “Apologetics and Apologies”, 19–20.

<sup>29</sup> Sproul, R C (2009). *Defending Your Faith*. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 9. ISBN 978-1-4335-0315-3.

<sup>30</sup> 1 Peter 3:15.

<sup>31</sup> Isaiah 1:18. Geisler, Norman L (1988). *Christian Apologetics* (Paperback ed.). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 11–12. ISBN 0-8010-3822-7.

<sup>32</sup> Psalm 19:1.

<sup>33</sup> Romans 1:20. Anderson, Owen (2008). *Reason and Worldviews*. Plymouth, U.K.: University Press of America, 2. ISBN 978-0-7618-4038-1.

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There are several resources that Christians offer defending inerrancy in regard to specific verses. Authors defending the reliability of the Gospels include Craig Blomberg in *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*,<sup>34</sup> Mark D. Roberts in *Can We Trust the Gospels?*<sup>35</sup> Richard Bauckham, Craig Evans and Darrell Bock.

Other old Earth creationists, such as astrophysicist Hugh Ross, see each of the six days of creation as being a long, but finite period of time, based on the multiple meanings of the Hebrew word *yom* (day light hours/24 hours/age of time) and other Biblical creation passages.<sup>36</sup>

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## Experiential apologetics

Experiential apologetics is a reference to an appeal “primarily, if not exclusively, to experience as evidence for Christian faith.”<sup>37</sup> Also, “they spurn rational arguments or factual evidence in favor of what they believe to be a self-verifying experience.” This view stresses experience that other apologists have not made as explicit, and in the end, the concept that the Holy Spirit convinces the heart of truth becomes the central theme of the apologetic argument.<sup>38</sup>

## Historical and legal evidentialism

A variety of arguments has been forwarded by legal scholars such as Simon Greenleaf and John Warwick Montgomery, by expert forensic investigators such as cold case homicide detective J. Warner Wallace, and academic historical scholars, such as Edwin M. Yamauchi. These arguments present a case for the historicity of the resurrection of Christ per current legal standards of evidence or undermining the pagan myth hypothesis for the origin of Christianity.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Blomberg, Craig (1987). *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*. Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press. ISBN 0-87784-992-7.

<sup>35</sup> Roberts, Mark D. (2007). *Can We Trust The Gospels?* Crossway. ISBN 978-1-58134-866-8.

<sup>36</sup> Ross, Hugh; Endara, Miguel (31 December 1990). “Response to Genesis and the Big Bang by Gerald Schroeder”. *Reasons To Believe*. Russell, Ryan. “Day 1 (Genesis 1:1-5)”. *Genesis: verse-by-verse Bible Study*. Christian Knowledge. Archived from the original on 24 July 2012. Retrieved 3 December 2010.

<sup>37</sup> Geisler, Normal L. (1999). *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

<sup>38</sup> Lewis, Gordon R. (1990). *Testing Christianity's Truth Claims: Approaches to Christian Apologetics*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America Inc.

<sup>39</sup> Greenleaf, Simon. “Testimony of the Evangelists”. University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law at <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/jesus/greenleaf.html> (Retrieved on March 24, 2021).

Montgomery, John Warwick (2004). “The Jury Returns: A Juridical Defense of Christianity”. In John Warwick Montgomery (ed.). *Evidence for Faith*. Edmonton: Canadian Institute for Law, Theology, and Public Policy. ISBN 1896363172. <http://www.mtio.com/articles/bissart1.htm> (Retrieved on March 24,

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Evidence for the historicity of the resurrection of Christ A.N. Sherwin-White states:

For Acts, the confirmation of historicity is overwhelming. Acts is, in simple terms and judged externally, no less of a propaganda narrative than the Gospels, liable to similar distortions. But any attempt to reject its basic historicity, even in matters of detail, must now appear absurd. Roman historians have long taken it for granted.... The agnostic type of form-criticism would be much more credible if the compilation of the Gospels were much later in time.... Herodotus enables us to test the tempo of myth-making, [showing that] even two generations are too short a span to allow the mythical tendency to prevail over the hard historic core.<sup>40</sup>

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## Moral apologetics

Moral apologetics states that real moral obligation is a fact. Catholic apologist Peter Kreeft said, "We are really, truly, objectively obligated to do good and avoid evil."<sup>41</sup> In moral apologetics, the arguments for man's sinfulness and man's need for redemption are stressed. Examples of this type of apologetic would be Jonathan Edwards's sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."<sup>42</sup> *The Four Spiritual Laws* religious tract (Campus Crusade for Christ) would be another example.<sup>43</sup>

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2021). Ankerberg, John; John Weldon. "Could the Evidence Stand-Cross Examination in a Modern Court of Law?". *The Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ*. Ankerberg Theological Research Institute. <http://ankerberg.com/Articles/apologetics/AP0302W3.htm> (Retrieved on March 24, 2021). Wallace, J. Warner (2013). *Cold Case Christianity*. Canada: David C. Cook Distribution. ISBN 978-1-4347-0469-6. Yamauchi, Edwin. "Easter: Myth, Hallucination, or History" at <http://www.leaderu.com/everystudent/easter/articles/yama.html> (Retrieved on March 24, 2021). "Refuting the Myth that Jesus Never Existed", James Hannam at <http://www.bede.org.uk/jesusmyth.htm> (Retrieved on March 24, 2021).

<sup>40</sup> Sherwin-White, A N (1963). *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 189–190.

<sup>41</sup> Kreeft, Peter (1994). *Handbook of Christian Apologetics*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 72. ISBN 0-8308-1774-3.

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.ccel.org/e/edwards/sermons/sinners.html> at "Select Sermons - Christian Classics Ethereal Library." (Retrieved on March 1, 2021)

<sup>43</sup> *The Four Spiritual Laws* has been renamed and can be found at <https://www.cru.org/us/en/how-to-know-god/would-you-like-to-know-god-personally.html> (Retrieved on March 1, 2021).

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## Defense of miracles

C.S. Lewis,<sup>44</sup> Norman Geisler,<sup>45</sup> William Lane Craig and Christians who engage in jurisprudence Christian apologetics have argued that miracles are reasonable and plausible wherever an all-powerful Creator is postulated.<sup>46</sup>

## Philosophical apologetics

Philosophical apologetics concerns itself primarily with arguments for the existence of God, although they do not exclusively focus on this area. They do not argue for the veracity of Christianity over other religions but merely for the existence of a Creator deity. Omnipotence and omniscience are implied in these arguments to greater or lesser degrees: some argue for an interventionist god, some are equally relevant to a Deist conception of God.

They do not support hard polytheism, but could be used to describe the first god who created many other gods; however, the arguments are only relevant when applied to the first god (the first cause, pure act and unmoved mover; it is a contradiction *a priori* to suppose a plurality of “pure acts” or “first causes” or “unmoved movers”).

These arguments can be grouped into several categories:

1. **Cosmological argument**— Argues that the existence of the universe demonstrates that God exists. Various primary arguments from cosmology and the nature of causation are often offered to support the cosmological argument.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Peters, Thomas C. (1997). *Simply C.S. Lewis: A Beginner's Guide to the Life and Works of C.S. Lewis*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 180–184. ISBN 0-89107-948-3.

<sup>45</sup> Geisler, Norman L. (1988). *Christian Apologetics*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 29, 30. ISBN 978-0-8010-7186-7.

<sup>46</sup> “Are Miracles Logically Impossible?” at <https://www.comereason.org/david-hume-on-miracles.asp>. Come Reason Ministries, Convincing Christianity. (Retrieved on March 1, 2021). “Miracles are not possible,” some claim. Is this true?” at <https://christiananswers.net/q-eden/edn-t011.html>. (Retrieved on March 24, 2021). Paul K. Hoffman. “A Jurisprudential Analysis Of Hume's “in Principal” Argument Against Miracles” (PDF) at <https://web.archive.org/web/20071026160950/http://www.ses.edu/journal/articles/2.1Hoffman.pdf> *Christian Apologetics Journal*, Volume 2, No. 1, Spring, 1999; Copyright ©1999 by Southern Evangelical Seminary. (Retrieved on March 24, 2021).

<sup>47</sup> “Evidences for God from Space” at <http://godevidences.net/space/lawsofscience.php> (Retrieved on March 24, 2021). Apologetics Press – “So Long, Eternal Universe; Hello Beginning, Hello End!” at <http://www.apologeticspress.org/articles/2329> (Retrieved on March 24, 2021). “Keith H. Wanser, Physics” at <https://answersingenesis.org/answers/books/in-six-days/keith-h-wanser-physics/> (Retrieved on March 24, 2021).

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A **cosmological argument**, in natural theology, is an argument which claims that the existence of God can be inferred from facts concerning causation, explanation, change, motion, contingency, dependency, or finitude with respect to the universe or some totality of objects.<sup>48</sup> A cosmological argument can also sometimes be referred to as an **argument from universal causation**, an **argument from first cause**, or the **causal argument**. Whichever term is employed, there are three basic variants of the argument, each with subtle yet important distinctions: the arguments from *in causa* (causality), *in esse* (essentiality), and *in fieri* (becoming).

The basic premises of all of these arguments involve the concept of causation. The conclusion of these arguments is first cause (for whichever group of things it is being argued has a cause), subsequently deemed to be God. The history of this argument goes back to Aristotle or earlier, was developed in Neoplatonism and early Christianity and later in medieval Islamic theology during the 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries and was re-introduced to medieval Christian theology in the 13<sup>th</sup> century by Thomas Aquinas. The cosmological argument is closely related to the principle of sufficient reason as addressed by Gottfried Leibniz and Samuel Clarke, itself a modern exposition of the claim that "nothing comes from nothing" attributed to Parmenides.

Contemporary defenders of cosmological arguments include William Lane Craig,<sup>49</sup> Robert Koons,<sup>50</sup> and Alexander Pruss.<sup>51</sup>

2. **Teleological argument**—Argues that there is a purposeful design in the world around us, and a design requires a designer. Cicero, William Paley, and Michael Behe use this argument as well as others.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Reichenbach, Bruce (2012). "Cosmological Argument". *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2006 Edition, Edward N. Zalta, ed.) at <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/cosmological-argument/> (Retrieved on March 24, 2021). Oderberg, David S. (September 1, 2007). "The Cosmological Argument" in Meister, Chad and Copan, Paul (eds.). *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Religion*. Routledge, 341–350. ISBN 978-0415380386.

<sup>49</sup> Craig, William Lane; Sinclair, James D. (May 18, 2009). "The Kalam Cosmological Argument". In Craig, William Lane; Moreland, J. P. (eds.). *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*. Wiley-Blackwell. pp. 101–201. ISBN 978-1405176576.

<sup>50</sup> Koons, Robert (1997). "A New Look at the Cosmological Argument" (PDF). *American Philosophical Quarterly*. University of Illinois Press. 34 (2): 193–211.

<sup>51</sup> Gale, Richard M.; Pruss, Alexander, eds. (March 2003). *The Existence of God*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate. ISBN 978-0754620518.

<sup>52</sup> "A brief history of design" at <http://www.answersingenesis.org/creation/v22/i2/design.asp> (Retrieved on March 24, 2021).

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The **teleological argument** (from τέλος, telos, 'end, aim, goal'; also known as **physico-theological argument**, **argument from design**, or **intelligent design argument**) is an argument for the existence of God or, more generally, for an intelligent creator based on perceived evidence of intelligent design in the natural world.<sup>53</sup>

The earliest recorded versions of this argument are associated with Socrates in ancient Greece, although it has been argued that he was taking up an older argument.<sup>54</sup> Plato and Aristotle, Plato's student, developed complex approaches to the proposal that the cosmos has an intelligent cause, but it was the Stoics who, under their influence, "developed the battery of creationist arguments broadly known under the label 'The Argument from Design'".<sup>55</sup>

Abrahamic religions have used the teleological argument in many ways, and it has a long association with them. In the Middle Ages, Islamic theologians such as Al-Ghazali used the argument, although it was rejected as unnecessary by Quranic literalists, and as unconvincing by many Islamic philosophers. Later, the teleological argument was accepted by Saint Thomas Aquinas and included as the fifth of his "Five Ways" of proving the existence of God. In early modern England clergymen such as William Turner and John Ray were well-known proponents. In the early 18th century, William Derham published his *Physico-Theology*, which gave his "demonstration of the being and attributes of God from his works of creation".<sup>56</sup> Later, William Paley, in his 1802 *Natural Theology or Evidences of the*

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<sup>53</sup> "teleological argument". Oxford English Dictionary. Ayala, Francisco J. 2006. "The Blasphemy of Intelligent Design". *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences* 28(3):409–21. JSTOR 23334140. (review of *Creationism's Trojan Horse: The Wedge of Intelligent Design*): "The argument from design to demonstrate God's existence, now called the 'Intelligent Design' argument (ID) is a two-tined argument. The first prong asserts that the universe, humans, as well as all sorts of organisms, in their wholes, in their parts, and in their relations to one another and to their environment, appear to have been designed for serving certain functions and for certain ways of life. The second prong of the argument is that only an omnipotent Creator could account for the perfection and purposeful design of the universe and everything in it." "The Argument from Design" at <https://web.archive.org/web/20190716122932/https://www.princeton.edu/~grosen/puc/phi203/design.htm>. Princeton University. Retrieved on March 24, 2021.

<sup>54</sup> Ahbel-Rappe, Sara, and R. Kamtekar. 2009. *A Companion to Socrates*. John Wiley & Sons. p. 45. "Xenophon attributes to Socrates what is probably the earliest known natural theology, an argument for the existence of the gods from observations of design in the physical world." Sedley (2007:86) agrees, and cites other recent commentators who agree, and argues in detail that the argument reported by Xenophon and Plato is "at any rate the antecedent" of the argument from design (p. 213). He shows that the Stoics frequently paraphrased the account given by Xenophon.

<sup>55</sup> Sedley 2007, p. xvii.

<sup>56</sup> Derham, William. 1713. *Physico-Theology*.

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*Existence and Attributes of the Deity* published a prominent presentation of the design argument with his version of the watchmaker analogy and the first use of the phrase “argument from design”.<sup>57</sup>

From its beginning, there have been numerous criticisms of the different versions of the teleological argument, and responses to its challenge to the claims against non-teleological natural science. Especially important were the general logical arguments made by David Hume in his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, published in 1779, and the explanation of biological complexity given in Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species*, published in 1859.<sup>58</sup> Since the 1960s, Paley's arguments have been influential in the development of a creation science movement which used phrases such as “design by an intelligent designer”, and post 1987 this was rebranded as “intelligent design”, promoted by the intelligent design movement. Both movements have used the teleological argument to argue against the modern scientific understanding of evolution, and to claim that supernatural explanations should be given equal validity in the public school science curriculum.<sup>59</sup>

Also starting already in classical Greece, two approaches to the teleological argument developed, distinguished by their understanding of whether the natural order was literally created or not. The non-creationist approach starts most clearly with Aristotle, although many thinkers, such as the Neoplatonists, believed it was already intended by Plato. This approach is not creationist in a simple sense, because while it agrees that a cosmic intelligence is responsible for the natural order, it rejects the proposal that this requires a “creator” to physically make and maintain this order. The Neoplatonists did not find the teleological argument convincing, and in this they were followed by medieval philosophers such as Al-Farabi and Avicenna. Later, Averroes and Thomas Aquinas considered the argument acceptable, but not necessarily the best argument.

While the concept of an intelligence behind the natural order is ancient, a rational argument that concludes that we can know that the natural world has a designer, or a creating intelligence which has human-like purposes, appears to have begun

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<sup>57</sup> “Design”. *Oxford English Dictionary*, substantive number 4.

<sup>58</sup> Manning, Russell Re. 2013. “Introduction”, 1–9, in *The Oxford Handbook of Natural Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3, for example: “Between them, so the story goes, Hume, Darwin and Barth pulled the rug out from underneath the pretensions of natural theology to any philosophical, scientific, or theological legitimacy.”

<sup>59</sup> Scott, Eugenie C. 2007. “Biological design in science classrooms” at [https://www.pnas.org/content/pnas/104/suppl\\_1/8669.full.pdf](https://www.pnas.org/content/pnas/104/suppl_1/8669.full.pdf) (Retrieved on March 24, 2021). *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 104 (suppl. 1): 8669–76.

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with classical philosophy.<sup>60</sup> Religious thinkers in Judaism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Islam and Christianity also developed versions of the teleological argument. Later, variants on the argument from design were produced in Western philosophy and by Christian fundamentalism.

Contemporary defenders of the teleological argument include Richard Swinburne and John Lennox.

3. **Ontological argument**—Argues that the very concept of God demands that there is an actual existent God. An **ontological argument** is a philosophical argument, made from an ontological basis, that is advanced in support of the existence of God. Such arguments tend to refer to the state of being or existing. More specifically, ontological arguments are commonly conceived a priori in regard to the organization of the universe, whereby, if such organizational structure is true, God must exist.

The first ontological argument in Western Christian tradition<sup>61</sup> was proposed by Saint Anselm of Canterbury in his 1078 work, *Proslogion* (Latin: *Proslogium*, lit. 'Discourse on the Existence of God'), in which he defines God as "a being than which no greater can be conceived," and argues that such being must exist in the mind, even in that of the person who denies the existence of God.<sup>62</sup> From this, he suggests that if the greatest possible being exists in the mind, it must also exist in reality, because if it existed only in the mind, then an even greater being must be possible—one who exists both in mind and in reality. Therefore, this greatest possible being must exist in reality.

Since its initial proposal, few philosophical ideas have generated as much interest and discussion as the ontological argument. Nearly all of the great minds in Western philosophy have found it worthy of their attention. Seventeenth-century French philosopher René Descartes employed a similar argument to Anselm's. Descartes published several variations of his argument, each of which center on the idea that God's existence is immediately inferable from a "clear and distinct"

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<sup>60</sup> Ahbel-Rappe, Sara, and R. Kamtekar. 2009. *A Companion to Socrates*. John Wiley & Sons. p. 45.

"Xenophon attributes to Socrates what is probably the earliest known natural theology, an argument for the existence of the gods from observations of design in the physical world."

<sup>61</sup> Szatkowski, Mirosław, ed. 2012. *Ontological Proofs Today*. Ontos Verlag. "There are three main periods in the history of ontological arguments. The first was in 11th century, when St. Anselm of Canterbury came up with the first ontological argument" (p. 22).

<sup>62</sup> Oppy, Graham. 2019 [1996]. "Ontological Arguments" at <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ontological-arguments/> (Retrieved on March 24, 2021). *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

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idea of a supremely perfect being. In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, Gottfried Leibniz augmented Descartes' ideas in an attempt to prove that a "supremely perfect" being is a coherent concept. A more recent ontological argument came from Kurt Gödel, who proposed a formal argument for God's existence. Norman Malcolm revived the ontological argument in 1960 when he located a second, stronger ontological argument in Anselm's work; Alvin Plantinga challenged this argument and proposed an alternative, based on modal logic. Attempts have also been made to validate Anselm's proof using an automated theorem prover. Other arguments have been categorised as ontological, including those made by Islamic philosophers Mulla Sadra and Allama Tabatabai.

Just as the ontological argument has been popular, a number of criticisms and objections have also been mounted. Its first critic would be Gaunilo of Marmoutiers, a contemporary of Anselm's. Gaunilo, suggesting that the ontological argument could be used to prove the existence of anything, uses the analogy of a perfect island. Such would be the first of many parodies, all of which attempted to show the absurd consequences of the ontological argument. Later, Thomas Aquinas rejected the argument on the basis that humans cannot know God's nature. David Hume also offered an empirical objection, criticising its lack of evidential reasoning and rejecting the idea that anything can exist necessarily. Immanuel Kant's critique was based on what he saw as the false premise that existence is a predicate, arguing that "existing" adds nothing (including perfection) to the essence of a being. Thus, a "supremely perfect" being can be conceived not to exist. Finally, philosophers such as C.D. Broad dismissed the coherence of a maximally great being, proposing that some attributes of greatness are incompatible with others, rendering "maximally great being" incoherent.

Contemporary defenders of the ontological argument include Alvin Plantinga, Yujin Nagasawa, and Robert Maydole.

4. **Moral Argument**—Argues that there are objectively valid moral values, and therefore, there must be an absolute from which they are derived.<sup>63</sup> The **argument from morality** is an argument for the existence of God. Arguments from morality tend to be based on moral normativity or moral order. Arguments from moral normativity observe some aspect of morality and argue that God is the best or only explanation for this, concluding that God must exist. Arguments from moral order are based on the asserted need for moral order to exist in the universe. They claim

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<sup>63</sup> "Morality Apart From God: Is It Possible?" at <http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/god-ethi.html> (Retrieved on March 24, 2021).

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that, for this moral order to exist, God must exist to support it. The argument from morality is noteworthy in that one cannot evaluate the soundness of the argument without attending to almost every important philosophical issue in meta-ethics.

German philosopher Immanuel Kant devised an argument from morality based on practical reason. Kant argued that the goal of humanity is to achieve perfect happiness and virtue (the summum bonum) and believed that an afterlife must exist in order for this to be possible, and that God must exist to provide this. In his book *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis argued that “conscience reveals to us a moral law whose source cannot be found in the natural world, thus pointing to a supernatural Lawgiver.”<sup>64</sup> Lewis argued that accepting the validity of human reason as a given must include accepting the validity of practical reason, which could not be valid without reference to a higher cosmic moral order which could not exist without a God to create and/or establish it. A related argument is from conscience; John Henry Newman argued that the conscience supports the claim that objective moral truths exist because it drives people to act morally even when it is not in their own interest. Newman argued that, because the conscience suggests the existence of objective moral truths, God must exist to give authority to these truths.

Contemporary defenders of the argument from morality are Graham Ward, Alister McGrath and William Lane Craig.

5. **Transcendental Argument**—Argues that all our abilities to think and reason require the existence of God. The **Transcendental Argument for the Existence of God (TAG)** is the argument that attempts to prove the existence of God by arguing

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<sup>64</sup> Marty, Elsa J. (2010-08-19). *A Dictionary of Philosophy of Religion* at [https://www.google.com/books/edition/A\\_Dictionary\\_of\\_Philosophy\\_of\\_Religion/78962v1rCDcC?hl=en&gbpv=1&pg=PA154&printsec=frontcover](https://www.google.com/books/edition/A_Dictionary_of_Philosophy_of_Religion/78962v1rCDcC?hl=en&gbpv=1&pg=PA154&printsec=frontcover) (Retrieved on March 24, 2021). Continuum International Publishing Group. p. 154. ISBN 9781441111975. C.S. Lewis offered a popularized version of such an argument in a series of talks for the BBC during World War II, later published in his *Mere Christianity*. Lewis argued that conscience reveals to us a moral law whose source cannot be found in the natural world, thus pointing to a supernatural Lawgiver. Allison, Gregg (2011-03-29). *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine*, 207. Zondervan. ISBN 9780310230137. In his highly influential book *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis revived the moral argument for the existence of God. By moving from the fact of human quarrels and the moral law that these presuppose, to the reality of God as the moral Lawgiver whose law people break, Lewis set forth a foundation not only for the existence of God, but for the message that “the Christians are talking about.... The tell you how the demands of this law, which you and I cannot meet, have been met on our behalf, how God himself becomes a man to save a man from the disapproval of God.”

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that logic, morals, and science ultimately presuppose a supreme being and that God must therefore be the source of logic and morals.<sup>65</sup>

A version was formulated by Immanuel Kant in his 1763 work *The Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God*, and most contemporary formulations of the transcendental argument have been developed within the framework of Christian presuppositional apologetics.<sup>66</sup>

6. **Presuppositional arguments**—Argues that the basic beliefs of theists and nontheists require God as a necessary pre-condition. **Presuppositionalism** is a school of Christian apologetics that believes the Christian faith is the only basis for rational thought. It presupposes that the Bible is divine revelation and attempts to expose flaws in other worldviews.

It claims that apart from presuppositions, one could not make sense of any human experience, and there can be no set of neutral assumptions from which to reason with a non-Christian.<sup>67</sup> Presuppositionalists claim that a Christian cannot consistently declare his belief in the necessary existence of the God of the Bible and simultaneously argue on the basis of a different set of assumptions that God may not exist and Biblical revelation may not be true.<sup>68</sup> Two schools of presuppositionalism exist, based on the different teachings of Cornelius Van Til and Gordon Haddon Clark. Presuppositionalism contrasts with classical apologetics and evidential apologetics.

Presuppositionalists compare their presupposition against other ultimate standards such as reason, empirical experience, and subjective feeling, claiming presupposition in this context is:

a belief that takes precedence over another and therefore serves as a criterion for another. An ultimate presupposition is a belief over

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<sup>65</sup> Martin, Michael (1997). "Does Induction Presume the Existence of the Christian God?" at [https://infidels.org/library/modern/michael\\_martin/induction.html](https://infidels.org/library/modern/michael_martin/induction.html) (Retrieved on March 24, 2021).

Infidels. But what about The Transcendental Argument for the Existence of God (TAG)--the argument that logic, science, and objective ethical standards presuppose the existence of God?

<sup>66</sup> Martin, Michael (1997). "Does Induction Presuppose the Existence of the Christian God?". *Skeptic*. 5 (2): 71–75.

<sup>67</sup> Frame, John M. (2006). "Presuppositional Apologetics" at <https://frame-poythress.org/presuppositional-apologetics/> (Retrieved on March 24, 2021). In Campbell-Jack, WC; McGrath, Gavin J; Evans, C Stephen (eds.). *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics*. InterVarsity Press. ISBN 978-0-8308-2451-9.

<sup>68</sup> Sproul, RC; Gerstner, John; Lindsley, Arthur (1984). *Classical Apologetics*, 183. Grand Rapids: Zondervan. ISBN 978-0-310-44951-5. "A friendly refutation of Cornelius Van Til's presuppositional apologetics."



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which no other takes precedence. For a Christian, the content of Scripture must serve as his ultimate presupposition... This doctrine is merely the outworking of the lordship of God in the area of human thought. It merely applies the doctrine of scriptural infallibility to the realm of knowing.<sup>69</sup>

Critics of presuppositional apologetics claim that it is logically invalid because it begs the question of the truth of Christianity and the non-truth of other worldviews.

Other philosophical arguments include:

- Alvin Plantinga's argument that belief in God is properly basic, reformed epistemology.<sup>70</sup>
- Pascal's wager,<sup>71</sup> is an argument that posits that humans all bet with their lives either that God exists or that he does not. Pascal argues that a rational person should live as though God exists.<sup>72</sup>

In addition to arguments for the existence of God, Christian apologists have also attempted to respond successfully to arguments against the existence of God. Two very popular arguments against the existence of God are the hiddenness argument and the argument from evil. The hiddenness argument tries to show that a perfectly loving God's existence is incompatible with the existence of nonresistant nonbelievers. The argument from evil tries to show that the existence of evil renders God's existence unlikely or impossible.

## Presuppositional apologetics

Presuppositional apologetics is a Reformed Protestant methodology which claims that presuppositions are essential to any philosophical position and that there are no "neutral" assumptions from which a Christian can reason in common with a non-

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<sup>69</sup> Frame, John M. (1987). *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God (Theology of Lordship)*, 45. Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed. ISBN 0-87552-262-9.

<sup>70</sup> "Intellectual Sophistication and Basic Belief in God" at

[http://origins.org/articles/plantinga\\_intellecualsophistication.html](http://origins.org/articles/plantinga_intellecualsophistication.html) (Retrieved on March 24, 2021).

<sup>71</sup> Pascal's Wager at <https://www.gotquestions.org/Pascals-wager.html> (Retrieved on March 24, 2021).

<sup>72</sup> Copleston, Frederick Charles (1958). *History of Philosophy: Descartes to Leibniz*, 155. ISBN 0809100681. Hammond, Nicholas (2000). "Blaise Pascal". In Hastings; et al. (eds.). *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought*. Oxford University Press, USA, 518. ISBN 9780198600244.

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Christian.<sup>73</sup> There are two main schools of presuppositional apologetics, that of Cornelius Van Til (and his students Greg Bahnsen and John Frame) and that of Gordon Haddon Clark.

Van Til drew upon, but did not always agree with, the work of Dutch Calvinist philosophers and theologians such as Dirk Hendrik Theodoor Vollenhoven, Herman Dooyeweerd, Hendrik G. Stoker, Herman Bavinck, and Abraham Kuyper. Bahnsen describes Van Til's approach to Christian apologetics as pointing out the difference in ultimate principles between Christians and non-Christians and then showing that the non-Christian principles reduce to absurdity.<sup>74</sup> In practice, this school utilizes what has come to be known as the transcendental argument for the existence of God.

Clark held that the Scriptures constituted the axioms of Christian thought, which could not be questioned, though their consistency could be discussed.<sup>75</sup> A consequence of this position is that God's existence can never be demonstrated, either by empirical means or by philosophical argument. In *The Justification of Knowledge*, the Calvinist theologian Robert L. Reymond argues that believers should not even attempt such proofs.

## Prophetic fulfillment

In his book *Science Speaks*, Peter Stoner argues that only God knows the future and that Biblical prophecies of a compelling nature have been fulfilled.<sup>76</sup> Apologist Josh McDowell documents the Old Testament prophecies fulfilled by Christ, relating to his ancestral line, birthplace, virgin birth, miracles, death, and resurrection.<sup>77</sup> Apologist Blaise Pascal believed that the prophecies are the strongest evidence for Christianity. He notes that Jesus not only foretold, but was foretold, unlike in other religions, and that these prophecies came from a succession of people over a span of four thousand years.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Frame, John M. (2006). "Presuppositional Apologetics" at <https://frame-poythress.org/presuppositional-apologetics/> (Retrieved on March 24, 2021). In W.C. Campbell-Jack; Gavin J. McGrath; C. Stephen Evans (eds.). *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics*. InterVarsity Press. ISBN 978-0-8308-2451-9.

<sup>74</sup> Greg Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic*, P&R Publishing, 1998, ISBN 0-87552-098-7, 275–77.

<sup>75</sup> John M. Frame (2006). "Presuppositional Apologetics". In W. C. Campbell-Jack; Gavin J. McGrath; C. Stephen Evans (eds.). *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics*. InterVarsity Press.

<sup>76</sup> Chapter 2 at [https://archive.is/20110724054728/http://www.sciencespeaks.net/Prophetic\\_Accuracy.html](https://archive.is/20110724054728/http://www.sciencespeaks.net/Prophetic_Accuracy.html) (Retrieved on March 24, 2021). *Science Speaks*, Peter Stoner.

<sup>77</sup> McDowell, Josh. *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*. chapter 8.

<sup>78</sup> Pascal, Blaise (1966). *Pensées*. England: Penguin Group, pp. x, xii, xiii.

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## Origins apologetics

Many Christians contend that science and the Bible do not contradict each other, and that scientific fact supports Christian apologetics.<sup>79</sup> The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that “The question about the origins of the world and of man has been the object of many scientific studies which have splendidly enriched our knowledge... These discoveries invite us to even greater admiration for the greatness of the Creator.”<sup>80</sup> The theologian and mathematician Marin Mersenne used celestial mechanics as evidence in his apologetic work,<sup>81</sup> while Matteo Ricci engaged in scientific apologetics in China.<sup>82</sup> In modern times, the theory of the Big Bang has been used in support of Christian apologetics.<sup>83</sup>

Several Christian apologists have sought to reconcile Christianity and science concerning the question of origins. Theistic Evolution claims that classical religious teachings about God are compatible with the modern scientific understanding about biological evolution and that the Creator God uses the process of evolution. Denis Lamoureux, in *Evolutionary Creation: A Christian Approach to Evolution* states that “This view of origins fully embraces both the religious beliefs of biblical Christianity and the scientific theories of cosmological, geological, and biological evolution. It contends that the Creator established and maintains the laws of nature, including the mechanisms of a teleological evolution.”<sup>84</sup> At this point it should be noted that the concept of Theistic Evolution is, at its very core, a flawed theory in that it attempts to merge two radically opposed worldviews into something that is not recognizable by either viewpoint.

The most radical example of a Christian-evolutionary synthesis is the work of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, which was intended as apologetics to the world of science,<sup>85</sup> but which was later condemned by the Catholic Church.

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<sup>79</sup> Jitse M. van der Meer and Scott Mandelbrote, *Nature and Scripture in the Abrahamic Religions: Up to 1700*, BRILL, 2009, 295. ISBN 90-04-17191-6. Kenneth Boa and Robert M. Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons: Integrative Approaches to Defending the Christian Faith*, Biblica, 2006, 173. ISBN 1-932805-34-6.

<sup>80</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. #287.

<sup>81</sup> Dulles, Avery Cardinal, *A History of Apologetics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Ignatius Press, 2005, 159. ISBN 0-89870-933-4.

<sup>82</sup> Lacouture, Jean (tr. Jeremy Leggatt), *Jesuits: A Multibiography*, Counterpoint Press, 1997, 189. ISBN 1-887178-60-0.

<sup>83</sup> Markos, Louis, *Apologetics for the Twenty-First Century*, Crossway, 2010, 134. ISBN 1-4335-1448-6. Stroud, James, *Mere Christian Apologetics*, Xulon Press, 2011, 19. ISBN 1-61379-449-5.

<sup>84</sup> Lamoureux, Denis, *Evolutionary creation*, [https://sites.ualberta.ca/~dlamoure/evolutionary\\_creation.pdf](https://sites.ualberta.ca/~dlamoure/evolutionary_creation.pdf) (Retrieved on March 24, 2021).

<sup>85</sup> Dulles, *op. cit.*, 297 ff.

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## Creationist apologetics

Creationist apologetics aims to defend views of origins such as Young Earth creationism and Old Earth creationism that critics (incorrectly) affirm run counter to mainstream science. Young Earth creationists believe the Bible teaches that the Earth is approximately 6,000 years old, and therefore reject the scientific consensus for the theoretical age of the Earth. They apply a literal interpretation to the primordial history in Genesis 1-11 – such as the long lifespans of people such as Methuselah,<sup>86</sup> the Flood,<sup>87</sup> and the Tower of Babel.<sup>88</sup> Old Earth creationists, however, believe it is possible to harmonize the Bible's six-day account of creation with the assumed scientific evidence that the universe is 13.8 billion-years-old and Earth is 4.54 billion-years-old.

## The Value of Christian Apologetics

Christian apologetics offers a robust defense for the truth of Christianity. Hence, training in Christian Apologetics can be of great value for the life and health of the church. This is because such training helps to instill within believers a deep confidence that Christianity is really true. And when one becomes convinced that Christianity is really true, one is typically more likely to share one's faith with others—and less likely to abandon the faith when confronted with various social, cultural, and intellectual pressures.

Consider that first point, that when one becomes convinced of Christianity's truth, one is more likely to share this truth with others. Many Christians admit to being hesitant about sharing their faith because they are afraid someone will ask them a question that they are ill-prepared to answer.<sup>89</sup> Training in apologetics can help counteract this fear. Granted,

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<sup>86</sup> "Living for 900 years - creation.com" at <https://creation.com/living-for-900-years> (Retrieved on March 24, 2021). Isaak, Mark. "CH311: Vapor canopy's effect on lifespan" at <http://www.talkorigins.org/indexcc/CH/CH311.html> (Retrieved on March 24, 2021).

<sup>87</sup> "Why Does Nearly Every Culture Have a Tradition of a Global Flood? - The Institute for Creation Research" at <https://www.icr.org/article/570/> (Retrieved on March 24, 2021). "The Flood" at <https://answersingenesis.org/the-flood/> (Retrieved on March 24, 2021).

<sup>88</sup> "TOWER OF BABEL - Is there archaeological evidence of the Tower of Babel? • ChristianAnswers.Net" at <https://christiananswers.net/q-abr/abr-a021.html> (Retrieved on March 24, 2021). "CONFUSION OF LANGUAGES - Is there any reference in early Mesopotamian literature to what happened at the Tower of Babel? • ChristianAnswers.Net" at <https://christiananswers.net/q-abr/confusionoflanguages.html> (Retrieved on March 24, 2021). "The Tower of Babel: Legend or History?" at <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/140-the-tower-of-babel-legend-or-history> (Retrieved on March 24, 2021).

<sup>89</sup> Indeed, entire books have been written to help believers feel better prepared for such conversations. See, for example, Mark Mittelberg, *The Questions Christians Hope No One Will Ask: (With Answers)* (Tyndale, 2010).

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one may still be asked a question that is difficult to answer. But apologetics training can alleviate the fear associated with such situations by helping believers understand that good answers are available—even if they cannot remember what those answers are! To give an illustration, if I learn that there is excellent evidence that a particular drug can cure some disease, then I will be far more confident about sharing this fact with others—even if I cannot answer all their questions about how the medicine works. I may not remember exactly how it works, but I do know that there is very good evidence that it works. And knowing this, I will naturally be more confident telling others about it, even if I cannot answer all their questions about how or why.

Moreover, training in apologetics can help insulate believers from abandoning the faith, for they now know that there are good reasons to believe that Christianity is really true. Of course, most people who abandon the faith do so for non-intellectual reasons. Still, as Paul Chamberlain observes, “A number of vocal critics who have moved from Christianity to atheism cite intellectual difficulties with Christianity” as a prime reason for quitting the faith.<sup>90</sup> While apologetics training cannot completely prevent such outcomes, it can make them less likely. After all, it is far more difficult to abandon a view once you have become sincerely convinced of its truth.<sup>91</sup>

## A Final Thought

Over a century ago, Princeton theologian J. Gresham Machen forcefully argued that, for the faithful Christian, all of life—including the arts and sciences and every sphere of intellectual endeavor—must be humbly consecrated to the service of God.<sup>92</sup> Indeed, this should be true not only for every individual Christian in particular, but for the entire church in general. Machen wrote:

Christianity must pervade not merely all nations, but ... all of human thought. The Christian, therefore, cannot be indifferent to any branch of earnest human endeavor. It must all be brought into some relation to the gospel. It must be studied either in order to be demonstrated as false, or else in order to be made useful in advancing the Kingdom of God. ... The Church must seek to conquer not merely every man for Christ, but also the whole of man.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Chamberlain, Paul, “Why People Stop Believing,” *Christian Research Journal* 41, no. 4:11.

<sup>91</sup> Gleghorn, Michael, “The Value of Christian Doctrine and Apologetics” at <https://probe.org/the-value-of-christian-doctrine-and-apologetics/> (Retrieved on March 24, 2021).

<sup>92</sup> Machen, J. Gresham, “Christianity and Culture,” *Princeton Theological Review* 11 (1913): 5.

<sup>93</sup> Machen, 6.