

# INTRODUCING APOLOGETICS

## 1. DEFINING APOLOGETICS

I Peter 3.15 is the classic text for guiding our understanding of apologetics

### A. I Peter 3.15

- i. our English word "apologetics" comes from the word apologia which is used in I Peter 3.15. In our English Bible this word is translated as "defense", or "answer". The idea is to explain or give a rationale for our hope as Christians.
- ii. **The Apologist** sets Jesus apart in their heart
- iii. **The Apologist** is ready
- iv. **The Apologist** makes a defense (to everyone)
- v. **The Apologist** gives an account (of Christian hope)
- vi. **The Apologist** is gentle and reverent
- vii. Defending the faith is set in the context of Christian suffering in I Peter (3.14-16)

## 2. OPEN CONVERSATION ABOUT EXPERIENCE WITH APOLOGETICS

## 3. MOTIVATIONS FOR APOLOGETICS

### A. Reasons for

- i. Instructed to
- ii. Love God with our mind
- iii. Strengthen your faith and conviction
- iv. opportunity to share the credibility of Christianity

## 4. WHAT IS NEEDED TO DO APOLOGETICS WELL?

- A. Know your Bible well
- B. Take time to think through objections to the faith
- C. Practice active listening, humility, gentleness, honesty,
- D. Be honest with your own questions, doubts, and wrestling
- E. remember that people don't have information problem but a spiritual problem

- i. Romans 1.18-21
- ii. Ephesians 4.17-19
- iii. II Corinthians. 4.3-4

F. Quote from Alex O Connor

- i. "I have, to put it mildly, been looking for God. I made a career out of engaging with religious arguments. At university I visited numerous churches. I attended Bible groups. Just recently I agreed to embark on a series of study of the wisdom literature specifically, reading it *again* in the hopes that this time I might finally feel a divine presence seeping from between the lines. I moved into a house for a year with two devoutly Christian housemates with the express intention of seeing if the obvious truth of Christianity and theism that people like to talk about can be found in the minutiae of daily life. I have looked in other words, in a great deal of places. I have read Athanasius and Anselm. I read Augustine and Aquinas. I looked in Julian of Norwich and Catherine of Sienna. I looked at the sociological origin of religious belief in Durkheim and Marx and Freud and Jung. I looked at religious experience in William James and Rudolf Otto. I've looked in the modern works of people like Ed Feser and Bill Craig and Michael Murray and Richard Swinburne and Alvin Plantinga. I have looked in poetry. I have looked in the Psalms. I have looked in Job. I have looked in Ecclesiastes. I've looked in Dostoyevsky. I've read C.S. Lewis. I've listened to Worship music. I've prayed. I've studied the gospel. I even got an actual degree in theology from a university and *nothing*. Nothing. Not once, not nearly, not ever, not even briefly have I experienced anything that speaks to the existence of a God in the universe.

## 5. OUTCOMES

- A. To have your faith strengthened
- B. To be aware of the arguments for and against the Christian faith
- C. To be equipped to give an answer when you are pressed about what you believe and why

## 6. THE MORAL ARGUMENT FOR GOD

This argument is structured as a syllogism. There are two premises, or truth claims and if the two premises are true then the conclusion must be true. If someone wants to avoid the conclusion then they must disagree with one or both premises. All our arguments for God will look like this.

This argument is arguing for the existence of moral reality not whether people can be moral

### A. Objective moral values and duties exist

- i. **Objective** = There is a standard of Right and Wrong/Good and Evil that exists outside of our own experience and culture. Right and Wrong are not dependent on my believing it to be true to make it true.
- ii. **Moral values** = beliefs or principles about the Good and Right like honesty, courage, goodness, forgiveness, compassion, selflessness
- iii. **Moral duties** = Behavior and actions that align with our moral values. This is about behaving or acting rightly or wrongly. Doing what is Right and forsaking that which is Wrong.
- iv. **No one lives like morality is subjective:** Everyone generally recognizes that is wrong steal, murder, and lie. This is known because feelings of shame, guilt, and remorse accompany those things. Likewise, everyone knows that acts of selflessness and generosity are good. The fact that people fight and disagree over right and wrong demonstrates that no one actually believes you have your morality and I have mine.
- v. **Our perception of moral reality:** Our five senses tell us that we are real living human beings and that I exist in this room and the people around me are actually here. You're not illusions or my subjective experience of reality. All of us agree that we all are in this room with others. It's real. Likewise, we should trust our perception of moral rightness and wrongness. It's not an illusion or subjective experience but it's real and outside of me.
- vi. **Criticize other cultures and civilizations:** When we criticize other cultures and civilizations, we are assuming a standard of Right and Wrong that applies to both of us that extends beyond our social context and time. If societies determine morality, then we lose the ability to criticize other nations and societies.
  1. *The Roman practice of adult males having relations with underage boys*
  2. *Hitler's extermination of the Jews*

### B. The best explanation for objective moral values and duties is God

- i. **Brute Fact:** Just like with gravity objective moral values just exist
  1. *The problem with this is that it doesn't account for the obligation of acting rightly. What requires me to do the right? What impels me to act when it's not in my best interest? Or what motivates me to avoid doing*

*wrong if I can get it away with it? This reason doesn't explain the accountability we all know is true with acting and believing rightly.*

ii. **Social convention:** Morality comes people deciding what is right and wrong

1. *The problem with this is that nations can legalize things that are truly immoral, but we have to say those things are morally good because they're a reflection of what society considers right (slavery).*
2. *If morality is a social convention, then we forfeit the right to criticize other nations and cultures.*
3. *It doesn't account for the objectivity of morality.*

iii. **Evolution/Natural Selection:** Evolutionary processes birthed our moral sensibilities via a herd mentality. As humans evolved, they discovered that cooperating with each other and treating each other well ensured the continuation of the species.

1. *The point of natural selection is survival of the fittest and passing your genetic code to the next generation. Why then would our moral code lead us to do acts of selflessness and believe it good or suffer feelings of shame and guilt when we do wrong? The reality of self-sacrifice is inconsistent with survival of the fittest.*
2. *The evolutionary process doesn't explain how moral values and duties are objective. Maybe evolution through a herd mentality did give us morality but how is it objective? It seems to be inescapably subjective. How does evolution give us an independent moral code?*
3. *Why is human flourishing objectively good over other animals?*

iv. **God:** God is the best explanation of objective moral values and duties because

1. **God accounts for the universality of moral values and duties.** *This is God's world therefore it makes sense his moral code would be sensed and experienced everywhere across time and culture.*
2. **God himself accounts for being the standard of morality .** *The Good and the Right are reflections of his character expressed in his commandments and our conscience. The Bad and the Evil are the violating of his standard and with-it feelings of guilt and remorse.*
3. **God accounts for the objectivity of morality.** *Morality is an objective reality because it comes from the objective and ultimate reality: God.*
4. **God accounts for why humans feel obligated to act rightly and why acting wrongly results in guilt and shame.** *God is the moral lawgiver, and we are accountable to him. We sense our accountability to him in our conscience.*
5. **God explains why human flourishing is objectively good.** *Human beings are created in the image of God.*

**C. Therefore, God exists**

