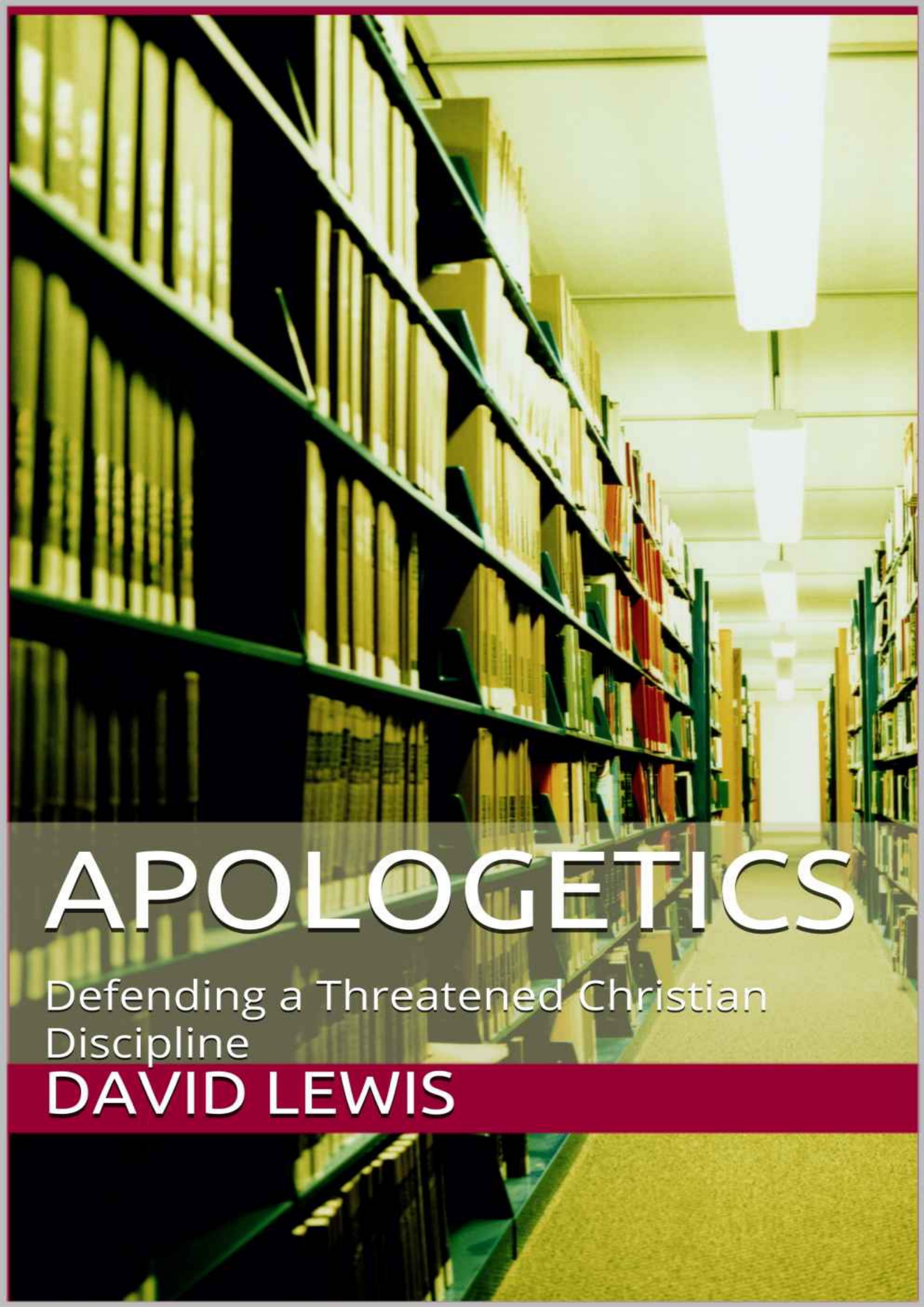


APOLOGETICS

Defending a Threatened Christian Discipline

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Introduction

Beyond the ongoing discussion within Christian apologetics itself, there are settled opinions on the *role* of apologetics in the life and ministry of believers – whether these are articulated or not, they are nonetheless felt. In the face of the apostle Peter's exhortation to "always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you,"[1] apologetics can appear "at best an illegitimate child in the household of faith and at worst a rogue who plunders the wealth of the faithful."[2] This study will not form or support the rational basis and rigor of the Christian understanding of reality nor state arguments to silence intellectual doubts. Rather, it will attempt to defend the *need* for a rational basis and rigor, taking a stance against a solely existentialist understanding of following Jesus, which as I will explain can lead to undefined mysticism.

In our present-day culture, there are unanswered and often unarticulated questions which we face that have a felt reality.[3] This paper seeks to articulate some of man's deepest questions and endorse that the gospel is satisfying to these, but only because its basis is, fundamentally, truth. The format of this work consists of seven parts, starting with an overview of present-day thinking, followed by two sections looking at some of man's questions and how the gospel addresses them. After this will be a consideration of apologetics and proposing the best apologetic. Lastly, the final two sections are written for believers where caution and instruction will be offered concerning living an apologetic life.

It is necessary in starting off to explain philosopher Francis Schaeffer's diagram of the "upper and lower stories." It is a visual way of representing the divided Western mind which seeks to categorize an "above" and "below," where the upper-story contains universals, the good, the unseen, God, whereas the lower-story is the world of sense, particulars, man, the visible and rational. The struggle of mankind has been his *approach* to the divide between the stories, and depending on the ebb and flow of thought at any particular time, the understanding of the content within these stories changes.

Chapter 1: The Mindset of our Age

Schaffer writes that a dominant mode of thinking and understanding of reality develops for each era of history. In the time of Thomas Aquinas, the primacy of reason working in conjunction with faith served as the representative way of thinking. By the 19th century, the failure of rationality alone to provide answers caused man, in desperation, to hold to rationalism and German philosopher Hegel's synthesis as a product of thesis/antithesis. He promotes the understanding that truth is found using *both/and* rather than *either/or* which is a subtle introduction to relativism, where neither thesis nor antithesis are correct alone but only when combined. Later the modern period understood the connection between the upper-and lower-stories as illustrated below:[4]

OPTIMISM MUST BE NON-RATIONAL

ALL RATIONALITY = PESSIMISM

By the late twentieth century, a significant development in thought changed the upper-story basis from the non-rational optimism to autonomous sexual freedom as mankind's liberator from the all-too-limiting and unavoidable rationalism, which declared man as a deterministic machine with no purpose beyond its own existence - hopelessly dead:[5]

THE AUTONOMOUS PORNOGRAPHIC AS THE ONLY HOPE OF FREEDOM AND OF MAN

RATIONALITY – MAN IS DEAD

The present day leaves man in the inescapable position of seeing the rational as leading to an inevitable reductionism of man where the only escape is non-rational madness, the only way to escape the death-sentence of the lower story:[6]

THE NON-RATIONAL – THE REAL FREEDOM IS MADNESS

THE RATIONAL – MAN IS DEAD

The dichotomy between rationalism and irrationality leads distressed individuals to seek another reality that is not understood rationally, whether it be via narcotics, sex, brain-altering activities, or other pursuits.

At the marketplace of rationalistic frameworks of reality, each sells itself as the solution to our uncertainty and lack of understanding of the true essence of life. It is here that naturalism and postmodernism have permeated and undergird public and private spheres of understanding. In scientific naturalism, everything can be accounted for in purely natural terms[7] and there is no supernatural realm possible in the universe, for the Cosmos is all there is, ever was, or ever will be. For this

reason, religion and values became noncognitive and nonfactual, and take a secondary role in simply helping people live better lives, regardless of what that means for the individual.[8] Apologist Ravi Zacharias summarizes this progression of thought: "From the extreme focus on rationalism came a balancing response of empiricism. From the displacement of personal value in empiricism came the tidal wave of existentialism that championed individual will, passion, and choice. From the nihilism that came hand in hand with existentialism, postmodernism was waiting to be born."[9] Schaffer brings us up to speed in saying that the essence of present-day thinking suggests that there are no answers and that everything is irrational and absurd.[10] With "the abandonment of the hope of a unified answer for knowledge and life" came a gnawing despair because man cannot live under the idea that he is, in essence, a machine.[11] Modern man takes the leap (through usage of drugs, etc.) from the lower-story to the upper, not for escape or kicks alone, but because he is desperate.[12]

Because of the perceived freedom available to the individual to determine his or her own reality, there is a gnawing sense of insignificance to one's choices, and this paradoxically "leads not to a deeper sense of [communal or individual] identity and dignity but to a disheartening lack of it."[13] It is clear that man, beginning with himself, can define the problem of existence ("Why am I here? Who am I?"), but he cannot generate an answer to that problem himself.[14]

Just as it is said that man will die *for* an idea, it can just as truthfully be said that man will die *because* of an idea. His self-regarding thinking patterns about his true nature determine who he is, as someone once wrote, "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he."[15] The rational is not as influential a factor for the thinking of present-day people as it had been before. Their perceived felt needs and their fulfillment found in miscellaneous beliefs trump the rational (or irrational) basis on which their belief lies. This poses significant danger for the postmodern man - anything goes and with it, the death of truth. An examination of the cultural mood shows that critics of this age are not solely against the message of Jesus but truth as a category.[16] "Truth by definition excludes,"[17] so man has attempted to do away with it. Zacharias writes, "The greatest and most notable casualty of our times … is, unquestionably, *truth*."[18]

The question of our time is "Who am I?" This question is not just a psychological question but primarily epistemological, which seeks to answer the question, "How do we know what we know to be as truth?"[19] A loss of faith in one's ability to know truth leaves man hoping to find "something in his head" because he has lost confidence in knowing with certainty that anything is 'out there.'[20] This reaction is based on the misconception that knowledge *requires* certainty, and thus people will "fail to take themselves to have knowledge if they lack certainty."[21] For followers of Jesus, the special revelation of Scripture provides truth and therefore

knowledge inaccessible through natural means alone. It is possible to have intellectual and rational integrity while holding to "the position of verbalized, propositional revelation" unless you hold the assumption of the "uniformity of natural causes in a closed system"[22] – this assumption requires a universe where no God exists who can communicate knowledge which cannot be known through natural means alone. The great importance of knowledge for man is underlined in the writing of Hosea: "My people are destroyed for lack of *knowledge*."[23]

A loss of faith in knowledge has led to our present-day mysticism which is detached from a historical understanding. In what Zacharias calls the New Spirituality, adherents of this movement desire existential satisfaction but without a foundational philosophical basis, meaning man can make the leap 'upstairs' "totally separated from all rationality," and to a "mysticism like no previous mysticism."[24] "When there is no light held to our version of truth to call our bluff," writes Zacharias, "we confuse what *is* with what we think *ought* to be, and infuse 'the ought' with our own ideas to make it what we *want* it to be."[25] A mysticism not founded in truth deceives; there is faith in faith, and no clear identification in what, which leaves one having faith, essentially, in oneself.

Perhaps for many in our time, logical consistency is only considered when critiquing someone else's perspective, but "experiential relevance is all that is needed to justify their own perspective."[26] This is a fruit of relativism, and the flexible terminology of the New Spirituality gives one the privilege to define reality as whatever one wants it to be.[27] The basis that certain practices or beliefs make you 'feel good' cannot last as an ultimate deciding factor for understanding reality; the essence of what is real will not be affected by your thoughts simply because you are 'at peace' with them. If comfort, stillness of the mind, and 'feeling good' are the goals of your life, then unarguably, there are a number of viewpoints to suit you. However, if you desire to *know* the *truth* and be transformed in light of it, there is only one path possible, for there is only one reality. "True spirituality is not a game we play. It is not merely a preference for some position over another. Nor is it at its core a search for some healing balm," writes Zacharias, "One had dare not make a commitment to a belief for secondary or tertiary reasons or to 'feel good'."[28]

The path of mysticism can stem from the misconception that religion is not a domain of fact and knowledge, and therefore it is a matter of faith and not knowledge.[29] Schaffer explains that old mystics always knew that somebody was out there (whether they were Hindus, Muslims or followers of Jesus), but "the new mystic says that that does not matter, because faith is the important thing. It is faith in faith, whether expressed in secular or religious terms," and the danger surfaces when the terms are not defined or if they are expressed, they are merely 'connotation' words – these are words as symbols that do not have defined meaning, such as 'god.' The modern man is committed to finding his answers by the leap upstairs detached from

reason.[30] It should be noted that the cries for satisfied needs are not misguided unless they form the sole basis for understanding reality.

Chapter 2: Man's Questions

Man has existential questions and hungers for a "beyond," and yet, oftentimes these are not articulated or defined. At least one thing that the New Spirituality movement has done is awaken us to a place of our need that "we all search for deep fulfillment and yearn for answers that are satisfying at the level of our feelings, not just at the philosophical level of truth and logic."[31]

For the unbeliever, one of the toughest issues to face is "the question of life's purpose and meaning."[32] The naturalism of our time leaves the spirit unsatisfied, materialism leaves the soul weary and postmodernism leaves the mind doubtful of an ultimate meaning to life that can be known. This has led "folks – and they are legion" to "have given up on seeking that meaning and instead are living for happiness … [which] in short, ruins your life. Why? … Put simply, we are wired for more than happiness."[33] This results in the empty self. Philosopher J. P. Moreland explains that the empty self is "filled up with consumer goods, calories, experiences, politicians, romantic partners and empathetic therapists." An individual with this condition "experiences a significant absence of community, tradition, and shared meaning … a lack of personal conviction and worth, and … embodies the absences as a chronic, undifferentiated emotional hunger."[34] People begin living for themselves and their pleasurable satisfaction, thus leading to passive, infantile personalities who cannot live for something bigger than they are.[35] Such folks can manipulate relationships with God and others, "to validate their own self-esteem and [they] cannot sustain deep attachments or make personal commitments to something larger than their own ego."[36] What these individuals need is "to acquire meaning in life" [37] – this is not simply a mental assent to a belief or finding relief in an idea, but rather serves as the foundation for one's perspective of God, the world, his community and himself.

In determining the best way to live out one's life, its *purpose* must be set in place first, for this purpose itself defines lifestyle, and for those who overlook this, their lifestyle can be hollow and lack purpose.[38] For those finding disappointment in pleasure, the cry for meaning is loudest, whereas those in the midst of pain seek comfort and answers.[39] In the midst of mass-marketed beliefs and spiritualties, modern man instinctively adopts the perspective which maximizes both purpose and security, but all too often the criteria for accepting a perspective falls short of considering whether it is true or false. In the forgotten era when 'virtue' and 'the good life' were esteemed, one sought to conform himself to reality rather than conform reality to himself. Philosopher Peter Kreeft states that for every desire man has, there is an object for that desire. For hunger, there is food, for thirst, water, for financial security, money, for love, people, and for meaning, God. The lyrics of an old Hindi song concur, that for man, "it is not gold or silver that he is seeking; it is the fulfillment of his soul."[40]

Chapter 3: Gospel as Satisfying

Among the plethora of beliefs (religious or otherwise) promising the truth, almost all suggest that man has the means to bring himself to a place of understanding reality and experiencing peace. For the Hindu, the secret lies in spiritual techniques to obtain enlightenment; for the follower of Buddha, the key is ceasing to desire; for the Muslim, the requirement is to follow Allah's Law; for the secularist, a rational perspective is what the others do not have. Yet for the followers of Jesus, "humans do not have the power within [them] to fix [themselves]."[41] Scripture makes clear that "it is for freedom that *Christ* has set us free."[42] Historically, the notion of freedom has meant the power to do what one ought to do, not the right to do what one wants to do.[43] It is through the merit and Person of Christ, not by His adopted children, that this costly grace and freedom is accessible to man. Distinctively, God is a personal being, thus bringing *relationship* to eternal value.[44] Christians are not best described as adherents of a perspective as they are followers of a Person, not devotees of a cause but rather imitators of a Somebody, not students of a discipline but disciples of a Teacher.

Man's universal cry for the "beyond" is satisfied not only by love which gives of itself, but in worship, which bestows honor, worth, and glory to someone greater than itself.[45] The key to the New Spirituality is that "the answers supplied are only the feelings that one wants to generate, totally apart from any reasoning. That is not true of the Jesus of history and the same Jesus of experience."[46] The gospel satisfies because its rigorous basis is in *truth*, and it is because of *truth* that a lasting commitment to Christ is established. In living we will be broken, and we will be broken either by a lie or by the truth.[47]

Chapter 4: Truth as a Person

If man functioned with only a mind, presenting the gospel in algebraic terms would silence any dispute. If man existed with emotion alone, the perspective eliciting the highest sensations and impressions would suffice. However, as entertaining as it is to categorize man into his separate components, he is more than the sum of his parts, for he is created in the image of God. The Truth which man longs for is not, in essence, an idea or a belief which will bring meaning and satisfaction.

A striking shift took place where man's thinking understood "God … not so much a person as He was a power. Truth was not an embodiment as much as it was an idea."[48] One will miss a Person if he is looking for an idea alone. Why did Jesus come into the world? The answer can be found in His own words: "For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."[49] He essentially states that man's "true intentions regarding truth or falsehood," Zacharias writes, "are revealed by what we do with him."[50] The good news cannot have its basis on principles or values, since Jesus brings meaning "because of who he is."[51]

Theology often sits comfortably in describing Christ "characteristically" with such distant terms as His being omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, etc. Yet even in articulating his relational nature, truths can appear as primarily ideas or abstracts. As critical as these writings are, the subject of how best to know Him is left untouched.[52] In the life of Job, a clear example stands. His basic understanding of God was that He rewards and blesses the good and brings reproach upon the immoral, yet he experienced the pain of loss as a good man. Throughout his suffering, "his theology was tottering, not his belief in God."[53] The wisdom and advice of his friends were misplaced, for they were "rich in allusions to what others had said but impoverished in their own personal knowledge of God."[54]

The nature and characteristics of God are meaningless without a Person behind them, for we do not experience Him from a worldview or philosophical framework of reality, but rather He comes where He is invited. It is necessary to note that the intellectual thoroughness of the gospel does not diminish or sidestep the very person of God and his mysterious depths. The gospel of John begins, "In the beginning was the *Word*, and the *Word* was with God, and the *Word* was God … and the *Word* became flesh and dwelt among us."[55] The Word spoke and established the coherently, law-governed heavens with His mouth. In this respect, order and rationality are godly, but error is already introduced once either become god.

Chapter 5: The Best Apologetic

Although the message of the gospel is Christ and Him crucified, it is His followers that people encounter daily. Zacharias underscores this when he says there are five gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and the Christian) and many people do not read the first four.[56] Furthermore, he argues that the "single greatest obstacle to the impact of the gospel has not been its inability to provide answers, but rather the failure on our part to live it out."[57] The lives of Christians and their communities are a vital part of evangelism, where persuasion is found both existentially and intellectually.

The traditional understanding of Christian apologetics is often limited to arguments for the existence of God, solving the problem of evil and similar rational pursuits. However, the definition of apologetics comes from the Greek *ἀπολογία* meaning to make a defense of something or someone.[58] Peter calls believers to "always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear."[59] In addition to the rational justification for Christ, His Person defends Himself in the lives of believers who have the aroma of Him; for the message cannot be separated from the messenger.

One of the primary places for seeing the body of Christ is His church. Ravi writes, "… apologetics as *experienced* in the local church offers the unbeliever far more than an intellectual defense. The church setting provides a richness and depth that goes far beyond mere convincing of the mind,"[60] and this is largely because many, influenced by relativism, have lost confidence in a reasonable truth. The gathering of the church allows unbelievers the opportunity to experience worship and fellowship completely foreign to their prior experience. First, the fellowship of believers with one another as an apologetic is supported by Jesus' words in the gospel of John: "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."[61] This looks markedly different from people getting together to socialize, but when meeting together "we should have something in mind and ought intentionally to seek to foster our mutual commitment to advancing the cause of Christ and the spread of the gospel."[62] Secondly, worship invites the presence of God and with it comes the fear of the Lord and His Word – "an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you."[63] True worship does not arise from our whims, rather it is "a response to a God who initiates toward His people, gives them life, and shows Himself active on their behalf."[64]

Where these crucial elements are missing, surely the resulting church can become a one-sided representation of the reality of Christ by forming an institution which is lacking His life and love. The importance of the love and lives of followers cannot be underestimated in the communication of the gospel, for often times

“resistance is not of the mind but of the heart.”[65]

Chapter 6: Caution to Believers

The unnoticed influence of present-day philosophies often affect the core of not just *what* we think as truth, but more importantly, *how* we think about *what* is truth. Consider three views on the nature of truth that Schaeffer discusses: Greek, Jewish, and modern. The Greek concept of truth was a balanced, metaphysically harmonious system, which is only a component of the Jewish perspective; the biblical understanding saw "an appeal to real history" as a sure basis, looking to "history in space and in time which could be written down and discussed as history."[66] The modern view separates these two views, but at the wrong point, argues Schaeffer, where now many people mistakenly see "the Greeks as holding to rational truth and the Jews as being existentialists."[67] In light of this, ministers of the gospel must safeguard the very nature of truth for "if truth dies … then so does the gospel in the listener's ears."[68]

The biblical perspective must embrace both components of rational thought and appealing to history, for if reason has no role in religious decisions in becoming a follower of Jesus, then there is no 'reason' to expect it to inform decisions within religious life regarding doctrines, forms of worship, etc.[69] Unfortunately among some Evangelical circles, a pseudo anti-intellectualism lies near the root of faith, drawing justification for this from the passage in Acts where Peter and John are perceived to be uneducated and untrained men; this indicates that they had not undergone formal rabbinic training, and we cannot assume they thought the mind has no role living out the gospel.[70] In God choosing the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, Moreland interprets this as God choosing "foolish (*moria*) things that were offensive to human pride, not to reason properly used."[71] Often what can substitute for a reasonable decision to follow Christ is a decision based on emotion or feeling, and for many, particularly young Christians, faith can be confused with warm feelings toward God, and "when their feelings are running cool," writes Moreland, "they think they must be having a crisis of faith. Soon it becomes a real crisis of faith; like those who refuse to believe what they cannot see, they refuse to believe what they cannot feel."[72] Zacharias agrees, suggesting that when the understanding is not in command in time of faith, "so it is not in control in time of doubt."[73] Both of these could be the result of hearing a simple gospel which appeals to felt needs only, where the role of reason is absent in evangelism.

The apostle Paul, on the contrary, brought to light "the truth and reasonableness of the gospel, *not* the fact that it addresses felt needs."[74] Furthermore, the place of emotion in regards to faith is crucial to define and explore, for if emotion is all that matters, "then neither faith nor doubt have anything to do with truth," writes Zacharias, "they are simply the names that we give to their changing moods."[75]

The question is then how can we blend the knowledge of the truth with a

proper amount of feeling so that we will guide our emotions rather than be led by them.[76] For those who have understood God on the level of their emotions alone, there is an obvious tendency to focus on them in a life-defining respect, focusing on the self; this is 'self-seeking' and this brings "confusion and every evil thing."[77] A significant refocusing and dying must take place, either "the lie to which the feelings are subject, or the truth to which the feelings must conform,"[78] for we must know what is real apart from our feelings in order to center them on reality.

A further cause for basing faith on feelings is due to a lack of knowledge, which can lead to a defensive and proud posture "as a cover-up for his or her lack of knowledge."[79] Moreland, identifying himself as Spirit-filled, indicates that an improper or misplaced emphasis on the Spirit along with intellectual laziness will fashion Christians who are unknowledgeable in the content of their beliefs and feel inadequate because of it, and suggests that churches should specifically train believers "to think theologically and biblically."[80]

The life of the follower of Jesus is subject to reason; there should be no sacred/secular distinction. What causes a split from the world's wisdom is found in the assumptions starting off, which allow revelational, propositional knowledge for believers. Fear cannot dictate our ministry and understanding; we must "reaffirm our commitment to truth and right reason and be confident that our Christian beliefs both warrant that commitment and will flourish in light of it."[81] Danger for believers can lie in basing understanding off of inner experience alone, using connotation words (the currency of the "new theology") rather than defined words – a definite and sometimes inconspicuous difference. Schaeffer believes that those who press only for an encounter with Jesus have regardless of whether or not it is intended, moved upstairs as illustrated below:

NON-RATIONAL – AN ENCOUNTER WITH JESUS

RATIONAL – ONE DOES NOT SET ABOUT PROVING OR DISPROVING PROPOSTIONS

In critiquing the position that believers can escape pressures of debate by downplaying Scripture and "simply putting the word 'Jesus' or 'experience' upstairs," he pointedly asks, "What difference is there between doing this and doing what the secular world has done in its semantic mysticism, or what the New Theology has done?"[82] If followers slip into a dichotomy, separating an experience with Jesus from the content of the Scriptures, "we shall, without intending to, be throwing ourselves and the next generation into the millstream of the modern system."[83] One cannot avoid reading the Bible on a regular basis because of fear of developing a legalistic and self-righteous understanding; we have not received a spirit of fear, but "of power and of love and of *a sound mind*."[84] Our desire for God is rigorous, full-bodied, and multi-faceted, involving all faculties properly aligned.

Chapter 7: Exhortation to Believers

In the gospel of Mark, Jesus attests: "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your *mind*, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment."[85] The neglect of the mind in loving the Lord cannot have his complete blessing. As his followers, we make every day significant in "treasuring His thoughts and harnessing our feelings,"[86] and disciplining our minds to hear from him daily, for "there is no greater expression of the will than to choose to hear from His Word on a regular basis."[87] We cannot substitute the privilege of personally hearing God from His Word with the instruction which comes from preachers and teachers of His Word, as important as they are in spiritual growth and gaining understanding. Listening does have a cost, but the reward is great: to know the will of God.[88] The discipline of reading what God *has* said and listening to what He *is* saying is a discipline indeed, yet note: "Nothing that is worth doing is pleasurable or easy in the early stages of learning how to do it."[89] The self-denial (and joy) for a follower can mean allowing God to actively mold your future in the present with the context of the past. It can mean His plans, arrangements, and thoughts will become your plans, arrangements and thoughts. You not only give Him your pain, problems, and struggles – your very worst – but your goals, expectations, and strengths – your very best.

The disciplines are instructive and formative, yet, by way of analogy with tennis, "it is not enough to engage in daily tennis readings, watching Wimbledon each year, and seeking constant exposure to motivational tennis music … for a tennis discipline is done repeatedly not to get good at the discipline, but to get good at the game of tennis."[90] The knowledge and truth of God, pursued with discipline, provide the appropriate ground for faith, so it is wise to "be ruthless in assessing the precise nature and strength of what you actually believe and develop a specific plan of attack for improvement," suggests Moreland as well as reading books *and sharing* how God has moved in other people's lives.[91]

Believers who enjoy the presence of God on a regular basis yet neglect the disciplines can "get stuck in spiritual infancy and character development [which] is substantially thwarted."[92] Moreland, writing to an evangelical audience, addresses two extremes found in churches. To churches of cessationist leaning (believing that the miraculous gifts of Spirit ceased with death of the apostles), he broadly states that too much of their accomplishments can be explained without there needing to be a God to explain them.[93] Whereas, when observing Pentecostal churches, he feels that too many people can be 'addicted' to seeking experiences of the Spirit *as a substitute* for the "day-in and day-out processes of faithful discipleship and spiritual formation."[94] In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus, perhaps startlingly, says, "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will

declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.”[95] To know the only true God and Jesus Christ is eternal life both now *and* forever, for eternity has started and continues now; it does not begin when you die.

Conclusion

For ministers of this gospel, it is insightful to look at Paul's letters to his spiritual son, Timothy, who was instructed to do the work of an evangelist. Paul's exhortation to him included the following: "the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."[96] More generally, workers in the ministry have the job description of equipping others for ministry, "not to do the ministry themselves and have others come and passively support them."[97] [98] Further instruction includes exhorting Timothy to give himself entirely to reading, exhortation, and to doctrine, and to not neglect the gift which had been given to him by the laying on of hands of the elders.[99] He is charged before God to "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers."[100] And the purpose of all this is "*love* from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith."[101]

Zacharias, by way of summary, writes that "the task of the apologist is with God's help to help the questioner see his or her own heart as the root of the problem and pray that the Holy Spirit will bring conviction of sin, for that is what it really is. Once this conviction comes and the heart is seen for what it is, the cross stands in its magnificence as the offer of forgiveness."[102] From the writings of the New Testament, it is clear that apologetics was at the heart of the church's ministry as witnesses.[103] Our understanding of current worldviews and thinking is crucial in effectively communicating the gospel in terms understood to our listeners. Moreland gives specific advice about dialoging with others through questions. He explains that "how we react to these questions will affect the level of communication between us from then on … if we respond with dogmatism, they proceed accordingly. But if we demonstrate an attitude that encourages the expression of doubts and questions, our effectiveness will be far greater."[104] Our friendship with others must be affirmed and shown as unconditional, not dependent on how they respond to Jesus – love as an end and not a means. Hudson Taylor knew that men could not believe without the conviction of the Holy Spirit, and he lived a life of prayer for this to happen, but "he also knew that men cannot believe without hearing the gospel."[105] We must be straightforward about the truth of the gospel in our conduct (Paul corrects Peter in this),[106] without handling the word of God dishonestly nor walking in craftiness but by manifestation of the truth.[107] According to what Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, 'I believed and therefore I spoke,' we also believe and therefore speak,"[108] and we also believe and therefore speak.

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[1] 1 Pet. 3:15 NKJV

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