

Application for a Reasonable Faith Chapter

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Narrative on how I came to faith in Christ

I cannot remember a time when I was not a Christian. Every Sunday as a child I sat in the First Christian Church in Whiting, Indiana, next to my mom and dad, three sisters, and two brothers. I sang the old hymns and listened to hundreds of sermons. My parents were a wonderful witness of commitment to God and to each other. I was baptized at a church camp when I was ten years old and throughout high school I attended a youth group.

During my senior year in 1968, my faith began to slip and for two years in college it lapsed. I was in full rebellion, yet I knew it was against a loving God that I sinned. During the summer before my senior college year, my younger brother witnessed to me and shared his enthusiasm for C.S. Lewis. Reading his apologetic works did not so much convince me that Christianity was true (I already knew that), rather, as a self-styled intellectual, it provided me with academic cover. I no longer had to choose between being smart and being a Christian. During that year of 1972 I was a sold-out Jesus Freak. I've never looked back.

I went into the Peace Corps from 1972 to 1974 and married my lovely wife, Kim, while in Korea teaching middle school students. We had two boys. Zachary was born in 1975 and Simon Peter in 1977. My life after that proceeded on two tracks; one academic and one military. I served in the U.S. Army for 20 years and am now retired as an officer. I taught in universities on and off over the decades, earning a PhD in Education from the University of Oregon in 1983.

In 2001, I was teaching part-time making a patchwork living. At 51 I was bored. I knew I could do more. I began taking seminary classes at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary and in 2003 I earned my M.Div. I was then ordained by my local church, Tiburon Baptist.

In 2001, I also began [my missionary work in Rwanda](#). Kim and I traveled to Rwanda every year from 2001 to 2010. From 2004 to 2006, I pastored a Korean congregation in San Francisco. Then from 2007 to 2012, I pastored First Southern Baptist Church in San Lorenzo, California.

2010 was a year of tragedy. Kim, my wife of 36 years, died in Rwanda in a car accident while on a mission trip. I wrote a book about that experience called [Forgive Like a Rwandan](#). Passing through that fiery furnace of suffering and sorrow, I matured as a Christian.

I remarried in 2013 and now live with Liz in San Mateo, California. Since 1996 I have writing HTML and have an extensive personal web site. Here I enumerate [my pilgrimage](#).

Narrative of my spiritual walk today

(My life is at the [service of the gospel](#). God has given me this gift of grace)

I retired as a pastor just before marrying Liz and no longer work for pay. For the past three years, I've been doing what I can to promote the gospel of Jesus Christ. I spent the first year writing, editing, and marketing my book.

I have continued my missionary work in Butare, Rwanda. Once a year I underwrite and teach at the [East Africa Christian Apologetics Conference](#) held at the National University of Rwanda. On September 15, 2016, I will be returning to Rwanda for the 20th time to hold the 4th annual apologetics conference.

Since 2003, I have been teaching Bible and seminary classes to inmates at [San Quentin Prison](#). My Spring class was on church history. I teach in the prison Saturdays from noon to 3:00 pm. I am starting up again in a few weeks.

Liz and I attend Western Hill Church in San Mateo, California. I lead a men's Bible study on Sunday morning, working our way through the Gospel of John. I also lead a table for Men's Fraternity at 6:00 am on Thursdays at Central Peninsula Church. Life seems busy, but I'm thirsty for more. At 66 years old, what can I do? Since my recommitment to Christ in 1971, I have read and taught about apologetics. Now's the time for me get more serious and share this good news with others.

I feel more connected to Christ than at any time in my life. I feel his grace moment to moment. I know God is not done with me yet.

Two References

Karl Ortis is the pastor of Western Hills Church where I now attend on a weekly basis.

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His phone number is: 650-574-4881

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Diane Varady is a member of my former church. She and her husband continue to be my friends. She looks after my dog when I'm on mission to Rwanda.

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QUESTIONS ON THE PREFACE

The Preface of a book is often skipped; but in the case of Reasonable Faith, there is some helpful information that you don't want to miss.

1. *What two approaches to the subject of Apologetics does Reasonable Faith not address? (12)*

Reasonable Faith does not address the history of apologetics and apologetic systems.

Avery Dulles, the author of A History of Apologetics, recently wrote an article that describes the revival of Christian Apologetics occurring today. Dulles, a Catholic Cardinal and Professor of Religion and Society at Fordham University, says, "All over the United States there are signs of a revival. Evangelical Protestants are taking the lead . . . And their method succeeds. The churches that combine a concern for orthodoxy with vigorous apologetics are growing. Their seminaries attract large numbers of enthusiastic students." I Praise the Lord!

With respect to evangelical apologetic systems, you might also consult Five Views on Apologetics, edited by Steven B. Cowan (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2000), which contrasts "classical", "evidential", "Reformed", "presuppositional", and "cumulative case" approaches to Apologetics.

2. *How is Reasonable Faith structured? (12) What were the loci communes? (12)*

It's structured around the common themes of Reformed Theology or loci communes: scripture, creation, sin, Christ, salvation, church, and last things

3. *What four divisions does each chapter of the book include? (13)*

They are:

Historical Background

Dr. Craig's view

Application to evangelism

Bibliography / further reading

QUESTIONS ON THE INTRODUCTION

1. Look at the definition of Christian apologetics (15). What is the significance of the three elements of this definition, that Apologetics?

(1) is a “branch of Christian theology”

The context of apologetics is theology, The study of God (the Queen of the Sciences)

(2) seeks to provide “a rational justification,”

The method is rational rather than emotive or devotional

(3) focuses on Christianity’s “truth claims”?

It is centered on truth claims intended to demonstrate the existence of God and the truth of the gospel. It is not intended to be a complete systematic theology.

2. What four purposes does Apologetics serve? (15)

Apologetics:

1. Serves as an expression of God’s love
2. Shows truth to unbelievers
3. Confirms faith in believers
4. Connects Christian doctrine with other truths (scientific and philosophic)

3. What three vital roles does Apologetics play? (16-23)

The three roles are:

1. It shapes culture
2. It strengthens believers
3. It evangelizes non-believers

4. Why is it shortsighted to depreciate the value of apologetics because “no one comes to Christ through arguments”? (17).

First, some people do indeed come to Christ through apologetics.

Second, apologetics can create a milieu in which Christ becomes a viable option to non-believers.

5. Why is the idea that we live in a post-modern culture a myth? Why is this misdiagnosis of our current cultural situation potentially so disastrous? (18)

One dimension of the word “post-modern” is that truth lies in the eye of the beholder. In some limited realms like art this may be true, but in nearly all daily walks of life it is false. The term suggests that people of our day don’t use reason when weighing options. We all do. We must. Reason leads to truth in any culture at any time.

6. *Self-examination question: To what degree have I been intellectually engaged with my faith?*

I have been engaged in apologetics since I met C.S. Lewis in 1971. I have never focused on the topic. Now is the time

7. *In what two respects can Apologetics strengthen believers? (19-21)*

Faith becomes reasonable. It can protect me against lapses. Or when it would oh-so convenient not live as a Christian, apologetics can provide armor when the faith is ridiculed. Just to know “there is an answer to this attack. I must seek it.”

8. *Share some way in which you as a believer have been strengthened through the study of Apologetics. Be specific.*

Sometimes the words of scripture seem so alien in the work world. I remind myself of the contingency argument or the evidence of the resurrection of Jesus. “No” I tell myself. “My faith is real. God is real.” I require that self pep-talk from time to time.

9. *What biblical grounds are there for the use of Apologetics in evangelizing unbelievers? (21-22)*

It is throughout the NT, especially by Paul. I was in Athens last September, standing at the Acropolis, looking down on Mars Hill. If the person you’re talking with is not familiar with the OT or NT (like Paul to the Athenians), apologetics is the one path open to you (like the unknown god).

10. *Why should we not be discouraged if many unbelievers remain unconvinced by our apologetic arguments? (22)*

It’s not my job to convince but to present as best I can a rational defense of my faith. The Holy Spirit does the conviction and convincing.

11. *Why should we be concerned about that minority of persons who will respond positively to apologetic arguments? (22)*

Often the people who do respond to apologetic arguments are influential. They can experience a change of heart and become champions for Christ. They can affect culture. Plus, they are the ones who may be immune to a traditional evangelical presentation.

12. *List the broad divisions and sub-divisions of Apologetics (23-24).*

Offensive or positive and defensive or negative

13. *What are the two reasons Reasonable Faith focuses on offensive Apologetics? (24-25)*

1. It's first critical to grasp what is true about the faith and why it's true. To combat the specific and multitude of errors can come later.

2. The positive truth undergirds self and I seek to refute error. I must know the true \$100 bill in detail before trying to ferret out counterfeits.

This also means that five big issues of defensive apologetics are not addressed in this book and receive a secondary treatment by *Reasonable Faith*.

1. A defense of evil/suffering in the light of God's goodness
2. The doctrine of Hell
3. The interpretation of Genesis 1—the seven days of creation
4. The exclusivity of the Christian faith
5. The doctrine of the Trinity

CHAPTER ONE

HOW DO I KNOW THAT CHRISTIANITY IS TRUE?

I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1. After reading this section, summarize some of the basic alternatives for understanding how reason and faith relate. Up to now which of these alternatives is closest to your own thinking? How would you have answered the question in the chapter's title?

Faith and reason are not opponents but partners. Faith is not for religion and reason for science. We could not function in life without a reasonable faith in both the physical and metaphysical world.

If asked the title question before this book, I would have responded with an argument designed to show the questioner that my knowledge also applies to him. I have learned the distinction between knowing and showing.

II. ASSESSMENT

1. Key to this chapter is the distinction between knowing and showing Christianity to be true. (43) Explain the difference.

I've always grasped the distinction intuitively, but it was muddled. Knowing is an unshakable inner conviction that something is true. Showing is demonstrating this truth to others. For example, I know my first date in high school was with Lena. I'm not sure I could muster the evidence to show anybody that truth.

2. At the most fundamental level, how does one know that Christianity is true? (43-47)

It must be the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that bears witness to our spirit. At times God seems closer to me than my own skin.

3. What, then, is the role of argument and evidence in our knowing Christianity to be true? (47-48)

It undergirds our faith, reassures us that our faith is reasonable. It allows us to love God not just with our heart and soul, but also with our mind. External evidence (reason) is the ministerial role. It provides an independent warrant for our faith.

4. Some object that Christian claims of a self-authenticating experience of the Holy Spirit are invalidated by analogous non-Christian claims, or by artificially-induced experiences. How can one respond to this objection? (48-50)

The existence of a counterfeit does not prove the genuine to be false, or equally counterfeit.

Non-believers may also experience transcendent moments. The Holy Spirit can touch them and woo them to Christ. The “hound of heaven” it’s sometimes called.

What about artificially induced experiences.

5. *Explain how one shows Christianity to be true. (51-52)*

Two ways are pointed out. One is the presence of the Holy Spirit at work in a seeker’s life as self authenticating. The other way is by persuasive argument —evangelism and apologetics.

6. *What is the difference between a deductive and an inductive argument? (52-53)*

Classically, deduction argues from the particular to the general while induction from the general to the particular.

Deduction is typically based on premises and conclusions to arrive at truth. Induction usually involves probabilities. Scientific argument is usually deductive, while historical is inductive.

7. *What two prerequisites are there for a sound deductive argument? (52)*

Each premise must be true or likely to be true. And the conclusion must logically follow from the premises, that is it must be valid.

8. *Try to formulate a valid deductive argument for Christianity.*

If Christ has risen from the grave, then death has been conquered.
Christ is risen!
Therefore, death has been conquered.

9. *Construct an argument for a Christian hypothesis like “God raised Jesus from the dead” using Bayes’ Theorem. (53-54)*

This is calculating the probability of a hypothesis on given evidence. It is more likely than its negation.

The witness and martyrdom of the apostles coupled with the explosive growth of the church is best explained by the actual resurrection of Jesus. Therefore, it is more likely that Christ rose from the dead than He did not.

Please use the formula on P.53 to construct an argument (obviously know that the variables will be estimates)

10. *Why is it not enough to present sound arguments to show Christianity to be true? What more is required? (55)*

An apologist is always the junior partner. God gets the glory. God does the conversion. We may be his instrument. In addition, our attitude and demeanor must be Christ-like in presenting Christ. You must be respectful and humble.

What about whether the premises in relation to their negations.

11. *What is the role of the Holy Spirit in our showing Christianity to be true? (56-57)*

Wow! We are always the instrument. It takes courage and preparation, but the HS draws men and women to Himself. We cannot draw persons to Christ.

12. *How might one respond to the objection that believers and unbelievers have no common ground on which to argue? (57)*

We all have common ground, to a greater or lesser extent. Each of us is made in God's image. We all respond to reason and love. It's like Paul in Athens. His common ground (or hook) was the idol to the unknown god.

13. *What points of discussion do you have?*

1. When does dogmatics replace apologetics in a discussion?
2. Many say the culture is postmodern. Perhaps it is art and taste, but truth cannot be matter of taste. Can it?
3. What is the faith of a strict materialist?
4. Can we really arrive at certainty in anything?

PRACTICAL APPLICATION FOR CHAPTER ONE

1. *Did you find the distinction between knowing and showing Christianity to be true and helpful? Why or why not?*

Yes, indeed. In the past if someone had asked “how do you know God is real?” I would have immediately begun to SHOW. And if I failed in showing, I questioned if I really did KNOW. Now I can be continually assured of knowing, and accept an occasional failure in showing. Thank you for that.

2. *What implications does the teaching of this chapter have for your personal spiritual formation?*

It does clarify knowing and showing. That’s BIG. It both lifts a burden and places a burden. It lifts the burden of me “convincing” people. That is not my job. I present and the HS convicts. Yet, with new knowledge gained through Reasonable Faith, I cannot hide this learning under a bushel.

3. *What are the implications of this chapter for evangelism?*

As a retired pastor, most of my preaching was evangelical to a multitude. My apologetic was limited to counseling and witnessing one-on-one. Now I can deliberately work apologetics into my preaching (which I still do on occasion).

4. *How is effectiveness in apologetics to be defined? (50)*

We do not have the eternal perspective. We cannot see the seeds planted – to be harvested by the next to witness. We present the apologetic message, prepared, considered, in prayer, and in the power of the HS. We leave the result to God.

It was Mother Teresa who said “God does not want us to be successful but faithful.” I must be faithful to my calling. My guess is that God judges our effectiveness by our faithfulness to Him.

CHAPTER TWO THE ABSURDITY OF LIFE WITHOUT GOD

I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1. *What is cultural Apologetics? What is its proper place in building a case for the Christian faith? (65, 86)*

It is an analysis of post-Christian culture intended to show that life without God is absurd – without meaning, significance, and purpose.

2. *Share some examples from contemporary music, literature, or film of the human predicament.*

In *Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy* the number 72 becomes enshrined as the ultimate meaning/reason/significance of life. Absurd!

I recently listened to an audio version of *Lord of the Flies*. A microcosm of humanity's predicament when there are no laws or lawmaker.

I liked the bumper sticker that read, "What if the Hokey-pokey is really what it's all about?"

II. ASSESSMENT

1. *What two prerequisites must be met if life is not to be absurd? (71-72)*

We need God and immortality.

2. *What three broad areas illustrate the absurdity of life without God? (72) How do these differ from one another?*

Meaning and significance has to do with understanding, answering the question "why?"

Value addresses morality and worth and answering the question "how do I live?".

Purpose addresses outcomes, "To what end?"

3. *Explain why life is meaningless without immortality and without God. (72-74)*

In this regard, I like *Ecclesiastes* best. The preacher tells us all becomes vanity. We are no different than the beasts. On the micro scale, my petty life has no meaning. On the cosmic scale, the universe itself is futile.

4. *Explain why life is valueless without immortality and without God. (74-75)*

What about love and brotherhood? Without God, why are these to be preferred above hate and selfishness? Human beings cannot live without a code that treats others with dignity and value. Without God, we make up the rules. Will replaces love as the categorical imperative (as it did for Nietzsche). Without eternal life why would we be responsible for action on earth?

5. *Explain why life is purposeless without immortality and without God. (75-77)*

How could there be purpose in a mindless universe? What appears to be purpose is an illusion, just our petty plans that end with our deaths. When all the lights in the universe go black, what is the purpose of anything? We become Nietzsche's madman.

6. *How should you respond to someone who says, "I don't believe in God, but my life is meaningful"? (Hint: Is belief in God a prerequisite of life's having meaning? What is the difference between saying that life is absurd without God and saying that life is absurd without belief in God? Suppose someone believes in God, but God does not exist. Is his life absurd? Suppose, on the other hand, that God does exist; is the atheist's life then absurd—or just tragic?)*

He is living in Schaeffer's basement as an atheist, but coming up for fresh air on the second floor for fear of suffocating. He can ascribe meaning outside of God, but there is no scaffolding for it.

If there is ontologically no God, life is equally absurd for all. Since God does indeed exist, a believer recognizes his real purpose, meaning, and value. A non-believer becomes a tragic figure, because although he possesses these three things being created in God's image, he is oblivious to that fact.

7. *What is the practical dilemma faced by the atheist? (78)*

How can one live with a transcendent meaning, value, and purpose on the one hand, yet reject the transcendent God and immortality on the other? A true atheist cannot be happy and consistent at the same time. Nihilism is what atheism devolves into when its Christian capital runs dry.

8. *What should you say to someone who claims that moral values are just social conventions that we can adopt in order to live in harmony? (88)*

We can willfully adopt them as arbitrary/non-transcendent, but others can adopt different and opposing values. How could we punish anyone who has freely adopted Nazi moral values? We cannot live in harmony without objective moral values, implicit or explicit, That apply to every rational being. Is loving your neighbor or eating him just a convention like driving on the right or left of the roadway?

reading this book which is of less literary quality than *Brothers Karamazov*. Go figure. [\[This is a very mean-spirited comment.\]](#)

PRACTICAL APPLICATION FOR CHAPTER TWO

1. What is it like to feel the human predicament described in this chapter? Can you describe that experience?

I have been a Christian my whole life and I experience the human predicament through the prism of Scripture. Along the lines of C. S. Lewis, I know three things. (1) There is a universal code of morality. (2) I am completely unable to keep this code. (3) I am in desperate need of a savior. That's my predicament. Christ is the solution.

2. Develop some questions to help people who are thoughtless or preoccupied with other things to sense the human predicament.

Why are you working so hard for retirement? Won't you just become food for worms in the end?

You know, eventually the polar ice caps will all melt. The entire cosmos will vanish. I appreciate you working for the environment, but what's the ultimate point of that?

What a beautiful baby you're holding in your arms! What do figure is the value of that little girl?

3. Does your heart respond to God with worship and adoration for imparting meaning, value, and purpose to life?

Sometimes after a conversation with a non-believer, I shout to myself in celebration. God has showered me with His mercy by revealing Himself to me. What a privilege! Sometimes it motivates me to pray for my friends and relatives who are lost without meaning and purpose in life.

CHAPTER THREE THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

With this chapter we come to the first pillar in our positive case for the truth of the Christian faith. It is so important that you may want to invest more time in the study of the next two chapters than others.

I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1. Describe the revolution which has been going on in Anglo-American philosophy since the late 1960s. (93-95)

In the late 1960s, “God was dead”. This was announced on magazine covers and by most professional philosophers who were atheist, especially in universities. It was unexpected but God made a comeback beginning in the 1970s until today. Many theists are now professional philosophers and are defending their theism. After 9/11 a virulent strain of celebrity atheists published against God. More theist philosophers countered them.

2. What are some of the basic types of arguments in favor of God’s existence? (95-106) Be able to identify each one with a sentence or two.

Most seem to have been alluded to by Thomas Aquinas. They are:

The ontological argument

The cosmological family of arguments (including kalam and Leibnizian)

The moral argument

The teleological argument (which includes the fine-tuning argument)

3. Did you notice that the roll of defenders of these arguments sounds like a Who’s Who of the great minds of Western intellectual history? What does that tell you about your heritage?

This tells me that ardent atheism/naturalism is a recent phenomenon, and historically speaking a minority position. The great ancient philosophers (Greeks), the great medieval philosophers (Christian, Jew, and Muslim), and the founders of modern philosophy and science all recognized the philosophic necessity of a transcendent God of some sort.

II. ASSESSMENT

1. Give from memory the five steps of the Leibnizian cosmological argument. (106)

1. Everything that exists has an explanation for its existence, either in itself or outside itself – that is, it’s contingent.
2. If the universe has an explanation to exist, the reason is God.
3. The universe does exist.
4. Therefore the universe has an explanation for its existence.
5. Therefore, God is the explanation of the universe.

2. *Why is the first premise not susceptible to the objection that some truths may have no explanation for their truth? (107)*

It seems to me that critics demand a material cause and since no material existed before the material universe came into existence, the question is nonsense. But that does not rule out an agent/efficient cause – an eternal mind who created ex nihilo without material.

3. *What defense might you give on behalf of the first premise of the argument? (107)*

I think it would be useful to point out the distinctions between Aristotle's four causes. Also, it may be useful to argue that the universe is not necessary. Show it is contingent.

4. *Explain why the typical atheist is himself committed to the truth of the second premise. (108)*

Most atheists would say the universe is meaningless, without explanation. Without God, how could it be otherwise? They would have to admit that if the universe had an explanation, it would have to transcend the universe – it would be God.

5. *Why is the second premise quite plausible in its own right? (108)*

It makes simple sense: No explanation = atheist Yes explanation = theist

6. *What response can be made to someone who claims that perhaps the universe exists by a necessity of its own nature? (108-110)*

I can conceive of nothing – a void without space and time But would that be nothing? But why is there something rather than nothing? Also, science teaches that there was a time before time that was without time and space. Most scientists seem to believe it. Also, is it conceivable that the universe could have been made up of different particles?

7. *How does the kalam cosmological argument reinforce the Leibnizian cosmological argument? (111)*

The two arguments intertwine. kalam speaks of “causes” whereas Leibniz speaks of “explanations”. These are related, but come at different angles. Also, the scientific argument in kalam's second premise undergirds Leibniz who does not specifically include a scientific explanation of the universe's origin.

8. *Give from memory the three steps of the kalam cosmological argument. (111)*

1. Whatever begins to exist has a cause for its existence.
2. The universe came to exist.
3. Therefore, the universe has a cause

9. What three reasons can be given in defense of the first premise of the argument? (111-112)

1. It's rooted in our intuition about the world – intuitively true.
2. Something from nothing is like magic – metaphysically true.
3. The observation is constantly confirmed with our senses – empirically true.

10. What should you say to someone who, like Mackie, says that it makes more sense that the universe came into being uncaused than that God caused the universe to come into being? (112-113)

I would say, “why?”

Only if God did not exist would it make more sense, but that's begging the question. To me an “uncaused effect” is more implausible than God creating ex nihilo. Mackie seems oblivious to the three reasons above for the first premise: it seems to be intuitively, metaphysically, and empirically true.

11. How might you respond to critics who claim that premise (1) is true only for things in the universe, but it is not true of the universe itself? (113-114)

Is this special pleading? A material-of-the-gaps? The principle of causation is a metaphysical and not a physical principle. How can a physical universe break a metaphysical truth? In any case, most cosmologists believe in a “cosmic egg” at the early moments of the universe. Every egg requires a chicken, right?

12. What can you say in response to persons who claim that quantum physics furnishes an exception to the causal principle? (114-116)

Folks who make this claim are fudging the facts about “nothing”. Quantum particles – quarks -- do not arise from nothing. They require a pre-existing quantum vacuum that occupies time and space. So, what caused the vacuum in the first place? How could it arise ex nihilo?

13. State in a sentence the four lines of evidence marshaled in support of the second premise of the kalam cosmological argument. (116, 120, 125, 140)

Another way to say that the universe came to exist is that it is not past eternal. To demonstrate this, four lines of evidence are put forward.

1. An actual infinite number of things cannot exist, to include past events.
2. It's impossible to form an actual infinite collection by adding one member after another.
3. The universe is expanding and cannot be infinite or eternal.
4. The second law of thermodynamics entails a heat death to a closed system like the universe.

14. Give from memory the three steps of both of the philosophical arguments for the beginning of the universe. (116-120)

- A.
1. An infinite number of things cannot exist.
 2. A beginningless series of time events would constitute an actual infinity of things.
 3. Therefore, a beginning series of time events cannot exist.
- B.
1. A series of events in time is formed by adding one event after another.
 2. A collection of events formed by adding one event after the other cannot attain infinity.
 3. Therefore, the series to time events cannot be truly infinite.

15. Explain the difference between an actual and a potential infinite. (116-117)

A potential infinite is a mathematical concept. One can divide a whole into successive halves indefinitely. The symbol for this potential infinite is the lazy eight ∞ .

An actual infinite is a collection of items beyond number. This can exist in set theory, but in the material world, an actual infinite is impossible. The symbol for the actual infinite is the Hebrew letter aleph \aleph

16. Why is it a mistake to claim that the use of the actual infinite in mathematics proves that an actually infinite number of things can exist? (117)

Things can exist in the mathematical world that cannot exist in the physical world, like planes, multi-dimensions, etc. They are useful constructs, but have no material reality. Can anyone empirically show an infinity of items?

17. Illustrate the absurdity of an actually infinite number of things. (118-119) Invent your own illustration.

Most atheists would concur that we live in an expanding universe. True? If so, then the universe is limited in size. Now let's consider basketballs. If there could exist an infinite number of basketballs, then the limited universe could not contain them. Or if it did, the entire universe would contain nothing but basketballs—end to end! There'd be no room for the observing atheist.

18. How should you respond to someone who says, "These absurdities result because our finite minds cannot comprehend the infinite"? (119)

I would counter that our finite minds can indeed understand the concept of the infinite. The term means "without or beyond number." It's precisely because we understand it mathematically, we reject it materially.

19. How should you respond to someone who says, "If an actually infinite number of things could exist, then these allegedly absurd situations are exactly what we should expect"? (119)

If pigs had wings, we would expect them to fly. But they don't.
If married bachelors do exist, then we would expect weird results.
When absurdities result in applying a concept to reality, we generally recognize the concept to be false.

20. What should you say to someone who says, "If an actual infinite cannot exist, then God must not be infinite"? (119 note 46)

It is a misunderstanding. God's infinite existence is qualitative, not quantitative. Also, we assert that within the material universe an actual infinite cannot exist. God transcends our universe.

21. Explain the difference between the so-called A-Theory of time and the B-Theory of time. How does the A-Theory underlie the second philosophical argument for the beginning of the universe? (121)

According to A-theory, time is tensed and dynamic. Things and events in time are not equally real. Past things are non-existent, now exists in the present, and future things are not yet existing.

According to B-theory, time is un-tensed and static. All points along the time scale are equally real – past, present and future. However, our limited minds comprehend time moving from point to point. Time is an illusion of the human mind.

22. Illustrate the impossibility of forming an actually infinite collection by adding one member at a time. (121-124)

I used to play this game when I was a kid. "Whatever you say, I'm one more than that". "Oh Yeah, whatever you say, I'm infinite more than that!" etc. etc. The word "infinite" literally means "not finish-able". Adding numbers could not finish that which is by definition un-finish-able.

23. How should you respond to someone who says, "But from every point in the infinite past, there is only a finite distance until today. Therefore, there is no problem in traversing an infinite past"? (123)

The person is misinformed. I could say, "How about the halfway point along the infinite past?" That would still be infinite and non-transverse-able, right?
Furthermore, no proponent of ex nihilo creation suggests that that event took place in the infinite past. Rather, it happened in the finite past, before which time, time was not infinite, rather undifferentiated.

[What informal logical fallacy is relevant here?](#)

24. *Explain how the standard Big Bang model implies an absolute beginning of the universe. (126-128)*

Through backward extrapolation.

Beginning with Einstein and moving through the 20th century, physicists have shown convincingly that the universe is expanding. If you draw the expansion lines backward along a time/space axis, you come to a shape like a cone. The point of the cone is the absolute beginning of the universe, before which nothing material existed.

25. *What should you say to someone who says, "Maybe there was some physical reality prior to the Big Bang which caused it"?* (127)

Cosmologists mean by "universe" all space/time reality, not just some of it. All of it is subject to the laws of physics and therefore require an absolute beginning. Furthermore, if some sort of physical reality did exist prior to the Big Bang, it would require a cause.

26. *What are the weaknesses of the Steady State model?* (128-129)

This model does not correspond to what cosmologists/astrophysicists observe in the universe. There is not experimental verification. The expanding universe appears to have an evolutionary history not a steady state.

27. *What problems does the oscillating model face?* (129-130)

First, there is no known physics that would cause a collapsing universe to bounce back to a new expansion. Pure speculation. Second, there does not appear to be enough mass in the universe to cause it to collapse. Rather, cosmic expansion is accelerating.

28. *What is the fatal flaw of vacuum fluctuation models?* (131-132)

There is no physics that explains the occurrence of infinite mini-universes. When do they occur? Why do they occur? If the past is eternal, there must be an infinite amount of such universes and they must appear infinitely old. This goes against observation.

29. *What does the Borde-Guth-Vilenkin theorem imply for inflationary models of the universe?* (133-134)

The theorem implies that all inflationary models of any postulated universe must have an absolute beginning.

30. *Explain how quantum gravity models support the beginning of the universe.* (134-136)

These models suggest a beginning to the universe, just not a "beginning point". The cone still exists, but the sharp tip is rounded. In these models, the concept of imaginary time becomes a mathematical device without ontological significance.

31. *What fatal flaw afflicts pre-Big Bang scenarios featuring an infinite past? (137-138)*

Our universe has an observable finite age. It appears to be evolving and expanding. If the universe is past eternal, an end state would have already been reached. Heat death? Also given infinite time all black holes should have coalesced.

32. *Why does the Cyclic Ekpyrotic Model fail to avert the absolute beginning of the universe? (138-139)*

The stronger theorem of Borde, Guth, and Vilenkin indicates that all such models have a past boundary point and cannot be past eternal.

33. *How does thermodynamics imply a beginning of the universe? (140-141)*

The second law of thermodynamics states that in a closed system – such as the universe – things move from order to disorder and from hot to cold. The question then becomes, if the universe is eternal, why hasn't it wound down? Why hasn't it already suffered a heat death?

34. *Explain Boltzmann's Many Worlds Hypothesis and why it was deficient. (141-142)*

Boltzmann postulated our world is a fluctuation in a sea of diffuse energy. It is an isolated region of the universe where a reversal of entropy occurred. The problem once more is that there is no physics to explain such a reversal of thermodynamics. Such odds of such an enormous accident are impossibly small.

35. *What implications does thermodynamics have for the oscillating model? (144-145)*

Our universe is now in a state of expansion and cooling. For an oscillating model to work, the reverse would have to happen not once, but maybe 100 times. Again, there is no physics to explain how a reversal of thermodynamics can happen. Also, multiplying the accepted age of universe by 100 still demands a beginning point. The past is not eternal.

36. *Why is the conjecture that our universe was birthed by a mother universe via black hole tunneling untenable? (145-146)*

Steven Hawking admitted that such a scenario is impossible. A mother universe could not spawn baby universes through black holes. In any event, the mother could not be past eternal.

37. *What problems face the inflationary multiverse as a means of avoiding the beginning of the universe? (146-150)*

This is the hypothesis that there is a multiverse old enough and big enough to have evolved sufficient volume to account for our low entropy conditions appearing by

chance. The odds of this happening were calculated by Roger Penrose to be one part in $10^{10^{123}}$. It is more likely that I am not me observing a universe, but rather a brain in a vat.

38. *What attributes of the First Cause may be deduced from the kalam cosmological argument? (152)*

1. The first cause can only be accounted for in terms of an agent and his volition, a personal explanation.
2. The first cause must be timeless and immaterial, something like a mind.

39. *Why must the cause of the universe be personal? (152-154)*

How can it be that the cause of the universe is eternal and yet the effect which it produces is not eternal but began to exist a finite time ago? The only answer seems to be that the cause of the universe's beginning is a personal agent who freely chose to create a universe in time. The "free choice" of a "personal agent", means that the universe is personal indeed.

40. *What should you say to someone who asks, "If everything has a cause, what is God's cause?" (155)*

This is a misunderstanding. The argument is "everything that has a beginning, has a cause." The Christian contention of God is that He is eternal, timeless, without a beginning. Therefore, He requires no cause.

41. *What should you say to someone who says, "The beginning of the universe cannot have a cause because causes must exist before their effects, but there was no time before the Big Bang" (156)*

I think there are two confusions. First this is not a temporal cause, but along the lines of Aquinas, it is a cause of rank or source. Secondly, it is reasonable to conclude that the cause and effect were simultaneous. Time and space were created in the same instant.

Also, I think it is important at some point to concede that creation *ex nihilo* is a "miracle" that is, it is naturally impossible. It's like Moses parting the Red Sea, or God raising Christ from the dead. There is not a natural explanation for such things. I believe atheists struggle with the Big Bang and devise outlandish alternatives, because down to their bones they are Humian and like Hume, kick and scream against the miraculous.

I would suspect that in any true miracle finds its cause in God and the effect is immediate. Miracles are, from the perspective of minds that exist in a natural world, simultaneous.

NOTE FOR DR. CRAIG: I'm confused. Can an actual infinite exist in our space-time universe? On page 127, concerning a singularity, when distance becomes zero, temperature, pressure and density become infinite. Is this infinite ontologically possible? I don't understand the difference between an object with zero diameter and no object at all. When I was zero years old, I did not exist. A pencil that is zero inches long does not exist. A feather that weighs zero ounces does not exist. How can a singularity exist with zero dimensions? Shouldn't a singularity have at least the diameter of a quark? Otherwise wouldn't it disappear entirely? Furthermore, if there are two singularities and both have infinite density, how could one of them possess more mass than the other. Does one have greater infinity than the other? I must be missing something.

CHAPTER FOUR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD (II)

42. *State the three steps of the teleological argument from fine-tuning. (161)*

1. The fine-tuning of the universe is due to either physical necessity, chance, or design.
2. It is not due to physical necessity or chance.
3. Therefore, it is due to design.

43. *What is fine-tuning? (158)*

There are many physical laws in the universe. These laws can be given mathematical values. The idea of fine tuning is that minute deviations from these actual values would create a life-prohibiting universe. The range of assumable values for life to exist in the universe is exquisitely narrow when compared with the range of assumable values.

44. *What should you say to someone who says, "If the constants and quantities had different values than they do, then other forms of life might well have evolved. (159)*

The fine-tuning argument is that life—any possible life— would be impossible if these values were even slightly tweaked. In other words, the universe would collapse after a few seconds of existence, or the stars could not form at all, or all matter would coalesce into a black hole, etc.

45. *Why is it irrelevant to claim that in universes governed by different laws life might well exist even though the constants and quantities would have different values than they do. (159-160)*

Again, the point is that for life—any life—to exist, many physical laws of nature must be exquisitely fine-tuned. Tinkering with the values even slightly would make it impossible for atoms or chemistry to exist.

46. *What are the explanatory options for fine-tuning? (160-161)*

There are three options. The fine-tuning of the universe may be due to physical necessity. It may be due to chance. It may be due to design.

47. *Why is the hypothesis of physical necessity implausible? (161-169)*

We can imagine different values for these physical laws. The universe does not have to be the way it is; it could have been otherwise. Perhaps one possible universe out of 10^{120} could sustain life.

48. How should you respond to someone who says that “just as in a lottery someone has to win, no matter how improbable, some universe must exist, no matter how improbable”? (164-165)

In a lottery, someone has to win. That is way the game is played. But suppose I devised a “lottery” in which a winner was not required. But to claim the prize a contestant must write down and submit on paper the same ten-thousand-digit number that I wrote down. Nobody would ever win. The enormous, specified improbability of a life-permitting universe presents an astronomically high hurdle for the chance hypothesis.

49. What’s wrong with saying that “the fine-tuning doesn’t require an explanation because if the universe weren’t fine-tuned, we wouldn’t be here to be surprised about it”? (165-166)

It’s like telling the policeman, “Okay. I’m in this bank after hours with the alarm going off, but that doesn’t require an explanation, because if I weren’t here, the alarm wouldn’t be going off. It’s logical and silly at the same time.

Also, if someone had predicted that person A would win the lottery and they did, that would require an explanation along the lines of (1) necessity – he bought all 10000 tickets, (2) chance – just an odd coincidence hard to swallow, or (3) design – the fix was in.

50. What’s the problem with saying that there exists a World Ensemble of randomly ordered universes and our world just happens to be one member of the ensemble? (166-170)

The world ensemble/multiverse seems to be an attempt to overwhelm the fine-tuning argument. Given a near-infinite number of universes, one would likely be life-permitting. The world ensemble argument goes: We just happen to live in that one-in-a-trillion trillion universes.

Like the many-world hypotheses the world ensemble runs counter to existing physics and observation. Adopting this view would result in a bizarre illusionism.

However, if naturalists rabidly insist that no designer exists, the possibility of a designer alternative is zero. I can see why so many are flailing around for alternatives

51. What two things does Dawkins overlook in his “Who designed the designer” hypothesis? (171-172)

What’s wrong with his entire argument are the two basic things that can go wrong. Some of the six premises are patently false or worse irrelevant. And, two, the conclusion in no way whatsoever flows logically from six premises (even if they were true.).

In regard to his specific question “who designed the designer?”, again the Christian understanding is that God is an undersigned designer, so the question is not pertinent. Furthermore, the question need not be answered. In order to find an explanation the best, one need not propose an explanation for the explanation.

Contrary to Dawkins, it may be that “the natural temptation to attribute the appearance of design to actual design itself” appeals to the human mind, because a Designer actually exists.

What about his contention that the Designer explanation is just as complicated as the universe as an explanation?

52. Give from memory the three steps of the moral argument. (172)

1. If God does not exist, then objective moral values and duties do not exist.
2. Objective moral values do exist.
3. Therefore God exists.

53. Distinguish moral values from duties. (172-173)

Moral values have to do with good/evil and something’s worth. Moral duties have to do with right/wrong and something’s obligatoriness.

As I meditate on it, it seems like moral values are based on divine revelation, while moral duties are based on divine wisdom. I think about something like divorce. Revelation might tell me it’s always evil. Wisdom might tell me it might be the right action in this particular context.

54. What does it mean to say that moral values and duties are objective? (173)

Objectivity in regard to morality means that it is independent of what people think or perceive. To say the moral duty is objectively right or wrong is to say its rightness or wrongness does not depend on what any human may believe.

55. If naturalism is true, why does it seem that moral values and duties do not exist? (173-175)

If all that exists is cosmos, then nothing is special about the human species. We are just a cosmic accident in a hostile universe. Who can referee and determine that this set of good/bad is superior to that set?

I remember once thinking about Star Wars and the “Dark side” of the force. Why is it dark? Wouldn’t the opposing forces be termed “Force A” and “Force B”? To say with confidence that Darth Vader is on the dark side, one would need an objective moral standard that outranks both forces. The force that corresponds to the good is the bright

side, the one that doesn't is the dark side. The highest ranking entity in the universe could not be a force with a good side and a bad side. The lawmaker would out rank it.

56. Explain the distinction between moral ontology and moral epistemology and the significance of this distinction for a moral argument for the existence of God. (176)

Moral ontology means that "God does exist" – more specifically it concerns the grounding of moral values and duties. Moral epistemology means that "I believe God does exist" – more specifically it concerns how we can to know moral values and duties. Moral epistemology is not required for moral behavior. A person can possess a moral compass without acknowledging its maker. Moral ontology is needed, because without an objective God, there cannot be objective morality. And "subjective morality" is just another term for taste, custom, instinct, or habit.

57. Why is it premature for the naturalist simply to take human flourishing as his explanatory stopping point? (177)

A died-in-the-wool naturalist would admit that a cockroach has as much right to exist on this planet as a human. He might be guilty of speciesism if he spoke otherwise. If that be the case, then why does human flourishing take priority over roach flourishing? What is it that makes humanity special, if we are not made in the image of God?

58. What three objections might be brought against Atheistic Moral Platonism? (178-179)

1. It seems to lack any basis in reality. Do morals just float around in an unintelligible way?
2. If moral values exist as abstract objects, why would humans be compelled to follow them and not ignore them?
3. It seems unlikely that humans existing in a temporal material world could have any connection to moral values that exist in an eternal abstract world. Explain this mechanism. Were these abstract moral objects existing in the Jurassic? To what end?

59. Construct an argument for skepticism about our five senses parallel to an argument for skepticism about our moral sense.

All human beings are born with a moral sense. Just remove a toy from a baby and see the sense of injustice screamed at you. As we grow our moral senses grow. These are real, just as real as our five physical senses. Is anyone blind to the need to love your neighbor? In anyone deaf to the cry of the abused? We may ignore what we see and hear, but our moral sense is appealed to. Just as there are people who are visually blind, there are people who are morally blind. This is an exception and a disability.

60. How should you respond to someone who says that our moral sense is the delusory result of socio-biological influences? (179-180)

If that be the case, then human beings are under no obligation to follow a moral code. Moreover, if morality is a “delusion” an enlightened person should break free of moral values and obligations altogether. We typically call such men and women “evil”.

What fallacy is relevant here?

Also, what is our warrant for all our beliefs if naturalism is correct?

61. Respond to the Euthyphro Dilemma. (181-182)

The Euthyphro Dilemma goes as follows: Either something is good because God wills it or God wills it because it is good. After reflection, both of these options prove unsatisfactory. The problem is this dilemma is a false dichotomy. A third option is that our moral values and duties are grounded in the character of God. They are a necessary expression of his just and loving nature

62. Why is it not arbitrary and implausible to take God as one’s explanatory stopping point? (182)

Like the first cause, or the necessary being, there needs to be a stopping point to indefinite regress on moral issues. By definition, God is the greatest conceivable being and the paradigm of goodness. As the ultimate standard of value, God is the least arbitrary stopping point.

63. State from memory the six steps of Plantinga’s ontological argument. (184-185)

1. It’s possible that a Supreme Being exists.
2. If He exists, He exists in some possible world.
3. If He exists in some possible world, He exists in every world.
4. If He exists in every world, He exists in the actual world.
5. If He exists in the actual world, then He exists.
6. Therefore, a Supreme Being exists.

64. Explain the difference between epistemic possibility and metaphysical possibility. Why is this important? (185)

Epistemic possibility asserts that God’s existence may be true or it may be false as far as we know. This does not get us far. In terms of metaphysical possibility, God is either necessary or impossible, regardless of our epistemic uncertainty. If His existence is not impossible, then it is necessary.

65. What intuitive warrant is there for the first premise of the ontological argument? (185)

The existence of a Supreme Being is an intuitively coherent notion. There is not a self-contradiction in the statement, like a “married bachelor”. That provides sufficient warrant to believe that it is true rather than false.

66. How do the usual parodies of the argument fail? (185-186)

For the most part, the objects of parodies do not have intrinsic maximum values. They are subjective qualities. Also, “most excellent” others would not be necessarily existent, as a Supreme Being would be.

67. *How can we defend our intuition that a maximally great being exists in the face of the intuitive possibility that a quasi-maximally great being exists? (186-187)*

Any quasi-supreme being would not be necessary, but necessarily contingent on a full maximally excellent Supreme Being. (One who says “I AM THAT I AM”)

68. *What a posteriori warrant might we offer for the first premise of the ontological argument? (187-188)*

Abstract objects might provide such a warrant as outlined by Plantinga:

1. Abstract objects exist either independently or as concepts in some mind.
2. Abstract objects do not exist independently.
3. If they are concepts in some mind, then a mind must exist that is omniscient and metaphysically necessary.
4. Therefore, an omniscient necessary being exists.

69. *What response can be offered to the objection that the ontological argument is question-begging? (188-189)*

Some may consider the ontological argument question-begging because it runs parallel to other arguments (cosmological, teleological, moral). In other words, the person proposing the argument is already committed to its conclusion. However, it is a stand-alone argument and to a purely philosophic mind, it may be the best.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION FOR CHAPTERS THREE AND FOUR

1. *What does the revolution in Christian philosophy tell you about the so-called new atheists' claim that "theists are morons"?*

It may be true that the vast majority of professional scientists in the fields of biology, geology, and sociology are atheists. However, in the fields of astronomy, astrophysics, and cosmology, it is not true. Many professionals in these fields keep open the possibility of there being a Creator. Moreover, in professional philosophy there are many theists today. By any stretch of language can they be called "morons"? Ridicule is not argument. It is the last resort of someone who does not have an argument.

2. *Suppose someone, upon hearing the kalam cosmological argument, accuses you of "God-of-the-gaps" reasoning—using God to plug the holes in our scientific knowledge. What should you say?*

I would respond that the kalam argument, especially premise two, enjoys nearly unanimous support among astrophysicists. It marshals the latest of scientific knowledge to demonstrate that the universe must have a cause. Rather, it is the atheist who must scramble to devise ad hoc arguments and unconvincing notions of an un-caused universe—a kind of materialism-of-the-gaps.

3. *Suppose someone says that appealing to God as Creator or Designer is not a legitimate explanatory hypothesis but just a way of expressing our ignorance. How might you respond?*

I would respond that one could only call my appeal illegitimate and ignorant, if one has certain knowledge that God as Creator does not exist. I would point out that they must confess some humility and admit that their knowledge is limited (elsewise they would be God).

I believe that many atheists are convinced that miracles are impossible. Period. Therefore, a miraculous God cannot exist. Therefore, evoking a God-Creator is ignorant. I could point out many intelligent men and women from across the globe and throughout history have believed in a Creator-God. Is the small segment of Western intellectuals the only group of human beings to grasp what is true?

4. *Suppose that someone responds to the moral argument by saying that religion is not a reliable guide to the discovery of moral values and that the God of the Bible is in particular morally repugnant. How should you answer?*

In the context of the moral argument, I would say that both statements are irrelevant. I could even concede the questioner's position, because the moral argument does not appeal to religion or to the God of the Bible to reach its conclusion. I would say "once more, here are the two premises and the conclusion. What is your objection?"

Of course we could discuss religion and the God of the Bible, but that is not germane to the philosophic discussion,

5. *Which of these arguments do you find the most persuasive and why?*

As a lay philosopher and not a professional, I find the moral argument most persuasive. It has an emotional/gut appeal. In discussion, you can get the atheist defending the abuse of children and the actions of Nazis. At some point, they cry “mercy” and admit that objective moral values must exist. It may not be more logically sound than the others, but it hits the heart as well as the head.

I like the Leibnizian Contingency argument and a Paley-like teleological argument next. I think those two are easy to follow for the non-scientist/philosopher. Then comes the kalam and fine-tuning arguments. I think both of these are unassailable, but both need an understanding of logic and scientific knowledge or at least acceptance that what’s in the footnotes is true.

I still struggle with the ontological argument. I’ve read that section of book several times. Still I would not be confident in arguing for God against someone who possessed a little philosophic prowess.

CHAPTER FIVE THE PROBLEM OF HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE

Having laid our theistic foundations, we now begin to construct the groundwork for a later presentation of Christian evidences. A case for God's decisive revelation in Jesus requires that objective knowledge of the past is attainable and that God's supernatural action in the world is possible and identifiable. In the next two chapters these crucial questions are addressed.

I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1. Wherein lies the uniqueness and the scandal of the Christian religion? (207)

The scandal of the Christian religion rests in the mediation of revelation through historical events. Unlike most major religions of the world, its revelation is subject to historical investigation.

2. How did the medieval use of signs of credibility serve as a precursor to historical apologetics? (209-210)

Medieval Christian philosophers supported the authority of Scripture through miracles and prophecy. However, they did not take the further step of historical augmentation. They also considered the inception and growth of the church a sign of credibility. All these strands are still used by modern apologetics. They are just packaged differently.

3. How did the rise of historical apologetics parallel the development of modern historiography? (211-215)

The rise of modern historiography was carried out by men who were Christian believers; Valla, de Mornay, Erasmus, Grotius, Filleau, and Pascal. Their historical writing typically dealt with demonstrating the Christian religion—especially the resurrection—to be grounded in history. In this way they were historian/apologists.

4. Why was this parallel development aborted? (215-219)

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, many intellectuals in Europe became convinced that miracles cannot happen. The miraculous has no place in a historical narrative. At this point, historians began the quest to uncover a non-miraculous Jesus. Finally, the consensus became that a historical Jesus was no longer recoverable. A divorce occurred between professional historians and Christian apologists.

II. ASSESSMENT

1. What are the two major objections to the objectivity of history? (219-222)

They are:

1. the problem of lack of direct access, and
2. the problem of lack of neutrality

2. *What is the difference between historical constructionism as a philosophy and as a methodology? (222-223)*

As a philosophy, ontological constructionism supposes that the past is not real but is constructed by our minds. History is subjective and illusory. We cannot come to know it. As a method, constructionism is a way of conducting historical research.

3. *What's wrong with constructionism as a philosophy? (223-225)*

If constructionism is true as a philosophy, human beings cannot be held responsible for immorality of the past. For instance, you interpret the Holocaust as a monstrous crime, but I say that's just an illusion. Can anybody live with that conclusion? We all believe that the events of yesterday really, truly, happened.

4. *Why is constructionism as a methodology not a problem? (225-226)*

As a method, constructionism is undisguisable from historical realism, that is, the past can be reconstructed using evidence to support a hypothesis. As far as I can tell, this is what happens every day in courts of law.

5. *Assess the supposed difference between a scientist and a historian with regard to their access to their objects of study. (226-227)*

Supposedly, science is empirical and history is evidential. In some ways this is true. Scientific experiments can be replicated and history cannot. However, even the experimental scientist relies on historical journals, and yesterday's testing, and in this sense he doesn't have access to his object of study.

Furthermore, many hard sciences are historical in nature not experimental. Geology, Darwinian evolution, and astrophysics come to mind. In these branches of science, the task is similar to the historians, reconstruction of the past.

6. *Why does the "theory-ladenness" of observation not undermine the objectivity of science or history? (227-230)*

Theory-ladenness is the idea that all observers have backgrounds and biases that make judgments about their objects of study unreliable. Again, we make judgments every day and often we are held accountable for their reliability. For instance, if I claimed I saw you rob a 7-11 last week, and that was demonstrably false, I could go to jail for perjury. As human beings we must live as if our interpretations of history are objectively true.

7. *What is a historical fact? (231)*

A historical fact is either the historical event itself or a piece of accurate information about that event.

8. *What's wrong with saying that historical facts exist only in your mind? (231)*

I do have some sympathy with this. According to the A-theory of time, the past does not exist. Let's take the example of Lincoln's assassination. For about 100 years it existed in the mind of at least one person with direct knowledge. Now it exists, spoken down the generations or more likely captured in written testimony and even photography. But where does it exist? It exists in public documents that are readily available to most everyone. And it exists in the minds of those who have read the evidence.

Having said all this, certainly the historical fact of Lincoln's death is not dependent on one human mind. If that were true, perhaps only the immediate sensory input into the brain is objectively real.

9. *Criticize the notion of a "meaningless fact." (231-232)*

A "meaningless fact" almost rises to the level of a "married bachelor". Facts may be irrelevant, or trivial, but not meaningless. The fact that I put salt on my boiled egg this morning may be irrelevant to this question, and unimportant to my daily activity but the fact means "Chris put salt on his egg this morning."

10. *What criteria can be used in testing historical hypotheses? (233)*

The seven are listed on page 233 by McCullagh:

1. It describes present observable data.
2. It has greater explanatory scope
3. It has greater explanatory power.
4. It must be more plausible.
5. It must be less ad hoc.
6. It must be disconfirmed by fewer accepted beliefs.
7. It must beat its rivals in 2 to 6.

I would humbly add a criterion after number 3. "Does it have greater predictive power?" The Big Bang got better with the confirmation of predicted background radiation.

11. *Why does the lack of neutrality on the part of a historian not support historical relativism? (234-235)*

As long as the historical hypothesis is tested by facts, there is no danger of sacrificing objectivity.

Also objections based on lack of neutrality can be mitigated in a number of ways:

1. proper historical method
2. full disclosure -- public acknowledgment of biases and financial supporters
3. peer review
4. submission to hostile experts

12. List three considerations which reveal that historians do believe in the objectivity of history. (235-237)

A common core of indisputable historical facts exists.

It is possible to distinguish between history and propaganda

It is possible to criticize poor history

13. What is the importance of naturalism as a presupposition of historical inquiry? Is it justified? (238-240)

No naturalist can accept the historicity of the miraculous events of the Gospels. He must deny either their miraculous nature or their historicity. The presupposition of naturalism affects the historian's assessment of the evidence of the Gospels.

I can see this most clearly in the naturalist denying a creator of the universe.

Some admit the Big Bang happened but it was not miraculous, i.e. the universe is self-caused, un-caused, eternal, etc.

Others deny its simple historicity, i.e. multiverse, string theory, etc.

All these shenanigans take place to avoid the obvious conclusion that a presupposition of naturalism is not tenable.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION FOR CHAPTER FIVE

1. *How can we avoid making unrealistic claims about the historical evidence for the Christian faith? What fundamental dilemma should we insist on? (242)*

I would limit the scope of historical evidence to the resurrection of Christ. It would be an endless task to provide evidence for every event in the Old Testament and New Testament. Once the resurrection is conceded, Jesus becomes who He says He is, and the rest falls into place. We may not know all the answers, but we've crossed the divide from atheist to theist.

Also, we will insist on using the same common sense approach to historical evidence for the Christian faith as we use in everyday life. We go where the evidence leads following rules of logic. It would be hypocrisy to accept a sensible standard of evidence for life and a skeptical standard when considering Christianity.

I think Lee Strobel as a lawyer does a great job in laying out facts and insisting on following them in *A Case for Christ*.

2. *Sometimes historical skepticism among laymen is based on unsophisticated objections such as, "You can't prove anything about what happened so long ago!" What confusion does this objection embody?*

(Hint: Which is crucial to historical proof: the gap between the evidence about some event and today or the gap between the event and the evidence about that event? Does good evidence become poor evidence just due to the passage of time?)

I would say we can be more certain about some events that happened in antiquity in a public arena, than other events that happened in a secret location yesterday.

Did the Egyptians build pyramids? What is the evidence?

Did the cop draw first or was it the robber? He said. She said. Is there any evidence?

CHAPTER SIX THE PROBLEM OF MIRACLES

I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1. *How did Newtonian physics make God's miraculous intervention in the world seem incredible? (248-249)*

Although Newton was a Christian believer, his famous *Principia* seemed to eliminate the need for God's providence. Since the universe behaved like a clock following Newton's three famous laws of motion, Deists could contend that God's miraculous intervention in the world was not necessary.

2. *Summarize Spinoza's two arguments against the possibility of miracles. (249-250)*

These are Spinoza's two arguments against miracles:

1. Miracles violate the unchangeable order of nature. The idea is that all nature acts out of God's will. A miracle would be an exception to that and would violate His will. That contradiction can't happen.

2. Miracles are insufficient to prove God's existence. Here the idea that the supreme proof of God's existence is the orderly state of the universe. Miracles would disrupt the order and might lead some to atheism. His two sub-points are that a so-called miracle could be the work of an underling such as an angel, or the work of the devil. God is not proved. Secondly, a so-called miracle could be an event caused by some physical act we do not yet know.

3. *Summarize David Hume's two-step argument against the identification of miracles. (250-251)*

Hume developed one "In Principle" argument and several "In Fact" arguments:

In principle, Hume asserts that evidence from the unchangeable laws of the nature would oppose and overwhelm any claim of a miracle. He suggests that an event may have occurred thought to be a miracle, but a wise man would still conclude that miracles don't occur.

In Fact, Hume asserts evidence for miracles is poor. He gives four reasons for this. First, educated and honest men have not attested to miracles. Second, people crave miracles and invent them. Third, miracles occur among barbarians. Fourth, miracles occur in all religions and thereby contradict each other.

II. ASSESSMENT

1. *Why does the indeterminacy in nature allowed by some interpretations of quantum physics not suffice as a defense of miracles? (259-261)*

There are three reasons. First, not all laws are formed by quantum indeterminacy. Miracles in other realms of physics would still be impossible. Second, not all gospel miracles could be explained by quantum indeterminacy. Third, although quantum indeterminacy may show that some effects have an ambiguous cause, the possibility of large scale uncaused events is next to nothing. That would entail large objects popping into and out of existence.

2. *Why are miracles not “violations of the laws of nature”?* (261-263)

The same hand that decrees natural law also decrees its exceptions. Natural laws are universal generalizations based on experience. They are descriptive of what God normally does and not proscriptive of what He must do. The laws of nature hold only when the hand of God is held.

3. *How should miracles be defined?* (263)

A miracle is a naturally impossible event, or put in the positive, a natural event with a supernatural cause. A miracle is an event which results from causal interference with a natural propensity which is so strong only a supernatural agent could impede it.

4. *What could conceivably bring about an event which is naturally impossible? (263) What are the implications of this for Apologetics?*

Only the personal God of theism could bring about an event that is naturally impossible. This implies two things. First, if miracles do occur, then a personal God must exist as the source of the miracle. Second, if a supernatural God does exist (as supported by arguments in previous chapters) then miracles in the natural world are certainly possible, even likely.

5. *What is the flaw in Spinoza’s first argument against miracles?* (264)

Spinoza questions how God could know the content of the world—that natural laws behave consistently—and at the same time cause events that are contingent—for example, miracles that occur at the word of Jesus. It seems to me that God could have decreed a natural order and also decreed from the beginning that He would be causing naturally impossible events at certain times and places throughout history. That does not appear unreasonable.

6. *Why is Spinoza mistaken in thinking that the admission of a miracle would overthrow a natural law? (265-266) How is this relevant in the case of someone who responds to the evidence for Jesus' resurrection by shrugging his shoulders and saying, "I guess that dead men do rise after all!"?*

Spinoza's view is that natural law, the regular rhythm of the universe, points to the existence of God. If someone like God were permitted to enter time and space and upset that regular rhythm, then natural law would be overthrown, lie in tatters. An irregular universe would lead people to atheism. Again, Spinoza is mistaken. The author of the book is the only person permitted to make occasional changes to its content. Who is Spinoza to deny Him that?

If a reasonable man conceded that the resurrection of Jesus actually occurred, he would not shrug and carry on with life. A reasonable person would pay close attention to the words of the dead man now alive. As a matter of fact, most miracles in the New Testament are spoken of as "signs" intended to undergird the claims of the miracle worker.

7. *What would allow us to identify Jesus' miracles and resurrection as genuine miracles rather than the effects of unknown natural causes? (266-268)*

For one thing, never in the history of humanity has a person who is truly dead returned from death to become fully alive. Second, as science and medicine advances, it becomes more obvious that true resurrection is naturally impossible. Thirdly, Jesus was more than a reanimated corpse. He possessed a glorified body.

I think of Frankenstein's monster. This was pseudo-scientific 150 years ago. In this story, just a shot of electricity was enough to reanimate a corpse. "It's alive! It's alive!"

What about the religious and historical context in which they occurred?

8. *What two more or less independent claims does Hume's "in principle" argument make? (270)*

First, he claims that miracles are by definition utterly improbable. Second, he claims that no evidence for a purported miracle can overcome its intrinsic improbability.

9. *In asserting that no amount of evidence could ever establish a miracle, what factor did Hume overlook? How does this factor come to expression in the probability calculus? (270-272)*

He overlooked the second ratio representing the explanatory power of the miracle's occurring or not occurring. Without this ratio, the probability of any long-shot event is close to zero. Is it always more probable that the testimony in support of a miracle is false than that the miracle actually occurred?

10. How is the following slogan false in light of probability calculus: "Extraordinary events require extraordinary evidence"? (273)

First, one must assume that a miracle can take place. If miracle is impossible, then by definition, no evidence is sufficient. If a miracle is possible, then the Baye's Theorem applies. The explanatory power witness/evidence of the second ratio may be simple but sufficient to balance out the improbability of a miracle taking place.

For example, one sliver of ice should convince the tropical man that water can become hard like a rock. One unambiguous message to SETI would convince exobiologists that ALFs do exist. And one human bone, has changed the course of human anthropology. This is all ordinary evidence.

11. Why can it not be assumed that the intrinsic probability of a miracle is terribly low? How would the inclusion of the fact of God's existence in one's background knowledge affect the intrinsic probability of a miracle claim? (275)

For a naturalist/atheist the probability of a miracle is zero. A Deist like Hume presupposes a background knowledge that a distant god created the initial universe and then left it to its own devices. If that background is accurate, then the probability of a miracle would be terribly low. However, if a person were a theist, believing in the God and Christ of the Bible, then that background knowledge would make reports of miracles plausible.

I like the example of SETI. What is the probability of SETI actually receiving a message from outer space? It really depends upon your background belief in ETs. If they are impossible, SETI will never work. If intelligent life is rare, it might work. If the universe abounds with ETs, then given enough time and patience earth should receive a message.

12. What should you say to someone who claims that in order to study history, one must presuppose that miracles do not happen? (276-277)

One could make that statement only if one knew a priori that God did not exist. If He does exist, then miracles are possible. And if they are possible, why reject them out of hand? I would say to the person that he is therefore "close minded" about a possibly true event. A theist would have the open mind, being skeptical about miracles in the main, but open to that possibility.

13. Why are Hume's "in fact" arguments not insuperable? (277-278)

Hume's "In Fact" arguments are these: First, educated and honest men have not attested to miracles. Second, people crave miracles and invent them. Third, miracles occur among barbarians. Fourth, miracles occur in all religions and thereby contradict each other.

These arguments cannot be used to decide the historicity of any particular miracle. Although we must be cautious, the only way to determine the historicity of a miracle is through honest investigation—with both possibilities open before us. Was this particular event naturally caused or supernaturally caused?

PRACTICAL APPLICATION FOR CHAPTER SIX

*1. All of the illustrations in this section about the importance of the question of miracles for biblical criticism and the science/religion dialogue are epitomized in James D. G. Dunn's treatment of the virgin birth of Jesus in his *Remembering Jesus* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003), p. 347. Dunn suggests that belief in Jesus' virginal conception was a theological elaboration of the basic affirmation that Jesus' birth was from the Holy Spirit (which need not imply a virginal conception). He admonishes the reader that "Here we also need to be aware of the biological and theological corollaries of insisting that the virginal conception/birth was a historical fact" and cites approvingly Arthur Peacocke's assertion that "any theology for a scientific age" has to start with the assumption that in order to be fully human Jesus had to have a human father.*

This is nonsense. In order to be a fully human male, Jesus had to have both X and Y chromosomes. But he had to get them from a human father only if miracles are impossible. The presumption that he had to get them from a human father is a corollary of Peacocke's naturalism. By contrast, the biological corollary of the historicity of the virginal conception is that at least some of Jesus' genetic material was supernaturally created. The theological corollary is that God can create a fully human being out of nothing should He so choose (cf. the cases of Adam and Eve on creationist views of origins). We see here how a gifted biblical scholar can be led astray through his philosophical naiveté.

Can you point to other examples of this problem?

First, I'm not convinced that Dunn was "led astray through philosophical naiveté". I have read his books. He always seemed like a solid miracle-believing Christian. Perhaps later in life, he compromised his faith in order to win the approval of his "intellectual" peers. Paul said that the crucifixion, and hence the entire miraculous gospel, was "foolishness" to the Greeks. In my humble opinion Dunn did not want to be thought of as a fool by a "Greek" philosopher such as Peacocke.

Plus, I'm not sure why confessing Christians find the virgin birth of Jesus unbelievable. The crowning miracle was of course the resurrection of Christ. Compared to that, a virgin birth would be simple. If someone said, "I can't believe in the virgin birth". I would reply "Can you believe in the resurrection?" If yes, I would ask, "Then why do you find the virgin birth unlikely?" If no, I would respond, "Then on what grounds do you consider yourself a Christian?" ~~ ("And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." I Corinthians 15:17) I wonder if Dunn also rejected the resurrection.

Charles Templeton was a Canadian evangelist who was an associate of Billy Graham. In 1946 he was listed as the "best used of God" superseding even Graham. However, he was having doubts about the Bible and wrote in "An Anecdotal Memoir" that he read Paine, Voltaire, Russel, Ingersoll, Hume, and Huxley. His faith was demolished and he became a vociferous opponent of the Christian faith. He talked with Graham who was unable to answer his doubts. Sad.

CHAPTER SEVEN THE SELF-UNDERSTANDING OF JESUS

I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1. *How has the portrait of the historical Jesus changed from the Old Quest through the New Quest to today? (287-296)*

It seems to me that the quests for Jesus have gone through four stages; the non-miraculous Jesus, the mythological Jesus, the concocted Jesus, the Jewish-context Jesus. Post-enlightenment thinkers like Hume and Spinoza made it fashionable to disregard miracles in history. This Deist thinking filtered into theist thinking and soon theologians were questing a non-miraculous Jesus. Many “lives” of Jesus were written to explain away miracles. The narrative of Jesus’ life provided the outline.

However, this old quest shifted with Strauss then Schweitzer. They contended that the gospel is a projection of modern theology, a myth. With Bultmann and the new quest shifted focus. In his view, the early church invented a Jesus of faith and made it impossible to know the Jesus of history. Finally, the focus of the newest quest is to reclaim Jesus as a Jew in his first century context.

2. *How does the “burden of proof” issue underlie the negative use of the so-called criteria of authenticity? (292-293)*

In a sense, the evidence is innocent until proven guilty. If an event falls short of the criteria of authenticity that in itself does not demonstrate something to be untrue. The criteria when used properly increases the confidence that something is true. It was not intended to be used in the negative. A lack of evidence is not a sign of inauthenticity unless one pre-supposes the event to be untrue in the first place.

For example, if I’m accused of robbing a bank and I claim I was home at the time of crime, the prosecutor may say, “Did anyone witness you at home?” I would say, “No, I was alone.” The prosecutor wouldn’t say, “Aha, that means you’re guilty.” It is true that a witness might make my innocence appear more likely, but lack of a witness could not make me appear guiltier.

II. ASSESSMENT

3. *Why is Meier’s distinction between the historical Jesus and the real Jesus inept? How should the distinction be rightly drawn? (296-298)*

Meier’s conjecture in fact creates two “Jesuses”. This is confusing. His method of adding a proper name to a series of propositions cannot answer the question “Who was Jesus?”. We should be seeking not the Jesus of history, nor the Jesus of tradition, but Jesus the man. Can we reconstruct Him from the evidence?

There are three levels of questions, as I see it. 1. Was Jesus Messiah, Son of God, Son of Man? If the answer is yes; you are already a Christian. What's there to prove? 2. Was Jesus who he claimed to be? This question is difficult to answer, because some of his verbal claims are so subtle. 3. The best question to ask is "who did Jesus understand Himself to be?" Can we discern this from the historical record?

4. *Why is "the criteria of authenticity" a misnomer? How are they to be rightly understood? (298)*

Criteria typically refer to a standard by which to judge. The "criteria of authenticity" are not infallible guides in that sense, but more like hints or indications or signs. They can support a case for historicity, but their absence does not mean the event is non-historic.

5. *Explain some of the most important criteria of authenticity. Think of examples of events/sayings in the Gospels which are shown to be authentic by use of such criteria. (298)*

The six criteria mentioned in the text are:

1. Historical congruence. Does the event fit the context of first century Palestine?
2. Independent, early attestation. Is it mentioned by unrelated writers close to the event time?
3. Embarrassment. Might the nature of the event cause the witnesses embarrassment and make it unlikely they invented the event?
4. Dissimilarity. Is the event in the right time sequence, not too late or too early?
5. Semitism. The actual words Jesus spoke were not in Greek but in Aramaic. Are there traces of this original language?
6. Coherence. Does the event mesh with accepted facts about Jesus?

In John chapter 9, the man born blind is brought before the Jewish leaders. His parents were afraid to speak, because they "might be expelled from the synagogue". I've heard it said this could not happen because the official policy to expel believers did not occur until 50 AD. But I read the counter argument that even from time of Christ Jewish leaders could expel people who help opinions counter to the official line. This would be "dissimilarity".

The fact that women were the first witnesses to the empty tomb was not something the early church would have invented. Women at that place and time could not even bear witness in court. Why would the gospel writers invent a story about women being first? which criterion is described here?

6. *What fundamental problem confronts those who deny that Jesus made any claims implying his divinity? (300)*

His claims of divinity were not the full-blown explications of later church councils. Rather, the titles He used were explicit to his divinity. His teaching and behavior was consistent with His divine titles. The earliest church understood the import of His claims, and called Him Lord and Savior. Why would they do this if He did not claim divinity?

7. Give a defense of the authenticity of Jesus' claim to be the Messiah. What is the theological significance of Jesus' messianic self-understanding? (301-310)

“Christ” is the Greek equivalent of “Messiah”. This word is mentioned 555 times in the New Testament. It is almost like his surname, “Jesus Christ”. It’s absurd to think that Jesus did not accept this title or did not claim to be the Jewish messiah. When asked point blank by the chief priest if He were the messiah, the blessed one of God, Jesus replied in the affirmative. That He understood Himself to be messiah is beyond any reasonable doubt.

Understanding Himself to be messiah—the anointed one of Israel—Jesus went about on a singular mission to shepherd and to save His people. [Please give more details including scripture references](#) The three titles of prophet, priest, and king coalesced in the super title of messiah. The theological significance of this title is the launch point of Christ’s identity. He is the one promised by God through the prophets. He is the one who will inaugurate the kingdom of God on earth.

8. Give a defense of the authenticity of Jesus' claim to be the Son of God. What is the theological significance of Jesus' filial self-understanding? (310-314)

In the parable of the wicked tenants (Mark 12:1-9), Jesus casts Himself unambiguously as the only beloved son of the landowner, a person who was unambiguously the God of Israel. Sayings of the historical Jesus in Matthew 11:27, Mark 13:32 and Mark 4:10-12 all point to a man who thought of Himself as the unique Son of God.

It is of great theological significance that Jesus thought of himself as God’s Son in an absolute and unique way and as having been invested with the exclusive authority to reveal His Father God to men. His sense of being God’s Son transcended that of any mortal man or angelic being.

9. Give a defense of the authenticity of Jesus' claim to be the Son of Man. What is the theological significance of Jesus' self-understanding as the Son of Man? (315-318)

Jesus used the title “Son of Man” over 80 times in the Gospels. It was his favorite third-person self-description. Yet it is found only once outside the Gospels. What explains this difference in usage? All evidence points to the “son of man” as an authentic term used by Jesus and remembered by his earliest followers. Jesus understood Himself to be the Son of Man and everything that term connoted to first-century Jews.

In the minds of the first hearers, “Son of Man” would conjure apocalyptic images from Zachariah and Daniel. This son of man was given power to judge and rule the whole world. He would also sit at the right hand of God in glory. In one sense, this title (Son of Man) is a more explicit claim to deity than “Messiah” or “Son of God”.

10. *What is "implicit Christology?" (319)*

"Messiah", "Son of God", and "Son of Man" are explicit titles assumed by Jesus during his earthly ministry. Implicit Christology refers to his teaching and behavior that express or support his deity implicitly. His actions can speak louder than His words and undergird his explicit Christology.

11. *Explain several examples of implicit Christological claims made by Jesus. (319-327)*

The text mentions five areas in which Jesus made implicit claims to deity. They are:

1. His preaching of the Kingdom. This public teaching, especially the sermon on the mount, points to a speaker who presumes to modify the Jewish Torah. He said repeatedly, "You have heard it said, but I say." Who could abridge God's law as spoken to Moses except God Himself?
2. His personal authority. Jesus assumed authority that the Jews understood to be prerogatives of God. Through His own name, he healed the sick, cast out demons, and forgave sins. He considered His own name as authoritative as His Father's.
3. His miracles. The three Greek words commonly translated as "miracle" indicate power, wonder, and sign. I think His miracles were intended to demonstrate all three, with perhaps "sign" as the most important. In the Gospel of John, the writer calls the seven sample miracles "signs". They reinforced his claims to deity, pointing to Him as Messiah, God's Son, and the Son of Man.
4. His prayer life. In the recorded prayers of Jesus, there is the overwhelming sense of a son speaking to his father in an intimate and familiar sense. These prayers are unlike any other in scripture. He thought of himself as God's Son in a unique sense.
5. His status as arbiter to eternal destiny. Jesus claimed in several places that people's salvation depended on their confession of Jesus as Lord. Jesus would be the final judge of eternal destiny and entrance into eternal life would be based on acceptance of Himself as Savior. Surely this extraordinary claim is a statement of madness or majesty.

I would add to these five areas the claims of Jesus that He is greater than the Sabbath and greater than the temple. These two were pillars of Jewish practice and Jesus asserted supremacy to both. In a sense, He was calling upon Jews to base their practice on Him rather than the Temple and the Sabbath, both of which were instituted by God.

I would also add the great I AM sayings of John's Gospel. When Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I AM." His Jewish listeners understood this claim to deity and his obvious reference to Exodus 4:17. "Tell them I AM sent you.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION FOR CHAPTER SEVEN

1. How is popular anti-Christian polemics still largely stuck in the Old Quest for the historical Jesus?

There is absolutely convincing evidence that Jesus did intend to stand in the very place of God. One can come to this conclusion by using the minimum of New Testament texts deemed acceptable by the most liberal of scholars.

Anti-Christian polemic (especially on the internet) is stuck in the Old Quest, because it treats Jesus Christ as either a complete invention/myth made of whole cloth, or as a moral teacher of the first century who the early church recast as God incarnate. Neither of these views is tenable when carefully examined. The case is well supported that Jesus understood himself to be exactly what the chief priest accused Him to be: The Christ, the Son of the Blessed, and the Son of Man who sits at the right hand of God.

Of course a person can accept or reject His claims, but it is foolish to say Jesus never made them.

2. How is the material discussed in this chapter useful in sharing the Gospel with Muslims?

The most useful tact when sharing the gospel with Muslims is this: Stay fixed on the person of Jesus and avoid criticism of Mohammed or the Quran. Discover together what Jesus spoke about Himself and discover who He understood Himself to be in relationship to God.

3. How can the material discussed in this chapter serve to contextualize the evidence for Jesus' resurrection?

Resurrection is the ultimate vindication that Jesus is who he claimed to be. That begs the question, "Who did Jesus understand Himself to be?" Answering this question comes logically prior to a discussion of His resurrection.

If one would concede that "Yes, it is true. This was indeed the self-understanding of Jesus." In the context of this self-understanding, the resurrection makes sense. It fits as a story. As a matter of fact, as you ponder the matter, no other conclusion to His life and death would make sense. It was not some arbitrary man who rose from the grave for some arbitrary reason by some arbitrary process. It was the Son of God, who rose to initiate the new creation, by a Father who loved Him.

CHAPTER EIGHT THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1. What was the dilemma posed by the traditional apologetic for Jesus' resurrection? What further argument did the traditional apologetic offer on behalf of Jesus' resurrection? (342)

Early objectors to the resurrection offered two hypotheses; either the apostles deceived others or they themselves were deceived. This was the dilemma. But neither of these alternatives seemed reasonable. The conclusion could only be the apostles were telling the truth and Jesus did rise from the dead.

The early apologists also set forth the origin of the church as proof of the resurrection. How could a dozen or so men turn the world upside down without a resurrection?

2. How did Strauss undercut the traditional dilemma? (345-347)

Strauss proposed the hermeneutic of mythological explanation in 1835. Rather than asserting that the disciples hoaxed or were hoaxed, he contended that the miraculous events of the gospels never happened, but were the result of a long process of legend and religious imagination.

3. Describe the recent change in scholarly opinion concerning the historicity of Jesus' resurrection. (349)

Beginning with Ernst Kasemann in 1953, then moving on to Hans Grass and others, the resurrection was reexamined as history rather than myth. With Wolfhart Pannenberg resurrection scholarship took on a philosophical tone, and many Biblical scholars today conclude that Jesus really did rise from the dead.

II. ASSESSMENT

4. A historical case for Jesus' resurrection will comprise what two steps? (350)

The argument for Jesus' resurrection has two steps. First, to establish the facts which serve as historical evidence and, second, to argue that the hypothesis of Jesus' resurrection is the best or most probable explanation of those facts.

5. How should we respond to Bart Ehrman's claim that there can in principle be no historical evidence for Jesus' resurrection? (350-353)

Ehrman's claim is that the resurrection, because it was a supernatural act, is beyond historical evaluation. But why is that? What if historians can establish that Jesus was alive, that he was crucified, died, and was buried. What if historians can then establish that the tomb was empty and Jesus appeared in the flesh to many

witnesses? If these are indeed the facts, then what is the best account for them? It appears to be closed-minded special pleading to ignore the possibility of a miracle. Ehrman seems to be a methodological naturalist, refusing to even entertain the notion that a supernatural act appeared on the stage of history. I feel that his constraint is artificial and a good historian should follow the facts wherever they lead.

6. *Why are John Meier's reservations about a historical case for Jesus' resurrection misconceived? (353-357)*

Meier seems to contend that the resurrection may be an actual event but that it took place outside of space and time into a new reality. He states that historians cannot use such other-worldly evidence to build a case. He relies on Gerald O'Collins to buttress his argument. In the end though, the argument is misconceived. It's like admitting to truth of premise one and two, but being agnostic on the conclusion—for whatever reason. Meier is pre-committed to a worldview in which faith and reason do not mix. His argument seems to be his unspoken effort to keep them unmixed.

[How do ancient paradoxes of motion figure in here?](#)

7. *Why are Dale Allison's doubts about Jesus' physical resurrection unfounded? (357-359)*

Dale Allison seems to contend that in principle a dead body resurrecting into a living body constitutes a discontinuity. The two are different entities and therefore it is not resurrection of the same body, but the duplication of a body. This seems like an odd objection to me. I see no physical or theological problem with the original body being reconstituted out of new or existing parts and God being perfectly able to implant the identical soul from an old body to a new one.

By the way, I don't have the same body that I had 20 years ago. Perhaps a few bits of teeth, brain, and heart retain the same atoms, but 99 per cent of me has been duplicated through a very natural process. I became what I ate.

8. *What are the inductive grounds for inferring Jesus' resurrection? State the three facts to be explained. (360)*

These are the three facts that infer the resurrection of Jesus:

1. The tomb of Jesus was found empty after his crucifixion and death.
2. After this, many individuals and groups saw, heard, and touched Jesus as alive.
3. The first disciples were convinced that Jesus rose from the dead; so convinced that many were killed and the church blossomed.

9. Which of the lines of evidence supporting the fact of Jesus' empty tomb do you find the most convincing? Explain it. (361-371)

I like three especially. First is the witness of women as the first to proclaim the resurrection. Women in the first century could not bear witness in court. One man's word overruled a hundred women. This is an argument of embarrassment. Why would any inventor of legend, concoct a tale of women as witnesses?

I also like the left-handed way in which the Jewish leaders demonstrate the tomb was empty. "Tell them that someone stole the body". That is a testimony that the tomb was empty!

Third, if the tomb did contain the body of Jesus, it would have been displayed to dissuade those who believed that "this imposter" came back to life. Therefore, it had to be empty.

10. Using McCullagh's criteria for justifying historical hypotheses, assess one of the naturalistic hypotheses offered to explain the fact of the empty tomb. (371-377)

I remember the Apparent Death Hypothesis (ADH) as the "swoon theory". According to this hypothesis, Jesus was crucified and placed in a tomb. However, He was not stone cold dead. He somehow survived the torture and the coolness of the tomb revived Him. He then went on to appear to his disciples. The rival hypothesis to which this hypothesis will be compared is the God Raised Jesus Hypothesis (GRJH).

Using McCullagh's criteria, the first and second point are met. ADH does imply present observable data and can explain the empty tomb, appearances, and origin of the church.

On McCullagh's third and fourth point, the ADH appears to possess less explanatory scope and be less plausible than the GRJH. For example, how could the Roman soldiers have been mistaken about His death? How could a severely traumatized man roll back a heavy stone? How could He convince people that was a glorified Messiah? The ADH cannot explain this. The GRJH can.

In regard to point five—the ad hoc nature of the argument—the ADH must build a scaffolding of unsubstantiated speculation to support a conspiracy among the Sanhedrin, Apostles, and Romans. It's the only way such an unlikely hypothesis could possibly work.

In regard to point six, current knowledge about medicine (nearly dead people don't walk, give speeches, and eat meals) and psychology (a revived, traumatized leader would not inspire joyful commitment) makes ADH untenable. If there is an

explanation, it must be GRJH. Finally, in looking at points 2 to 6, the unbiased historian should tend to the GRJH over the ADH.

11. Explain how the post-mortem appearances of Jesus are multiply attested. (376-381)

The backbone of this explanation is found in I Corinthians 15:3-8. Here, the Apostle Paul outlines a series of six post-mortem appearances. Two of these are only found in these verses (James and the 500) and four are attested to by other scripture. The appearances are attested by Matthew in his gospel, by Luke in both his gospel and Acts, by John in his gospel and letters, and by Paul in several of his letters. Please add scripture references.

12. Defend the physicality of Jesus' post-mortem appearances. (382-384)

The most thorough-going explanation of post-mortem physicality appears in I Corinthians 15. In this chapter, Paul draws a distinction between the earthly body and the resurrected body. Paul leaves no doubt that although the resurrected body is glorified, it is 100% corporal and not ethereal. This was the understanding of the earliest church.

In each of the appearance accounts, some type of physical interaction takes place. Jesus is touched or shares food. The witnesses made the emphatic point that Jesus possessed a physical/glorified body leaving a real footprint and casting a genuine shadow.

John encapsulates all this in the opening verse to his first letter: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched ..."

13. Using McCullagh's criteria for justifying historical hypotheses, assess the Hallucination Hypothesis as an attempt to explain the post-mortem appearances of Jesus. (384-387)

Using McCullagh's criteria, the first point is met. The Hallucination Hypothesis (HH) does imply present observable data.

On McCullagh's second point, the HH only addresses one of the three facts of the resurrection—the post mortem appearances. The empty tomb and the origin of the church are not addressed by a theory of hallucination. Furthermore, a hallucination would be visual. Could the disciples interact with, converse with, and touch a hallucination? One would have to assume a complete psychotic break on the part of all observers.

On McCullagh's third and fourth points, the HH is farfetched. There were multiple people at multiple locations who witnessed the risen Jesus. Could all of

these witnesses have hallucinated Jesus? Is it psychologically possible? The HH cannot explain how men of sound mind could suddenly experience a common and mass hallucination. As such, it is implausible as a hypothesis for the appearances of Jesus.

On McCullagh's fifth point, the HH is ad hoc in several respects. It assumes a guilt complex on the part of Peter, a Christian predilection on the part of Saul of Tarsus, and mass hallucinations on the part of all witnesses. None of this is hinted in the narrative texts.

In regard to point six, current knowledge about psychology and research into mass hallucinations makes the HH untenable and therefore make the appearances into a mystery. If there is an explanation, it must be GRJH. Finally, in looking at points 2 to 6, the unbiased historian should tend to the GRJH over the HH.

14. How can the traditional argument based on the origin of Christianity be effectively recast? (387-389)

The mystery of the origin of the Christian church is the lynch pin of the resurrection evidence. The earliest followers of the Way believed in the fact of a resurrected messiah. There is no example of a first-century believer who was not an Easter Christian. This universal belief presupposes an empty tomb and post-mortem appearances. Therefore, if resurrection is the most likely explanation for the birth of the church, then both the empty tomb and appearances are subsumed in this one line of argument.

This recasting is exemplified in *The Resurrection of the Son of God* by N. T. Wright. This has become the gold standard as a defense of the resurrection. Oddly, this was also the position of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas.

15. Why can the origin of the disciples' belief that God had raised Jesus from the dead not be plausibly explained in terms of pagan influences? Of Jewish influences? (390-395)

This is the criteria of dissimilarity. The Easter story could not be something that the disciples "borrowed" from antecedent Judaism. There is no precedent for a Jewish messiah to be crucified and mocked and still maintain his messianic credentials. There is no evidence that any Jew prior to 30 AD believed in the bodily resurrection into glory of an individual man prior to the "last day".

The Easter story is not something borrowed from pagan culture. First, the disciples being observant Jews abhorred pagan gods. There is no mention of any Greek/Egyptian/cultic god in any early text. Second, the stories of pagan gods always appeared in a mythological setting without historical time or place—totally unlike the historical gospel of Christ. See especially Luke 1:1-6.

The evidence shows that both traditional Jews and cultic pagans found the resurrection account of Jesus unlike anything in their own experience—it was crazy. As a matter of fact, when Paul testified of the resurrection to the pagan Festus, he shouted, “You are out of your mind, Paul. Your great learning is driving you insane.”

16. Using McCullagh’s criteria for justifying historical hypotheses, assess the Resurrection Hypothesis. (397-399)

Using McCullagh’s criteria, the first point is met. The Christian church exists in 2016 and is fast growing in many parts of the world.

On the second point, the resurrection hypothesis has greater explanatory scope than any of its rivals. It explains the empty tomb, the post-mortem appearances, and the origin of the church.

On the third point, the explanatory power is greater than its rivals. It is in harmony with all the firsthand accounts of the resurrection.

The fourth point, plausibility, is the sticking point for naturalistic historians. All the other points could be spot on, but if miracles are impossible, then the resurrection is more than implausible, it is impossible. However, if God exists and if the self-understanding of Jesus reflects reality, then it’s absolutely plausible that God raised Jesus from the dead. In fact, it’s inevitable.

The fifth point deals with the ad hoc nature of the hypothesis. Some critics claim the resurrection hypothesis is ad hoc at base because God must be invoked make the event happen. The counter claim is that “ad hoc” is misapplied. Yes, the resurrection is predicated on God’s existence. But so what? Most rivals are predicated on a more ad hoc insistence of God’s non-existence.

The sixth point is similar to points four and five. Is belief in resurrection disconfirmed by 21st century accepted beliefs. If the belief is that “dead men don’t rise” by any means, then rival hypotheses must prevail. But if God does exist (shown to be likely in in other parts of this book), then miracles can happen and resurrection is possible. This is more likely given the religio-historical context of the gospel.

On the seventh point, the resurrection is the best fit for points 2 to 6. It is only the prejudice against miracles that drives critics to devise alternative hypotheses. In this way it is similar to the standard Big Bang model. Rivals proliferate because Big Bang suggests a big miracle.

How can the theological significance of the fact of Jesus' resurrection be accurately discerned? (399)

The theological significance of the fact of Jesus' resurrection is that the claims of Jesus are true. We discern it as divine vindication. Jesus is who He says He is, and He will do what He has promised He will do.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION FOR CHAPTER EIGHT

1. Isn't it quite amazing, when you think about it, that the historical evidence for an event so extraordinary as the resurrection of Jesus should be so good?

I would put it this way. If not for the anti-supernatural/anti-miracle bias of this current age, the resurrection of Jesus Christ would be the most universally accepted historical fact of antiquity.

2. If Jesus was raised from the dead, what sort of confidence do you have in what Christians believe?

The core of my Christian faith is solid and unassailable. In my world of flux, with my limited mind, I will always encounter puzzles, unanswered questions, and doubts about secondary matters.

However, what is of first importance? Paul spelled out the answer in I Corinthians 15: "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared [to many]."

My confidence concerning these things of first importance is secure. Reading *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics* has bolstered my confidence.

3. How might the resurrection of Jesus help us to deal with doubt or frustration with sin?

As outlined by Reasonable Faith, the Christian apologetic has twin aims: to argue in favor of God's existence and in favor of Christ's resurrection. In fact, if the resurrection is ontologically true then God must exist by necessity. I think this was the process when Paul expanded the gospel into the empire. Christ was preached first, then with belief in the Son followed belief in the Father. Since most people in America are at least mild deists, belief in Christ usually follows belief in God.

A resurrected Jesus is a real Jesus. How could a non-resurrected/Crossan-like Christ offer comfort to anyone? If the greatest man who ever lived died and stayed dead, what hope is there for me, a sinner? How could such a Christ help me deal with doubt or frustration with sin? The real resurrected Jesus is God incarnate, powerful yet personal, an object of both awe and adoration. I read from the New Testament every day of my life. Without a resurrection, my effort would be vain. As Paul says, without a resurrection, my faith is futile, I am still in my sins, and more than all men I am to be pitied.

CONCLUSION

1. What two relationships are involved in the Ultimate Apologetic?

The two relationships are the vertical—between God and me, and the horizontal—between others and me. It is spoken in the two great commandments: “You shall love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. And love your neighbor as yourself.”

I’ve always found it instructive that when Paul wrote his letter to the church in Galatia, he spent chapters 1 and 2 defending his own integrity against mudslingers. Then in chapters 3 to 6, he defended the gospel of Jesus Christ. Without the ultimate apologetic his witness would suffer.

How I comport my life in private and public, in conversation and debate, either undergirds or undermines my apologetic.

2. Do you have good reason to think that people find your life attractive, so that they would like to become Christians?

This is a difficult question to answer. I am a loner and have been a loner my entire life. I recognize this as a flaw in my personality. I enjoy my own company. I am very close to my family and children. My wife and I have a great relationship. People recognize my character and integrity, but I often come across as aloof and austere. I wish I could be more winsome and attractive to others.

When I teach and preach, my students are enthralled. I have always received excellent reviews as a teacher and writer. I have good reason to think that many lives have been touched through my work as a pastor, writer, and missionary. I am praying that God can use me as an apologist as well.

I don't want to come across as a wise guy, but my spell checker picked up misspellings in the download questions for "premise" not "premiss", "skeptical" not "sceptical", "epistemology" not "epistimology" and "critieria" not criteria.

Please note error below in the download / not in the hard copy.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION FOR CHAPTER FIVE

1. How can we avoid making unrealistic claims about the historical evidence for the Christian faith? What fundamental dilemma should we insist on? (191)

The page cited should be (242) not (191) to accord with the hard copy.

A comment I emailed to *Reasonable Faith*

Dr. Craig,

Thank you so much for your ministry of Reasonable Faith. I so enjoy your podcasts and YouTube videos. Last month I listened to your two-part podcast commentary of a Roger Penrose interview. During that interview you discussed Penrose's view that there are three kinds of existence: Material, Mind, and Math. He hinted that there may be more.

Last week, during a long drive, I was pondering these three and speculated that there may be four and one half kinds of existence, all beginning with the letter "M". I would appreciate your thoughts on this matter. If you could point me to a publication discussing modes of existence that would be great. What is really real from the perspective of the human being?

The first ontological "M" is Mind, God having the big "M" Mind and certain of His creatures possessing little "m" minds. The little "m"s could be human, angelic, or possibly alien. All of these little "m"s are images of the eternal Mind of God. Additionally, the following three and one-half "M"s are contingent upon God's Mind.

The second ontological "M" is Material which comprises all matter and energy in all time and space whether universe or multiverse. This ontological object (or set of objects) had a beginning in accordance with Genesis one and Big Bang theory. It's as plain as the nose on your face.

The third ontological "M" is Math. Part of the interplay between you and Dr. Penrose considered whether numbers were objects or truths. I would put them in the object basket, because they seem to be independent of material and human minds.

I suggest there is a Euthyphro-like dilemma in math as well as in morality. "Does 1 and 1 equal 2 because God wills it, or because He appropriates it?" If he wills it, then he could have willed the result of 1 and 1 be 3. If He appropriated it, then numbers have an ontological status equal to or greater than Himself. Like Euthyphro, the solution lies in a third way. Mathematical objects are true because they reflect God's eternal rational mind. Human minds, made in his image, apprehend this part of God's mind.

Another diversion, sorry. Have you considered *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*? Douglas Adams writes of our universe as a big cosmic joke. In his book, the existential answer to life, the universe, and everything turns out to be the number 42. This makes awkward sense. If God is ruled nonexistent, the transcendent ultimate must be something ontologically independent of mind and material. A number like 42 is as good as any other.

The fourth ontological “M” is Morality. Do objective moral values and duties really exist? I believe they do. If so, they are independent of material, math, and human mind. But is it possible that moral virtues like “justice”, “kindness”, and “courage” exist as Platonic objects? It’s difficult to see how or why Platonic moral objects would exist prior moral agents. Most likely, morality is rooted in God’s eternal character. Perhaps His “left mind” is math and His “right mind” is morality. Being made in God’s image our little minds reflect His big one.

The fifth ontological “M” is Message. I count this as one-half because message appears to be the intersection of mind and matter upon a particular medium. The message rides on the material. Does Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* exist? How about the *New World Symphony*? Are such messages really real? I believe the answer is yes, that mind communicates to mind by means of message—for example by spoken and written language or by mathematical and musical notation. Message requires a material medium and, once produced, message exists independently of mind and material. I have read John Lennox and John Polkinghorne and this appears to be what they are saying.

A strict materialist can reject the objective existence of mind, math, and morality. However, message is not easy to dismiss. Mind, Material, Math, Morality, Message: could there be more?