EVANGELICAL WORLDVIEW ANALYSIS:

A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT AND PROPOSAL

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by

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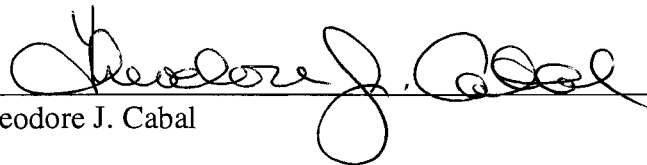
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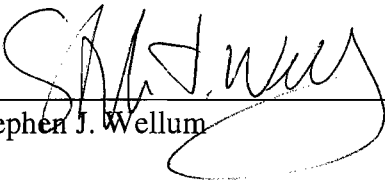
EVANGELICAL WORLDVIEW ANALYSIS:

A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT AND PROPOSAL

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Date _____May 4, 2006_____

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PREFACE

This work has been the culmination of many years of thought and study. Along the way, I owe a great debt to many for their insights and assistance. My time at Southern Seminary has been a fruitful experience learning from some of the premier professors in the evangelical world. I am grateful to those under whom I have studied, Ted Cabal, Ronald Nash, Bruce Ware, and Stephen Wellum. In particular, I benefited greatly from my relationship with my supervisor James Parker, whom I met soon after coming to Southern Seminary over six years ago. I am grateful for his guidance, generosity, and humor.

I am likewise indebted to friends and family members who steadfastly interceded wirh God on my behalf. I am not presumptuous enough to believe that the desire and ability to finish this project derived solely from my gifts and diligence. My church family has encouraged my studies as well as shown interest in my work.

Without a doubt, there has been no one so used of the Lord in this endeavor as my wife, Angela. She has offered invaluable support and wisdom in our marriage. Also, she has been patient on those occasions, unfortunately too many, when my studies pulled me away from time spent with our family. Truly, I regard her as a remarkably special woman and gift from above (Jas 1:17).

Above all else, I dedicate this dissertation to the Lord Jesus Christ. By his grace and guidance, I was able to write about a subject that continually challenged, blessed, and edified me. Moreover, it is my prayer that the time and energy spent toward the completion of this dissertation will better equip me, and those under my stewardship, to lead many others to the gateway of saving faith. To God be the glory.

CHAPTER 1

EVANGELICALISM AND WORLDVIEW ANALYSIS

Introduction

It has been well over a century since the great Scottish theologian James Orr

delivered his famous Kerr Lectures in 1891 in which he called upon evangelicals to

develop a distinctively Christian *Weltanschauung* or "worldview."[1] Orr borrowed the

concept "worldview" from his European milieu where it had circulated widely since its

advent via Immanuel Kant.[2] Orr's work was the first English-speaking articulation of a

full-scale Christian worldview.[3]

The motivation for Orr's employment of the worldview concept was his astute

and prophetic recognition that the modern attack on Christianity was not of a piecemeal

nature but of a comprehensive, systematic one. Orr wrote:

> No one, I think, whose eyes are open to the signs of the times, can fail to perceive
> that if Christianity is to be effectually defended from the attacks made upon it, it is
> the comprehensive method that is rapidly becoming the more urgent. The
> opposition which Christianity has to encounter is no longer confined to special
> doctrines . . . but extends to the whole manner of conceiving the world . . . . It is no
> longer an opposition of detail, but of principle. The circumstance necessitates an
> equal extension of the line of defence. It is the Christian view of things in general

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[1] Orr's lectures were later published as *The Christian View of God and the World as Centering in the Incarnation* (Edinburgh: Andrew Eliot, 1893). The volume has undergone many editions and reprints, most recently as *The Christian View of God and the World* (New York: Scribner's, 1887; reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1989). The term "worldview" is the English translation of the German word *Weltanschauung*.

[2] According to worldview historian David Naugle, "There is virtually universal recognition" that Kant coined the term *Weltanschauung* in his work *Critique of Judgment*, which was published in 1790. David K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 58.

[3] J. I. Packer, "On from Orr: Cultural Crisis, Rational Realism and Incarnational Ontology," in *Reclaiming the Tradition: Evangelicals, Catholics, and Orthodox in Dialogue*, ed. James S. Cutsinger (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 165.

which is attacked, and it is by an exposition and vindication of the Christian view of things as a whole that the attack can most successfully be met.[4]

Heavily influenced by Orr, the great Dutch polymath Abraham Kuyper argued along similar lines for the formulation and defense of Christianity as a "life system."[5] Kuyper correctly perceived nature of the assailment that Christianity was currently experiencing at the hands of modernism.[6] Instead of looking to traditional apologetic methodology for assistance, which he believed had not advanced the Christian cause "one step," Kuyper believed the development of a Christian worldview was critical.[7]

In his famous Stone Lectures delivered at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1898, Kuyper gave expression to such a far-reaching Christian worldview: "If the battle is to be fought with honor and with hope of victory, then principle must be arrayed against principle: then it must be felt that in Modernism the vast energy of an all-embracing life-system assails us, then also it must be understood that we have to take our stand in a life-system of equally comprehensive and far-reaching power."[8]

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[4]Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World*, 4. Later in the work, Orr elaborates on the nature of the Christian worldview: "There is a definite Christian view of things, which has a character, coherence, and unity of its own, and stands in sharp contrast with counter theories and speculations, and . . . this world-view has the stamp of reason and reality upon itself, and can amply justify itself at the bar both of history and of experience. I shall endeavor to show that the Christian view of things forms a logical whole which cannot be infringed on, or accepted or rejected piecemeal, but stands or falls in its integrity, and can only suffer from attempts at amalgamation or compromise with theories which rest on totally distinct bases" (16).

[5]Kuyper preferred the phrase "life system" as a translation of the German word *Weltanschauung*. Kuyper's understanding of "life system" is very similar to modern notions of "worldview."

[6]For Kuyper, "modernism" was characterized by three elements: the principles of the French Revolution, pantheism, and evolutionism. See Peter S. Heslam, *Creating a Christian Worldview: Abraham Kuyper's Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 96.

[7]Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1931; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 11.

[8]While, Orr argued for a broadly evangelical approach, with a keen focus on the person and work of Christ, Kuyper believed that a truly Christian worldview must be Calvinistic. In addition, Orr's worldview maintained a predominantly theological orientation while Kuyper's worldview included cultural implications.

At the dawn of the twentieth century, Orr and Kuyper foresaw the need for evangelicals to engage in worldview formulation and analysis in the defense of the Christian faith. To a great extent, their clarion call has been heeded. The past century has witnessed a cascade of works on the notion of worldview from a Christian perspective.[9] In fact, as worldview historian David Naugle asserts, "In the entire history of 'worldview,' no single philosophic school or religious community has given more sustained attention to or taken more advantage of this concept than Protestant evangelicals."[10]

Among evangelicals, the importance of articulating a Christian worldview has historically found its most frequent expression among Reformed circles. Undoubtedly, this prevalence traces back to the pivotal influence of Orr and Kuyper. Among those in the line of Orr, Gordon Clark took up the mantle of defending Christianity as an entire worldview. In his work *A Christian View of God and Things*, Clark declared in words reminiscent of Orr,

> Christianity therefore, has, or one may even say, Christianity *is* a comprehensive view of all things; it takes the world, both material and spiritual, to be an ordered system. Consequently, if Christianity is to be defended against the objections of other philosophies, the only adequate method will be comprehensive. While it is of great importance to defend particular points of interest, these specific defenses will be insufficient. In addition to these details, there is also needed a picture of the whole into which they fit.[11]

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[9]The works are legion but the following is a sample of resources not referred to in the dissertation: R. C. Sproul, *Lifeviews: Making a Christian Impact on Culture and Society* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1986); John P. Newport, *Life's Ultimate Questions: A Contemporary Philosophy of Religion* (Dallas: Word, 1989); David A. Noebel, *Understanding the Times: The Story of the Biblical Christian, Marxist/Leninist, and Secular Humanist Worldviews* (Manitou Springs, CO: Summit, 1991); L. Russ Bush, *The Advancement: Keeping Faith in an Evolutionary Age* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2003); D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe, *Lord of All: Developing a Christian World-and-life View* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005).

[10]Naugle, *Worldview*, 31.

[11]Gordon H. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things: An Introduction to Christian Philosophy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 25.

Carl Henry, often dubbed the "dean of evangelical theologians," fell under the impact of

Orr as well. Henry recollects his days as a student at Wheaton College: "It was James

Orr's great work, *The Christian View of God and the World*, used as a Senior text in

theism, that did the most to give me a cogently comprehensive view of reality and life in

a Christian context."[12] Henry has exerted tremendous influence on evangelicalism in

general and promoting the importance of worldview thinking in specific.

Ronald Nash, a student of Clark, followed his teacher's path in emphasizing

the importance of worldviews.[13] Nash attests, "Instead of viewing Christianity as a

collection of theological bits and pieces to be believed or debated, individuals should

approach it as a conceptual system, as a total world- and life-view. Once people

understand that both Christianity and its competitors are world-views, they will be in a

better position to judge the relative merits of all the systems . . . . The case for or against

Christian theism should be made and evaluated in terms of total systems."[14]

Albert Mohler serves as president of The Southern Baptist Theological

Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, one of the nation's most prestigious and largest

seminaries. Mohler is one of evangelicalism's most intelligent and articulate minds, and

stands indebted to the influence of Henry's emphasis upon Christian worldview thinking.

According to his personal web page, Mohler's mission is "to address contemporary issues

from a consistent and explicit Christian worldview."[15] In his verbal and written

[12]Carl F. H. Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian: An Autobiography* (Waco, TX: Word, 1986), 75.

[13]Importantly, Nash begins his two most extensive works with a discussion of the significance and content of worldviews as well as criteria for comparing them. See Nash's *Faith & Reason: Searching for a Reasonable Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988) and *Life's Ultimate Questions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999).

[14]Nash, *Faith & Reason*, 25-26.

[15]Albert Mohler's website [on-line]; accessed 12 November 2005; available from http://www.albertmohler.com/bio.php; Internet. Mohler has written for publications such as *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The USA Today* and appeared on numerous television programs like CNN's *Larry King Live* and NBC's *Today Show*.

communications, Mohler consistently refers to Christianity as a worldview, and calls upon believers to apply it to all of life.

Among those in the Kuyperian tradition, Cornelius Van Til affirmed Christianity as a worldview throughout his career.[16] For Van Til, this worldview was all encompassing in its scope: "The Christian life-and-world view . . . presents itself as an absolutely comprehensive interpretation of human experience . . . [and] as the only true interpretation of human experience."[17] Van Til perceived that not only did Christians embrace the *entirety* of the Christian worldview, but that unbelievers in turn rejected the *entirety* of the Christian worldview. In his *Defense of the Faith*, Van Til describes the mindset of the unbeliever: "As a rational creature he can understand that one must either accept the whole of a system of truth or reject the whole of it . . . . He can understand the idea of [Scripture's] necessity, its perspicuity, its sufficiency and its authority as being involved in the Christian position as a whole."[18] Apologetic engagement must be carried out at the worldview level both for believer and unbeliever.

Van Til's influence extended to several students who took the importance of worldviews to the halls of the academy as well as to larger Christian audiences. Francis Schaeffer fervently argued that the worldviews of unbelievers would ultimately fail to provide a unified depiction of reality. This deficiency stood in stark contrast to Christianity. Schaeffer writes, "The Christian system (what is taught in the whole Bible)

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[16]Greg L. Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic: Readings & Analysis* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1998), 596-600. Van Til followed Kuyper in his Reformed theology and in starting with the Christian worldview as the ultimate presupposition. Van Til disagreed with Kuyper that the total depravity of unbelievers does not effect peripheral matters such as logic.

[17]Cornelius Van Til, *Christian Apologetics*, 2nd ed., ed. William Edgar (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2003), 83.

[18]Cornelius Van Til, *Defense of the Faith* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1955), 166-67, quoted in Greg L. Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic: Readings & Analysis* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1998), 511.

is a unity of thought. Christianity is not just a lot of bits and pieces—there is a beginning and an end, a whole system of truth, and this system is the only system that will stand up to all the questions that are presented to us as we face the reality of existence."[19] Schaeffer popularized the teaching about worldviews to a wide audience among evangelicals that was to a large degree unfamiliar with the concept.

Later Van Til students Greg Bahnsen and John Frame continued the Kuyperian tradition about the need for worldview engagement. Bahnsen wrote, "Everybody has what can be called a 'worldview,' a perspective in terms of which they see everything and understand their perceptions and feelings . . . . The apologist needs to recognize that the debate between believer and unbeliever is fundamentally a dispute or clash between two complete worldviews—between ultimate commitments and assumptions which are contrary to each other."[20] Frame concurs, "Christianity provides a comprehensive view of the world (worldview). It gives us an account, not only of God, but also of the world that God made, the relation of the world to God, and the place of human beings in the world in relation to nature and to God."[21]

Allowing for various degrees of divergence, all of these thinkers followed the basic, programmatic lines of either Orr or Kuyper. A common denominator among all of these thinkers is their high appraisal of the Scriptures. For most of them, Scripture stands as the starting point or ultimate principle for the Christian worldview.

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[19]Francis Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, vol.1 of *Francis A. Schaeffer Trilogy* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1990), 178.

[20]Greg L. Bahnsen, *Always Ready: Directions for Defending the Faith*, ed. Robert R. Booth (Nacogdoches, TX: Covenant Media Press, 1996), 119, 68.

[21]John M. Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God: An Introduction* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1994), 31-32.

Though Reformed scholars have actively utilized the worldview concept, a wide spectrum of evangelicals have also implemented the notion. Norman Geisler, who adopts a mediating position between Reformed and Arminian schools of thought, strongly affirms the need for Christian worldview thinking.[22] In his book *Worlds Apart*, Geisler believes that worldviews are "all-important" as they depict the ultimate reality and its relation to everything else.[23] Thus, Christianity itself is a worldview.

Prominent philosopher of religion William Abraham highly endorses the vitality of a Christian worldview.[24] Writing from a distinctively Wesleyan vantage point, Abraham states,

> Religious belief should be assessed as a rounded whole rather than taken in stark isolation. Christianity, for example, like other world faiths, is a complex, large-scale system of belief which must be seen as a whole before it is assessed. To break it up into disconnected parts is to mutilate and distort its true character. We can, of course, distinguish certain elements in the Christian faith, but we must still stand back and see it as a complex interaction of these elements. We need to see it as a metaphysical system, as a worldview, that is total in its scope and range.[25]

Finally, William Lane Craig is a brilliant philosopher of religion who also valiantly and effectively defends the Christian faith against leading intellectuals. As for his theological inclination, Craig leans toward a more Arminian understanding, but he too agrees with the evaluation of Christianity as a worldview:

> A successful apologetic for the Christian faith should be in an appropriate sense a cumulative case and is, therefore, I think, best thought of as a project undertaken by a community of scholars, each contributing from his area of expertise to the cumulative weight of the case for the Christian *Weltanschauung*. The arguments in which I have specialized should be seen, not as links in a single chain of reasoning,

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[22]Norman L. Geisler, *Chosen But Free: A Balanced View of Divine Election* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1999).

[23]Norman L. Geisler and William D. Watkins, *Worlds Apart: A Handbook on World Views*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 9, 18.

[24]William J. Abraham, *Coming Great Revival: Recovering the Full Evangelical Tradition* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984) and *The Logic of Renewal* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

[25]William J. Abraham, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1985), 104.

which is, after all, only as strong as its weakest link, but rather as links in a coat of chain mail, in which all the links serve to reinforce one another.[26]

Craig's efforts toward this goal is seen in a recent collection of articles by various authors demonstrating the cogency and compelling force of the Christian worldview.[27]

Further examples could be given, but the point should be clear that the importance of worldview thinking has permeated evangelicalism of all theological stripes, particularly within the last generation. Evangelicals have appropriated the power and insight of the worldview concept and applied it to wider arenas of thought and practice. Before proceeding further, the relative degree of agreement among evangelicals about the notion of a worldview needs exploration.

Definition of Worldview

With the great interest in worldview thinking, the question arises as to the degree of unanimity among evangelicals on the definition of the term "worldview." In general, evangelicals affirm the *universality* of worldview thinking among people, even if it is not always recognized and understood. As Geisler and Watkins playfully ask, "What is it that everyone has, no one can live without, every important decision in life is made with, and yet most people do not even know they have?"[28] The answer, of course, is a "worldview."

Evangelicals also affirm the *importance* of worldview thinking. In fact, its neglect diminishes the God-given capacities of personal existence. William Alston comments,

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[26]William Lane Craig, "A Classical Apologist's Response," in *Five Views on Apologetics*, ed. Steven B. Cowan (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 173.

[27]Francis J. Beckwith, William Lane Craig, and J. P. Moreland, eds., *To Everyone an Answer: The Case for the Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004). Also see J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003).

[28]Geisler and Watkins, *Worlds Apart*, 9.

It can be argued on the basis of facts concerning the nature of man and the conditions of human life that human beings have a deep-seated need to form some general picture of the total universe in which they live, in order to be able to relate their own fragmentary activities to the universe as a whole in a way meaningful to them; and that a life in which this is not carried through is a life impoverished in a most significant respect.[29]

Though evangelicals affirm the universality and importance of worldviews, a precise formulation among them has been elusive.[30] In terms of specific definitions, here are three definitions from prominent worldview theoreticians, each with different emphases. Nash, in his work *Worldviews in Conflict*, offers a rather succinct candidate: "In its simplest terms, a worldview is a set of beliefs about the most important issues in life . . . . [It] is a conceptual scheme by which we consciously or unconsciously place or fit everything we believe and by which we interpret and judge reality."[31]

While Nash almost exclusively places an emphasis upon the cognitive aspect, James Sire, a widely read evangelical worldview thinker, recently revised his definition to include the role and significance of the human heart: "A worldview is a fundamental commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or unconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move

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[29]William P. Alston, "Problems of Philosophy of Religion," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 6:286.

[30]Jacob Klapwijk believes a precise definition is an impossibility; see Klapwijk, "On Worldviews and Philosophy: A Response to Wolters and Olthuis," in *Stained Glass: Worldviews and Social Science*, ed. Paul A. Marshall, Sander Griffoen, and Richard Mouw (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989), 41.

[31]Ronald Nash, *Worldviews in Conflict* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 16. Nash includes the following components as part of a worldview: God, metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and anthropology.

and have our being."[32] Sire, like worldview theoreticians from secular perspectives such as Wilhelm Dilthey, realizes the element of commitment, not mere abstract consideration.

Naugle touches upon still another element in the definition of worldview, that of story. He defines a worldview as: "A semiotic structure [that] consists primarily of a network of narrative signs that offers an interpretation of reality and establishes an overarching framework for life. Since people are storytelling creatures who define themselves and the cosmos in a narrative fashion, the content of a worldview seems best associated with this most relevant activity of human nature."[33] For Naugle, a worldview is not simply a set of formalized propositions, but a narrative that guides and inspires peoples and communities.

Undoubtedly, these definitions reflect the lack of unanimity among evangelicals concerning the definition of worldview. Without a standard definition to work from, evangelicals would seemingly be hindered from any efforts to engage in worldview analysis of rival systems. However, most worldview thinkers are intellectual descendants of either Orr or Kuyper, and, as Sire points out, general threads can be discerned in various contemporary formulations.[34] Broadly speaking, a worldview is:

> (1) Rooted in pretheoretical and presuppositional concepts that are the foundation for all one's thought and action, (2) comprehensive in scope, (3) ideally though not necessarily logically coherent, (4) related in some positive way to reality, that is, to the way all things and relations are, (5) though not necessarily irrational, nonetheless fundamentally a matter of commitment that is not provable by reason."[35]

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[32]James Sire, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept* (Grand Rapids: InterVarsity, 2004), 122. Sire notes his indebtedness to Naugle's insights about the fundamental nature of the human heart. He notes, "Naugle, so far as I have been able to determine, is the first worldview analyst to emphasize the striking similarity between he biblical concept of the heart and the worldview concept" (44).

[33]Naugle, *Worldview*, 291.

[34]Ibid., 5.

[35]Sire, *Naming the Elephant*, 36. However, both Clark and Van Til contend for its provability by reason though in divergent ways.

Sire seems correct in his assessment that evangelicals, though not in lock step, certainly adhere to a common cluster of beliefs from which to construct a Christian worldview and to evaluate alternative ones.

Worldview Analysis and Apologetics

Worldviews are not only comprehensive perspectives of reality but are vital for the defense of Christianity as Orr and Kuyper prophetically realized. In addition, it may be best to analyze other religions as worldviews, thus focusing on the same core issues that comprise a worldview. Before discussing the relationship between worldview analysis and apologetics, a few preliminary points need to be established. Apologetics, properly speaking, is the defense of the Christian worldview. This basic definition is typically refined further into positive and negative apologetics. The latter deals with handling particular objections to Christianity such as the problem of evil, the exclusivity of Christ, apparent scientific counterevidence, and alleged inconsistencies of Scripture. The former, positive apologetics, offers reasons both for the validation of the Christian worldview as well as the critique of competing worldviews.

Certainly, handling particular issues and challenges is a vital part of apologetics, especially on an interpersonal level.[36] However, worldview analysis primarily focuses on positive apologetics as the setting forth of the essential features of the Christian worldview. The primary reason for such an approach is that worldview contests do not occur over isolated facts or theories. Rather, these disputes encompass the entire framework of beliefs. In his work *The Practice of Philosophy*, Jay Rosenberg, elucidates the nature of two such opposing positions:

> Ultimately, the challenge is not to this or that individual thesis but to the consistency and coherence of a whole family of beliefs in which the thesis is embedded. It is not

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[36]On a practical level, apologetics often deals with the manifold and sometimes arbitrary concerns of the interlocutor. This dissertation is not ignoring this fact, but presenting an apologetic methodology via worldview analysis. The structure presented in the study is certainly adaptable to handle the various objections of people.

particular statements or theses, then, which are genuinely at issue in a philosophical dispute, but rather rich, more or less systematic *world views*.[37]

The reason worldviews are arbitrated at the systemic level is that the worldview itself acts as a grid for the evaluation of facts and theories. Since every person experiences reality from his or her worldview, people often perceive life in greatly different ways. Therefore, the need arises for evangelicals both to understand the formative nature of worldviews in apologetic engagement and to develop an effective strategy for worldview analysis. The first step in effective apologetics is not simply to "know thyself" but also to "know thy opponent." This insight leads to the task of better understanding alternative worldviews, in particular their main categories.

Worldview Taxonomy

Evangelicals classify opposing worldviews differently. Some claim that there are nearly an endless number of worldviews.[38] However, other evangelicals attempt to categorize worldviews. For example, Geisler delineates seven worldviews: theism, polytheism, deism, atheism, pantheism, panentheism, and finite godism.[39] James Sire lists theism, deism, naturalism, nihilism, existentialism, Eastern pantheistic monism, New Age, and postmodernism.[40]

Upon closer reflection, it seems that a simpler taxonomy can be produced, one that pinpoints the qualitative difference.[41] A more accurate and helpful approach is a

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[37]Jay F. Rosenberg, *The Practice of Philosophy: A Handbook for Beginners*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1984), 32.

[38]Naugle, *Worldview*, 278.

[39]Geisler and Watkins, *Worlds Apart*, 15-17.

[40]James W. Sire, *Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalogue*, 4th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004).

[41]For example, in Sire's classification, naturalism could also encompass nihilism, existentialism, and postmodernism.

threefold worldview taxonomy: theism, naturalism, and pantheism.[42] The distinguishing

criterion of this taxonomy is one's relation to ultimate reality.[43] Roy Clouser astutely

contends, "Instead of trying to find some thing common among the differing ideas of who

or what has the status of divinity, we shift the question to defining the status of the

divinity itself."[44] For Clouser, the divine is "*whatever does not depend on anything else*

for its existence, so that all that is not divine depends for its existence on the divine."[45]

Therefore, either the divine or ultimate reality is the world (naturalism or

pantheism) or God (theism).[46] For naturalism, ultimate reality is the world as comprised

of its fundamental elements or matter. Likewise, with pantheism, ultimate reality is the

universe as well, but it is conceived as divine rather than crude matter. In other words,

pantheists agree with naturalists that there exists only one continuous reality. Pantheists

acknowledge the appearance of other realities besides the ultimate reality but such items

are not real but illusion.

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[42]Paul Copan, *That's Your Interpretation: Responding to Skeptics Who Challenge Your Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 10, agrees with this taxonomy, saying, "Although many worldviews exist, we can reduce them to three." See also C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2001), chap. 6, where he divides those who believe in a deity into two categories: theists and pantheists.

[43]Roy A. Clouser, *The Myth of Religious Neutrality: An Essay on the Hidden Role of Religious Belief in Theories* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 13, argues against construing the ultimate reality as a Supreme Being because Hinduism does not believe the divine Brahman is a being while Buddhism affirms the divine is nonbeing.

[44]Clouser, *The Myth of Religious Neutrality*, 16.

[45]Ibid., 19.

[46]While other possible relations exist in the world, these three represent the most prevalent worldview options in present times. For example, panentheism, does not exert the same apologetic challenge as pantheism which has millions of followers from forms of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism. Panentheism faces grave conceptual challenges such as its notion of God being both infinite and finite.

Theism comprises the three great monotheistic religions of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. In contrast to naturalism and pantheism, there is not one continuous reality. Clouser explains, "The divine is not part of the universe nor is the universe part of the divine; there is a fundamental discontinuity between the creator and all else which is his creation."[47] This discontinuity recognizes the creation as either deity or illusion. In contrast, the creation entirely depends upon God but possesses great intrinsic worth as his handiwork.

This worldview typology proves helpful for two reasons. First, the typology focuses on the essential features of a worldview rather than minute differences. Most worldview conflicts will involve wide divergences which this typology nicely captures. When differences are not as acute, as say with Christianity and Islam, argumentation will occur at the more "micro-level."[48] Second, the worldview taxonomy is easily remembered, thus increasing apologetic ease and confidence. Such a rubric helpfully launches more believers into engagement that can be deepened with further study.

Need for Worldview Analysis

The contemporary milieu calls for evangelicals to implement worldview analysis. First, *globalization* has caused people of other faiths to live as neighbors when previously they resided great distances apart. Immigration, intercontinental travel, and technology have considerably made the planet much more interconnected. Thus, in Western society, Christian mission is no longer an overseas venture but a pressing challenge in everyday life.[49]

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[47]Clouser, *The Myth of Religious Neutrality*, 43.

[48]Christianity and Islam share a monotheistic view of God who created the physical universe, the reality of sin and evil, the existence of good and fallen angels, and the importance of certain individuals from the Old and New Testaments.

[49]For a helpful overview of the changes leading to the contemporary situation, see Harold Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism: The Challenge to Christian Faith & Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 55-91.

It is the conviction of this study that evangelicals have neglected the task of worldview analysis of world religions, instead focusing on its chief competitor in the Western world—naturalism. While the challenge of naturalism needs full engagement, the dearth of worldview analysis of other faiths is a glaring omission to the accomplishment of the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20). Particularly indicting is that the adherents of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam comprise forty percent of the world's population.[50]

Second, perhaps the greatest challenge facing Christianity at the current time is *religious pluralism*. Much of Western society displays an increasing hostility toward Christianity's exclusive truth claims. Evangelization in the West will simultaneously involve defending the faith. Christian apologetics must not shrink back from the task of worldview analysis and truth claims.

Third, *postmodernism*, the monolithic term to describe Western society's skepticism toward objective truth and metanarratives, poses tremendous challenges to evangelical Christianity. Because of its insistence upon the very things postmodernism rejects, Christianity must offer a compelling and courageous defense of these essentials as well as point out that postmodernism's stance is itself an oppressive metanarrative.[51] Extreme postmodern protests notwithstanding, there appears to be room at the roundtable for the Bible's "story" of creation, fall, and redemption.

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[50]According to the United States of America's Central Intelligence Agency, Muslims comprise 20% of the world's population while Hindus and Buddhists comprise 13% and 6%, respectively. Central Intelligence Agency, The World Factbook 2006 [on-line]; accessed 14 April 2006; available from http://cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/xx.html; Internet.

[51]Interestingly, though, some believe that postmodernism actually opens some avenues for Christian apologetic engagement. Postmodernism recognizes the presence of presuppositions, thus agreeing with the position taken by many Christian thinkers regarding the rejection of neutral assessment of evidence. Although postmodernism rejects metanarratives, it does acknowledge the importance of a community's narrative. Where this openness to narratives exists, apologists may present the story of redemptive history. This avenue will be explored further in a later chapter.

Methodology of Worldview Analysis

At present, two methods of worldview assessment predominate in the Western evangelical world: transcendental and abductive analysis. While bearing some affinity, it should be made clear that this schema differs from the longstanding debate between presuppositional and traditional apologetics. For one thing, the labels involved are extremely unhelpful and outdated.[52] More importantly, the two worldview methodologies both deal with entire worldviews. Though presuppositional apologetics follows suit, traditional apologetics typically does focus on entire worldviews but uses only individual evidences or proofs. Finally, this study focuses on the transcendental argument, the heart of presuppositionalism, but it omits other aspects of this apologetic strategy such as its view of the unbeliever's psychology and analogical knowledge.

Transcendental

Christian transcendental worldview analysis was developed by Cornelius Van Til, the long-time professor of apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary. Throughout his career, Van Til sought to develop a distinctively and consistently Christian philosophy. For Van Til, this worldview was all encompassing in its scope. Thus, apologetics must engage and attack the underlying worldview of the unbeliever.[53]

Transcendental worldview analysis consists of two steps. First, the believer ascertains, through a series of epistemological and metaphysical questions, the general beliefs of the interlocutor. The aim of this discussion is to discern the lost person's particular worldview, at least the one that is explicitly stated. Without a sufficient

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[52] Almost all apologists recognize the presence of presuppositions that affect human rationality. Presuppositionalists no longer maintain a distinct claim here. Thus, some presuppositionalists such as Scott Oliphint, professor at Westminster Theological Seminary, have dropped the title for "covenantal." See Oliphint's web page, accessed 16 June 2005; available from http://mywebpages.comcast.net/oliphint/Writings/A%20Covenantal%20Apologetic.htm; Internet.

[53] Van Til believed that, in essence, there were only two worldviews: Christianity and apostasy.

understanding of the opponent's thinking, the apologetic discussion can proceed no further. Bahnsen, perhaps Van Til's most faithful and ardent pupil, offers a sample of engaging questions:

> The Christian apologist must seek to uncover what this unbeliever's personal convictions are regarding relevant metaphysical and epistemological matters: e.g. what is the nature of things that are real, how does the world operate, where did it come from, what is man's place in the world, what is man's nature, are there moral or epistemological norms that are not chosen by the individual, what are the criteria for truth, what are the proper methods of knowing, is certainty possible, etc?[54]

After obtaining an adequate grasp of the unbeliever's worldview, the apologist should compare it with his or her own worldview. At this point, the apologist strategically points out that the objections of the unbeliever are actually met by the Christian—as long as the objection is handled within the framework of the believer's worldview. This is a vital point because it demonstrates the cogency and consistency of the Christian argument. For example, if the lost person objects to the notion of miracles, the believer adeptly notes that the apparent problem of miracles poses no problem at all when a supernatural and providential God is allowed. In addition, the apologist can demonstrate that basic areas of human beliefs and practices (communication, science, morality) are rational and logical given this triune God.

By assuming the claims of the Christian worldview, the apologist can set his or her sights on the opponent's worldview. According to Bahnsen, "The apologist then subjects the unbeliever's worldview to an internal critique to show that it is (1) arbitrary, and/or (2) inconsistent with itself, and/or (3) lacking the preconditions for the intelligibility of knowledge (language, logic, science, morality, redemption, etc.)."[55] The apologist's critique seeks to expose the opponent's lack of foundation for knowledge, leaving the expressed worldview in shambles.

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[54]Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic*, 512.

[55]Ibid., 513.

Abductive

Perhaps the most popular approach to assessing worldviews is abduction, or what is sometimes referred to as "inference to the best explanation." With abduction, the main idea is that "a body of data provides evidence for a hypothesis that satisfactorily explains or accounts for that data."[56] Advocates date its usage back thousands of years ago, but it did not develop into a formalized method of thinking until the seminal work of Charles Peirce. In the last half of the twentieth century, abduction has exponentially grown in usage and popularity. Among Christian thinkers, Basil Mitchell appears to be the first to utilize the concept in terms of worldview thinking.[57]

Harold Netland, a prominent evangelical thinker in religious pluralism provides a helpful description of this methodology:

> This approach maintains that a strong case for the truth of Christian theism can be established through the careful accumulation and analysis of a wide variety of data from various dimensions of our experience and the world. While none of these phenomena, either individually or collectively, entail the truth of Christian theism, the argument claims that Christian theism provides a more plausible explanation for the data than do other alternatives.[58]

In terms of specific procedure, abductive worldview analysis would follow three steps.[59] First, the Christian apologist and his or her opponent will find some features common to human existence. Both parties must agree or else dialogue will not continue. Thus, it is important to focus on broad areas where agreement is more likely. Areas commonly identified include human morality, rationality, and mortality as well as scientific, historical, and archaeological evidence.

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[56] John R. Josephson, "Conceptual Analysis of Abduction," in *Abductive Inference: Computation, Philosophy, Technology*, ed. John R. Josephson and Susan G. Josephson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 5.

[57] Basil Mitchell, *Justification of Religious Belief*, Philosophy of Religion Series (Oxford: Seabury Press, 1974).

[58] Harold Netland, "Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth," in *Biblical Faith and Other Religions: An Evangelical Assessment,* ed. David W. Baker (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004), 38-39.

[59] Philip Clayton, "Inference to the Best Explanation," *Zygon* 32 (1997): 386. Clayton proposes a four-step strategy that roughly corresponds to the one above.

Next, both sides will forward their worldview as the best explanation for the given facts. In this step, one observes the arguing "backwards" that characterizes abduction. Abduction seeks to demonstrate that Christianity more plausibly explains the relevant phenomena better than alternative worldviews. Abduction never strives for certainty because, as John Josephson points out, "low-plausibility alternative explanations can be generated indefinitely."[60] Therefore, doubt always remains a possibility. However, the presence of doubt does not eliminate the possibility of knowledge.

Finally, the Christian apologist will contrast his or her position with the opponent's over the matters in question. The contrastive nature of abduction highlights the strength of the theory in contrast to its competitor or what Peter Lipton refers to as the "foil."[61] The discussion concludes as the believer points to the Christian worldview as the superior explanation.

Transcendental and abductive methods of worldview analysis both possess clear and valuable strengths that should, if possible, be implemented in worldview analysis. In the end, abduction reasoning offers a more promising methodology for worldview appraisal though it too can be sharpened. In particular, the structure and content of its approach needs further reflection and harmonization with the biblical framework. This emphasis upon biblical worldview analysis will serve as the dissertation's constructive proposal.

Biblical Worldview Analysis

The penultimate chapter will delineate the *structure* and *content* of a biblical worldview analysis. An essential component in this chapter is biblical theology, which

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[60]Josephson, "Conceptual Analysis of Abduction," 14.

[61]Peter Lipton, *Inference to the Best Explanation*, 2nd ed., International Library of Philosophy (London: Routledge, 2004), 33.

Brian Rosner describes this way:

> Biblical theology is principally concerned with the overall theological message of the whole Bible . . . . *It proceeds with historical and literary sensitivity and seeks to analyse and synthesize the Bible's teaching about God and his relations to the world on its own terms, maintaining sight of the Bible's overarching narrative and Christocentric focus.*[62]

Biblical theology attempts to trace faithfully the plot line of redemptive history, and

argues that this scriptural framework reflects the mind of God. Richard Lints states,

> It is important to see the theological project as embedded in the Scriptures themselves rather than as merely an overlay on them, for this will make it easier to see how the theological project can be reconstructed to more nearly mirror the structure of Scripture . . . . The Christian theological framework is not created by masterful human imagination. In fact, it is not fundamentally a human construct at all.[63]

Since these categories are not arbitrary, it is incumbent upon exegetes and theologians to

follow the flow of redemptive history, otherwise foreign categories can distort the

essence of the worldview. The same holds true for apologists in their defense of the

Christian worldview.

In particular, this dissertation argues for a biblical worldview analysis that

follows the fundamental turning points of salvation and human history: creation—fall—

redemption (CFR). These turning points or epochs are essential because of the

universality of their scope, existential significance, and narrative nature. In addition, the

CFR schema, with its universal and existential dimension, supplies evangelical apologists

with abundant connecting points with dialogue partners.

Each element of the CFR matrix possesses tremendous evidential potential in

terms of commending the Christian worldview. Fields such as cosmology, archaeology,

psychology, sociology, and genetic science support this schema, validating its claim as a

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[62]B. S. Rosner, "Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology,* ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 3, 10.

[63]Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993; reprint, Eugene: OR; Wipf and Stock, 1999), 261, 264.

faithful representation of God's word and creation. Overall, the CFR matrix displays impressive merits as the best structure for engaging in abductive worldview analysis.

In worldview analysis, epistemological considerations play a crucial role. This approach strikes a proper balance between faith and reason, or between theory and evidence. This dissertation will assimilate the insights of epistemologist Robert Audi and philosopher of science Imre Lakatos. In particular, Audi's "moderate foundationalism," a very cogent and sophisticated theory of justification in contemporary epistemology will be explored.[64] Imre Lakatos' influential notion of "research programs" that deals with theories in the realm of philosophy of science will be incorporated in this section.[65] Audi and Lakatos' work finds agreement in positing a fallible set of fundamental beliefs that establish a broader group of derivative beliefs. The parallel with this study is that the CFR matrix stands as the foundational or core belief and the derivative evidence offers external validation as well as critiques of opposing worldviews.

Thesis

In the light of the pressing need for worldview analysis as the bedrock of evangelical apologetics, it seems imperative to reflect further about this topic. Hence, the thesis of the dissertation: this study will critically assess the two primary evangelical methodologies of worldview analysis and offer a constructive proposal. The dissertation concludes that evangelical worldview analysis should follow an abductive methodology and its contents should reflect the fundamental turning points of Scripture—creation, fall, and redemption (CFR).

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[64]Robert Audi, "Fallibilist Foundationalism and Holistic Coherentism," in *The Theory of Knowledge: Classical & Contemporary Readings*, ed. Louis P. Pojman, 2nd ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1999), 266-82.

[65]Imre Lakatos, "Falsification and the Methodology of Research Programmes," in *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, ed. Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

Personal Background and Interest

Soon after my conversion at the age of twenty one years old, I became interested in apologetics, perhaps because of the attacks upon my faith by several of my college professors. My interest only intensified during my master's work at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. In particular, I was part of a weekly evangelistic student group that engaged in intentional witnessing in the community. Through these encounters I observed the objections people offer to the truth claims of Christianity and the insufficiency of my responses to such objections.

My doctoral work at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has greatly broadened and deepened my understanding of apologetics. In particular, I have grown acutely aware of the foundational role and nature of worldviews in the task of apologetics. As mentioned earlier, people operate from within a worldview. Therefore, if Christians are to engage in apologetics effectively, they must be prepared to ascertain and engage opposing worldviews.

During the course of my studies, I observed two primary methods of analyzing worldviews among evangelicals, what I call the transcendental and abductive modes of assessment. Both positions have brilliant, cogent proponents who offer many powerful arguments. However, after studying these issues for several years, it seemed to me that both possess weaknesses that call for a rigorous evaluation of the most effective and faithful approach to worldview engagement.

In terms of theological convictions, I write from a thoroughly Reformed perspective. I believe these theological convictions are important in the formation of a Christian worldview and its defense. However, I do believe apologists from the Reformed tradition, particularly presuppositionalists, have exaggerated the differences and weaknesses of other evangelical apologists. For example, Van Til spent too much of

his intellectual resources sparring with other Christians rather than the unbelieving world, a fact acknowledged by Bahnsen.[66]

In terms of apologetic taxonomy, I mentioned earlier that the relevant categories are problematic on several levels. For the sake of the reader though, I will attempt to lay out my position in light of typical apologetic classification schemes. I believe wholeheartedly in the power and presence of presuppositions that affect human thinking and actions. Moreover, the Bible must stand as *the* source and standard for apologetics. In this regard, I would fall in line with presuppositionalism.

However, I affirm that Scripture itself holds out evidence in support of its claims such as Jesus' miracles and resurrection. Such facts are not stand alone proofs but mesh with the overall biblical worldview and are vitally important in positive apologetics. Thus, my apologetic approach might be appropriately dubbed "presuppositional evidentialism," but as this study will argue, the best strategy is "worldview apologetics."

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[66]Bahnsen, *Van Til*, 674-75 n.268, says, "I too wish that Van Til had given more attention to making practical applications of his presuppositional method—to actually defending the faith against the enemy, rather than debating methodology so much within the family of faith."

CHAPTER 2

TRANSCENDENTAL WORLDVIEW ANALYSIS

Introduction

Without question, Christian apologetics throughout church history has

typically employed philosophical proofs or factual evidences, or some combination

thereof, to demonstrate the veracity of biblical claism. Philosophical proofs include the

various versions of the ontological, cosmological, and teleological arguments. Factual

evidences include historiographical, archaeological, and scientific data supporting such

claims as the inspiration of Scripture, fulfilled prophecy, and the resurrection of Jesus

Christ.

In the twentieth century, a novel apologetic approach burst on the evangelical

scene—presuppositional apologetics.[1] According to this methodology as pioneered by

Cornelius Van Til, the apologist does not argue *to* the Scripture but *from* the Scripture. In

other words, Scripture is not the conclusion of the apologetic endeavor but the starting

point—the ultimate presupposition.

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[1]Some presuppositional apologists are opting for the term "covenantal" apologetics. Scott Oliphint explains, "The label 'presuppositionalism' as an approach to apologetics needs, once and for all, to be laid to rest. It has served its purpose well, but it is no longer descriptively useful and it offers, now, more confusion than clarity when the subject of apologetics arises. There are various reasons for this confusion. For one, there are a variety of ways to understand the notion of presupposition, as well as a variety of 'presuppositionalists' whose approaches differ radically – Schaefferians, Carnellians, and Clarkians, just to mention three. Moreover, there is also the post-Kuhnian predicament in which we find ourselves such that paradigms and presuppositions have come to be equated, and have come into their own, in a way that is destructive of Christianity in general, and of Christian apologetics in particular" [on-line]; accessed 16 June 2005; available from http://mywebpages.comcast.net/oliphint/Writings/ A%20Covenantal%20Apologetic.htm; Internet.

At the heart of presuppositional apologetics is the transcendental argument.

The precise definition of a transcendental argument remains simultaneously controversial

and elusive despite several hundred years of discussion. To get a starting point, though,

Anthony Brueckner asserts that a transcendental argument:

> Elucidates the conditions for the possibility of some fundamental phenomenon whose existence is unchallenged or uncontroversial in the philosophical context in which the argument is propounded. Such an argument proceeds deductively, from a premise asserting the existence of some basic phenomenon (such as meaningful discourse, conceptualization of objective states of affairs, or the practice of making premises), to a conclusion asserting the existence of some interesting, substantive enabling conditions for that phenomenon.[2]

To express a transcendental argument in more formulaic terms, one would state:[3]

There is experience p

The truth of some proposition t is a necessary condition of the possibility of experience p

Therefore t

Applied to presuppositional Christian apologetics, the transcendental argument

states that the Christian worldview as revealed in Scripture is the necessary precondition

for knowledge, ethics, metaphysics, and meaning. Any other starting point ends in self-

contradiction or absurdity. Of special interest for this dissertation is its emphasis upon

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[2]Anthony Brueckner, "Transcendental Argument," in *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2nd ed., ed. Robert Audi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 925.

[3]The form is roughly equivalent to the one found in Quassam Cassim, "Transcendental Argument," in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, ed. Ted Honderich (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 878. Philosophers differ over whether transcendental arguments assume a specific form. Sami Pihlström, "Recent Interpretations of the Transcendental," *Inquiry* 47 (2004): 290, believes ordinary transcendental arguments do not differ from standard *modus ponens*' mode of inference: "No one thing, no specific criterion, no essential property distinguishes transcendental arguments from other philosophical arguments . . . . There seems to be no essential structural difference between transcendental arguments and other kinds of philosophical argument." On the other side, Don Collett, "Van Til and Transcendental Argument," *Westminster Theological Journal* 65 (2003): 289-306, contends that Van Til's transcendental argument is a distinct form of argumentation. John Frame, who has previously disputed this point, concedes Collett's argument; Frame, "Reply to Don Collett: On Transcendental Argument," *Westminster Theological Journal* 65 (2003): 307-09.

worldviews, namely that Christian apologetics must concern itself with entire worldviews: "The fight between Christianity and non-Christianity is, in modern times, no piece-meal affair. It is the life and death struggle between two mutually opposed life and world views."[4] For Van Til, the transcendental argument is the only proper method of engaging in worldview analysis because it alone deals with underlying presuppositions.

This chapter will briefly survey the history of transcendental arguments, focusing on the progenitor of this style of argumentation, Immanuel Kant, as well as recent developments in the philosophical literature. Then, evangelical transcendental worldview analysis will be discussed along the following lines: its proponents, methodology, examples, strengths, and weaknesses. The chapter aims to incorporate insights from the contemporary philosophical discussion in assessing the effectiveness of this approach for worldview analysis.

Historical Survey

In tracing the roots of transcendental arguments, it is possible to note traces of this approach in Aristotle and a few other thinkers throughout history such as René Descartes.[5] However, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant introduced this new philosophical method of reasoning.[6] His importance to this line of reasoning cannot be underestimated. Robert Stern states, "While examples of transcendental arguments can

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[4]Cornelius Van Til, class syllabus (_An Introduction to Systematic Theology_, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1966), 6.

[5]Robert Stern, "Introduction," in _Transcendental Argument: Problems and Prospects_, ed. Robert Stern, Mind Association Occasional Series (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 3.

[6]Eckhart Förster, "How Are Transcendental Arguments Possible?" in _Reading Kant: New Perspectives in Transcendental Arguments and Critical Philosophy_, ed. Emily Schaper and Wilhelm Vossenkuhl (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 3. More commonly, Kant used the terms "transcendental deduction," "transcendental exposition," and "transcendental proof." Robert Stern, _Transcendental Arguments and Scepticism: Answering the Question of Justification_ (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 6.

perhaps be found in the philosophical literature prior to Kant, it is clearly Kant who made such arguments into a primary methodological device in constructing his philosophical system, for which epistemological issues were central."[7]

To establish the existence of synthetic *a priori* knowledge, Kant utilized insights from German transcendental philosophy.[8] Although the term "transcendental" appears in Kant's writings years earlier, it makes its German debut in the introduction to his 1781 edition of *Critique of Pure Reason*: "I call all cognition *transcendental* that is occupied not so much with objects but rather with our mode of objects in so far as this is to be possible *a priori*. A system of such concepts would be called transcendental philosophy."[9]

Kant proposed that which became his paradigmatic transcendental proposal— the "Transcendental Deduction of the Pure Concepts of Understanding."[10] According to Brueckner, "Kant argued . . . that the *objective validity* of certain pure, or a priori, concepts (the 'categories') is a condition for the possibility of experience."[11] Kant aimed to show that concepts such as causation were impossible to deny because in their very denial, one must presuppose their existence. Such concepts are necessary conditions for human experience.

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[7]Stern, *Transcendental Arguments and Scepticism*, 3.

[8]Camilla Serck-Hansen notes that "transcendental philosophy" was used in various ways by eighteenth-century German philosophers. However, they were in agreement that it belonged to the domain of metaphysics. See Camilla Serck-Hansen, "Kant's Critical Debut: The Idea of the Transcendental in Kant's Early Thought," in *From Kant to Davidson: Philosophy and the Idea of the Transcendental*, ed. Jeff Malpas, Routledge Studies in Twentieth Century Philosophy, vol. 13 (London: Routledge, 2002), 23.

[9]Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant in Translation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A11.

[10]Brueckner, "Transcendental Argument," 925.

[11]Ibid.

Before moving past Kant, it must be noted that his presence looms over all subsequent formulations of transcendental arguments, whether good or bad. In particular, some people trace the lack of clarity in current philosophical discussions about transcendental arguments to ambiguities found in Kant. Juliet Floyd calls Kant's notion of a transcendental argument "extraordinarily subtle and malleable."[12] Moreover, A. C. Genova points out that Kant used four different types of transcendental arguments: hypothetical deduction, metaphysical deduction, transcendental deduction, and transcendental refutation.[13] Thus, while some thinkers believe all contemporary transcendental reasoning must go through Kant first, others contend that Kant must be circumvented in order to postulate cogent transcendent arguments.[14]

Contemporary Philosophy

Interestingly, the relative usage and importance of transcendental arguments floundered until recent times. In the academic community, "the central figure in re-launching such arguments was P. F. Strawson in his work on metaphysics, *Individuals* (1959), and his reconstruction of Kant, *The Bounds of Sense* (1966)."[15] Strawson's pivotal work ushered in a new era of interest and confidence in transcendental arguments.

However, this rebirth was curtailed by several powerful objections. In 1967, Stephan Körner wrote an influential critique concerning the notion of a unique conceptual

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[12]Juliet Floyd, "The Fact of Judgement: The Kantian Response to the Humean Condition," in *From Kant to Davidson: Philosophy and the Idea of the Transcendental*, ed. Jeff Malpas, Routledge Studies in Twentieth Century Philosophy, vol. 13 (London: Routledge, 2002), 23.

[13]A. C. Genova, "Good Transcendental Arguments," *Kant-Studien* 75 (1984): 479-80.

[14]Stern, *Transcendental Arguments and Scepticism*, 7-8.

[15]Ross Harrison, "Transcendental Arguments," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward Craig, vol. 9, *Sociology of Knowledge—Zoroastrianism* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 452.

structure.[16] Körner contends that even if a transcendental argument can rule out an alternative proposal, it cannot rule out every conceivable one. Consequently, it cannot establish its conclusion.

A year later, Barry Stroud penned a famous article entitled, "Transcendental Arguments" in which he called into question the bold claims of Strawson.[17] He claimed that modern transcendental arguments rest upon a version of the verificationist principle to bridge the chasm between the conceptual and ontological realms. Kant avoided this dilemma with his transcendental idealism, but this notion is widely dismissed among current thinkers. Thus, the hopes of an "ambitious" transcendental argument providing objective ontological proof drew dimmer. Brueckner comments, "No anti-skeptical transcendental argument has been widely accepted. This is evidently due to the difficulty of uncovering substantive enabling conditions for phenomena that even a skeptic will countenance."[18] The initial enthusiasm produced by Strawson's work has waned to the point that some even question the enterprise.[19] Stern lists five common objections to the notion of transcendental arguments:

> This suspicion is fuelled by many sources: difficulties in giving a full definition of what a transcendental argument is and how it differs from other arguments; disappointed hopes regarding what they can achieve; doubts about their respectability from a naturalistic perspective; a conviction that their apparent goal of refuting scepticism is one that they seem to achieve too easily; or a feeling that, when looked at in any detail, they often rest on dogmatic and unsubstantiated claims that beg too many questions to really satisfy anyone who is not already committed to them.[20]

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[16]Stephan Korner, "The Impossibility of Transcendental Deductions," *The Monist* 61 (1967): 317-31.

[17]Barry Stroud, "Transcendental Arguments," *Journal of Philosophy* 65 (1968): 241-56.

[18]Brueckner, "Transcendental Argument," 925.

[19]Stern, *Transcendental Arguments and Scepticism*, 44.

[20]Ibid., 1.

As powerful and lasting as these criticisms have been, though, the issue remains controversial. Some transcendental proponents have taken exception to Körner and Stroud, claiming their concerns are not insuperable. Some point to the usage of transcendental arguments in fields like "epistemology, metaphysics, philosophy of language, philosophy of moral and political philosophy, and elsewhere."[21] In addition, there have been some attempts at formulating transcendental arguments by several prominent philosophers, including Hilary Putnam, John Searle, and Donald Davidson. These philosophers focused on specific areas—Putnam's attempt to refute brain-in-a-vat skepticism, Searle's argument for external realism, and Davidson's defense that beliefs are generally true by nature.[22] Moreover, some thinkers still assert that transcendental arguments are effective against a modified form of skepticism.

Stern, although recognizing the challenge presented by the five objections listed above, does not believe they invalidate the usage of transcendental arguments. To counter these objections, Sterns asserts,

> It may be that transcendental arguments should be viewed less optimistically than in the 1960s and 1970s, when P. F. Strawson's powerful reading and reconstruction of Kant made them suddenly in vogue; but whilst much of the theorizing *about* transcendental arguments has come to an end, they still continue to be used . . . . It may be that someone committed to a strongly naturalistic programme in philosophy will be suspicious of transcendental arguments; but such suspicions are not worth much if they are merely programmatic and hardly cast doubt on transcendental arguments alone. It may be that the claim to have refuted scepticism using transcendental arguments is premature and too easy; but it could also be said that the proponent of transcendental arguments takes the problem more seriously and deeply than do many of those who have offered other responses to this issue. And finally, it may be that transcendental arguments are often just sketched but hard to spell out in detail; but the same might be remarked of most philosophical claims and positions.[23]

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[21]Ibid.

[22]Ibid., 3.

[23]Ibid., 1-2.

In sum, the nature, function, and usefulness of transcendental arguments remains undecided among analytical philosophers. The various issues are often complex and difficult, and this reality should stir caution among evangelicals who seek to employ them for apologetic purposes.

Evangelical Transcendental Arguments

In a similar fashion as with the philosophical world in general, transcendental arguments came into prominence among evangelical Christian thinkers in the latter half of the twentieth century. Interestingly, though, the progenitor of the evangelical approach, Cornelius Van Til, formulated his arguments decades before the work of Peter Strawson. However, there appears to have been little interaction or influence between evangelicals and the larger philosophical world on the nature and usage of transcendental arguments.

Methodology

Before delving into the content of a transcendental argument, the apologist must understand the need for preliminary engagement with the unbeliever. In this crucial stage, the apologist questions the unbeliever about various subject matters. The aim of this discussion is to discern the lost person's particular worldview, at least the one that is explicitly stated. As stated above, the concept of "worldview" figures very prominently in this approach. Without a sufficient understanding of the opponent's thinking, the apologetic discussion can proceed no further. Bahnsen offers a sample of engaging questions:

> The Christian apologist must seek to uncover what this unbeliever's personal convictions are regarding relevant metaphysical and epistemological matters: e.g. what is the nature of things that are real, how does the world operate, where did it come from, what is man's place in the world, what is man's nature, are there moral or epistemological norms that are not chosen by the individual, what are the criteria for truth, what are the proper methods of knowing, is certainty possible, etc?[24]

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[24]Greg L. Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic: Readings and Analysis* (Phillipsburg,

After obtaining an adequate grasp of the unbeliever's worldview, the apologist should compare it with his or her own worldview. At this point, after comparing the worldviews, the apologist wisely points out that the objections of the unbeliever are actually met by the Christian—as long as the objection is handled within the framework of the believer's worldview. This is a vital point because it demonstrates the cogency and consistency of the Christian argument. For example, if the lost person objects to the notion of miracles, the believer adeptly notes that the apparent problem of miracles poses no problem at all when a supernatural and providential God is allowed. In addition, the apologist can demonstrate that basic areas of human beliefs and practices (communication, science, morality) are rational and logical given this triune God.

After proving the claims of the Christian worldview, the apologist can set his or her sights on the opponent's worldview. According to Bahnsen, "The apologist then subjects the unbeliever's worldview to an internal critique to show that it is (1) arbitrary, and/or (2) inconsistent with itself, and/or (3) lacking the preconditions for the intelligibility of knowledge (language, logic, science, morality, redemption, etc.)."[25] Ultimately, the opponent's worldview is revealed to be contradictory or unable to support its claims. Thus, the opponent must borrow components from the Christian worldview in presenting his or her particular worldview. The apologist's critique exposes the opponent's lack of a conceptual foundation, leaving the expressed worldview in shambles. Ironically, the opponent, lacking an intelligible basis for communication, rationality, and meaning, cannot even "know" the purported objections they previously hurled against the Christian claims of the apologist.

NJ: P & R Publishing, 1998), 512.

[25]Ibid., 513.

Assessing World Religions

Advocates of the transcendental approach repeatedly emphasize humanity's division into two camps—believers and unbelievers. Though there might be a plethora of religions, in reality there are only two worldviews—the biblical and autonomous worldviews, respectively. Van Til argues, "There are two and only two classes of men. There are those who worship and serve the creature and there are those who worship and serve the creator."[26]

In his lifetime, Van Til devoted his efforts toward the naturalistic worldview, apparently never applying his methodology to the world religions. In the same light, Bahnsen acknowledged that defenders of the atheistic/materialistic worldview are "sitting ducks for not being able to defend logic, or science, or the uniformity of nature."[27] The apologetic task becomes more difficult with adherents of other worldviews, something Bahnsen concedes.[28] To his credit, Bahnsen engages in this endeavor more so than any other transcendental proponent, though still on a limited basis. Therefore, it deserves careful attention to examine how transcendental worldview analysis will handle world religions. In addition, Frame's few mentions of other religions will be examined, interspersed where appropriate.

Though Bahnsen discusses the transcendental argument in regard to world religions, he still follows Van Til's strict apologetic bifurcation of humanity:

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[26]Cornelius Van Til, *Christian Apologetics*, ed. William Edgar, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2003), 62.

[27]Greg L. Bahnsen, "Buddhism" (MP3); available from Nagcogdoches, TX: Covenant Media Foundation GB840.

[28]Ibid. To my knowledge, Greg L. Bahnsen's only writing on this subject was a brief article "Presuppositional Reasoning with False Faiths," *Penpoint* 7 (1996) [journal on-line]; accessed 29 June 2005; available from http://www.cmfnow.com/articles/pa208.htm; Internet. This article is expanded and inserted as a lengthy footnote in his *Van Til*, 523-25 n.126.

> In dealing with the advocates of other religions, the Christian apologist should use the presuppositional method in the same way that he would use it with atheists and materialists. That is, he makes an internal examination of the worldview that is offered by whatever religious devotee he is having the dialogue with. The fact that the opposing religionist speaks formally of 'God' (or 'gods') is not a difficulty here, for he must define his specific concept of deity.[29]

Bahnsen goes to delineate the qualitative difference between Christianity and all other

religions:

> The vast majority of world religions cannot even offer epistemological competition to the Christian worldview. There are indeed other sacred books, but they are not at all like the Bible. An internal analysis of the metaphysical and epistemological presuppositions of non-Christian religions shows that they teach, metaphysically, that there is no god, or no personal god, or no god who is omniscient, sovereign, etc. Accordingly, from an epistemological perspective these sacred books are not and cannot be anything like what the Bible claims for itself, namely, to be the personal communication and infallible verbal revelation from the only living, completely sovereign, and all-knowing Creator. The other religious books, on *their own presuppositions*, give no reason to submit to them as true or normative. And as for their own worldviews, these books as pieces of literature can have no epistemological or ethical authority. What they offer (when you can make sense of it at all) is simply one opinion against another.[30]

In the lectures "Biblical Apologetics," Bahnsen discusses various religions

such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Mormonism. Bahnsen proposes a threefold

schema of world religions: transcendental mysticism, immanent moralism, and

counterfeit Christianities.[31] With transcendental mysticism, all of experience is an

illusion because human beings think in terms of differentiation when in reality the world

is one. Therefore, people should strive for the transcendent (true reality) that is

accessible only through mystical encounters. The chief representative of transcendental

mysticism is Hinduism, but Bahnsen also groups it with Sikhism, Hare Krishnaism, and

Ba'haism. The second category of world religions, immanent moralism stresses personal

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[29]Bahnsen, *Van Til*, 524 n.126.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Bahnsen, "Hinduism" (MP3); available from Covenant Media Foundation GB839.

experience (immanent) and lifestyle and behavior (moralism). Representatives of this category include Buddhism (discussed below) and Jainism.

The final category, counterfeit Christianities, includes religious groups that borrow from Christianity important points of doctrine such as a God who is personal, sovereign, and who reveals himself to humanity. The holy writings of such groups are indebted to the Bible, at least in part, and follow Christianity chronologically. Bahnsen further divides the counterfeit Christianity category into three subgroups: Unitarian (Islam and Jehovah's Witnesses), polytheism (Mormonism), and pseudo-messianic (Unification Church) because they believe Jesus failed to accomplish his task. Though these groups exhibit similarities to the Christian worldview, and some even claim to be Christian in their character, Bahnsen considers them biblical perversions.[32]

It is worth mentioning Frame's schemata of world religions. Frame asserts that the distinguishing feature of Christianity is a personal, absolute God. Though Christianity may not be the only religion with such a conception, "it is certainly the case that the major contender for 'absolute personality theism' in our day is biblical religion."[33] With this unique element in mind, Frame categorizes the world religions as biblical, pantheistic, or polytheistic. Like Bahnsen, Frame espouses that biblical religions include Christianity and "Christian heresies" such as Judaism, Islam, Mormonism, and Jehovah's Witnesses which are "influenced by the Bible, but which deny the central biblical gospel."[34] Frame also includes the early church heresies of Arianism, Gnosticism, Sabellianism, Docetism, and Eutychianism. Pantheism has an absolute deity

[32]Greg L. Bahnsen, "Islam" (MP3); available from Nagcogdoches, TX: Covenant Media Foundation GB841.

[33]John M. Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God: An Introduction* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1994), 38.

[34]Ibid., 38 n.6.

that is not personal while polytheism has many personal deities that are not absolute. Frame places Hinduism and Taoism into the category of pantheism. Under polytheism, he includes animism, Shinto, some forms of Hinduism, and the ancient religions of Greece and Egypt.

Buddhism

Bahnsen categorizes Buddhism as "immanent moralism."[35] As noted above, this category emphasizes personal experience (immanent) and lifestyle and behavior (moralism). In his analysis, Bahnsen critiques Buddhism along five lines. First, the goal or purpose of Buddhism is ambiguous. Buddhists strive to eliminate one's personal suffering through self-denial. The destiny of the person, though, is nirvana which is personal oblivion. This seems incoherent, leaving Bahnsen curious as to the motivating thrust behind Buddhism.

Second, Bahnsen attacks the doctrine of reincarnation. In particular, Bahnsen notices the tension between the denial of the self (what Bahnsen calls the "soul") and the teaching of karma in which the conduct of the present life determines a better or worse existence in the next life. If this is the case, it seems unclear as to the nature of reincarnation. Bahnsen quips, "You lose the 'me' in the 're' of reincarnation."[36] Buddhists use the analogy of the flame's being passed to the next candle. Again, this analogy denies personal continuity and strips away the motivation for morality that is vitally important to the Buddhist worldview.

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[35]For his part, Frame admits that Buddhism is hard to classify: "In its original form, it may have been atheistic; there are problems in interpreting the Buddhist concept of 'nothingness.' Clearly, there is no personal absolute in the mainstream forms of Buddhism." Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God*, 38 n.8.

[36]Bahnsen, "Buddhism," MP3.

Third, Buddhists strive to be released from the cycle of death and rebirth and reach the bliss of nirvana. Buddhists describe nirvana as "ineffable," but such a designation is self-contradictory. If nirvana is ineffable, how does Buddhist doctrine know this to be the case? Fourth, if the external world is illusory, or *maya*, the Buddhist's apologetic appeal is illusory as well. Thus, it is absurd for the Buddhist to attempt to persuade the Christian to adopt his or her particular worldview. Lastly, Buddhism fails to explain the presence of evil, both in the creation and in humanity. Without a personal creation, locating the source of evil appears hopelessly problematic.

In analyzing Bahnsen's internal critique of Buddhism, he focused on the logical inconsistency of Buddhism, demonstrating at several points its incoherence. Several points of Buddhist doctrine are self-referentially absurd. For example, to speak of external reality as an illusion contradicts the apologetic task of the Buddhists not to mention all human endeavors. In essence, the Buddhist worldview collapses upon itself. Such a demonstration is important because Bahnsen states at the outset of his lecture that if the apologist can reduce one's opponent to absurdity, he or she can claim victory:

> Don't mistake the needs of persuasion and evangelism with the goal of apologetics *per se*. If a person gives up on rationality, you've got him to cry "uncle" and that's what you want. You've shut his mouth. You are not able to open his heart—only the Holy Spirit does that . . . . When someone says, "We don't have to be rational." I say, "Speak up into the microphone because what you've just conceded is that you lost."[37]

Islam

Bahnsen lectured about Islam and once engaged in a public debate with a Muslim as well as a Jewish opponent.[38] In his lecture, Bahnsen, as noted earlier,

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[37]Ibid.

[38]The debate occurred at Orange Coast College, California, before approximately 750 people. Bahnsen penned a review article in November 1991. The names of the Jewish and Muslim scholars, while mentioned during the debate, were never spelled out in the article. See Greg L. Bahnsen, "Dr. Bahnsen Represents Christianity in

categorizes Islam as a counterfeit Christianity, meaning that it bears similarities to

Christianity but ultimately perverts it. At the outset, he recognizes that Islam is

considered by most people as the greatest apologetic challenge to Christianity. However,

Bahnsen believes Islam, like any other religion, cannot withstand a transcendental

analysis.

The brunt of Bahnsen's analysis is an internal critique of the Koran. To begin

with, the Koran claims to be a confirmation of the Old Testament law and the New

Testament gospel as previous revelations of Allah (Surah 3:2-3).[39] If that is the case,

then the Old Testament's teaching (Deut 13:1-5) requires acceptance that any subsequent

prophecy must conform to previous ones. However, the Koran explicitly contradicts the

Pentateuch, Psalms, and the Gospels.[40] In particular, the Gospels declare Jesus as the Son

of God.[41] Obviously, the Koran denies such an understanding of Jesus. In addition, the

Koran mistakenly describes the Trinity as polytheism, despite the Christian's

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Dialogue with Islam and Judaism at Orange Coast College," *Penpoint* 2.6 (1991) [journal on-line]; accessed 17 November 2005; available from http://www.cmfnow.com/articles/pa123.htm; Internet. Unless noted, the following discussion is from Bahnsen's lecture.

[39]In the debate, Bahnsen notes how the Koran claims to be continuous with the Bible and that those who follow the Koran are not to be divided against those who follow Moses and Jesus; Greg L. Bahnsen, "Islam, Judaism & Christianity, part 1" (MP3); available from Nagcogdoches, TX: Covenant Media Foundation GB984. In Bahnsen's debate, he chides the Muslim to produce evidence for the standard charge of biblical corruption. In addition, Bahnsen points out that the Koran claims it is an inscription of an eternal, heavenly book. In that light, though, how can such a perfect book allow for later abrogation of its earlier contents? Lastly, there exist no prophetic indicators of Muhammad in the biblical corpus. Greg L. Bahnsen, "Islam, Judaism & Christianity, part 2" (MP3); available from Nagcogdoches, TX: Covenant Media Foundation GB985.

[40]Bahnsen also points out factual errors in the Koran such as calling Mary the sister of Aaron (Surah 19:28) and Judas crucifixion in Jesus' place. In his debate, Bahnsen mentions that the Koran claims that Noah's entire family survived the flood (Surah 21:77) while an earlier passage asserted one son drowned (Surah 11:43).

[41]Interestingly, Bahnsen employs C. S. Lewis' famous trilemma in his debate "Islam, Judaism & Christianity, part 1" (MP3).

monotheistic formulation centuries earlier. At this point in the discussion, Bahnsen believes Islam is effectively defeated because of its internal contradictions.[42]

Finally, Bahnsen focuses on the Muslim doctrine of the total transcendence of Allah that is represented in two doctrines. First, *tanzih* holds that Allah possesses no characteristics even hinting of impermanence. It is not possible for the actions or attitudes of the creatures to affect Allah. Second, *mukhalafah* teaches that God's existence is categorically different from the created order. Therefore, Allah cannot be described by any category of human experience such as love, anger, or comfort. This sharp demarcation results in the question of whether humans could know anything about Allah. Islam's theological formulation leads to the contradictory teaching that Allah could not have revealed himself in the Koran because humans lack the categories to understand it.[43]

Bahnsen concludes by recognizing that since anyone can make religious claims, their claims must be examined. Muhammad's credibility is extremely deficient: he performed no miracles and displayed obvious moral imperfections such as twenty years of murders, multiple wives, and family problems. Bahnsen frankly acknowledges

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[42]John Frame and Steve Hays, "Johnson on Van Til: A Rejoinder" [on-line]; accessed 16 June 2005; available from http://www.vantilinfo/articles/johnson on vt.html; Internet. Frame notes that Muhammad never proclaims the Koran's self-attestation. Rather, the Muslim prophet points to the previous revelations to the Jews and Christians to validate his message (Surah 5:46-48; 10:94). Consequently, when the Scriptures of Christianity and Islam collide, "Muhammad's prophetic pretensions are thereby invalidated by his own appointed standard of judgment. Case closed."

[43]Greg L. Bahnsen, "A Critique of the Evidentialist Apologetical Method of John Warwick Montgomery" [on-line]; accessed 14 October 2005; available from http://www.cmfnow.com/articles/pa016.htm; Internet. Bahnsen cites several other weaknesses for the Muslim: "He expects men to *submit* to Allah, yet endorses a doctrine of *fate* (wherein volition is meaningless). He sees a unity for history which destroys particularity, while the basis for any historical variations (the arbitrariness of God's decree) undermines the unity itself. No wonder the Moslem renounces philosophy and logic when it comes to the Koran! The Moslem is an irrationalist-rationalist who can actually know nothing or even understand a divine revelation (his obligation is to simply recite the traditions)."

this approach is evidentialism and that it will not yield great success.[44] Consequently, one must look at Muhammad's failure to articulate a consistent worldview and the impossibility of speaking on behalf of an unknowable deity.

In Bahnsen's debate with the Muslim scholar, several additional features of his transcendental worldview analysis are revealed. In analyzing worldviews, Bahnsen claims two basic issues deserve attention. First, the material adequacy covers whether the worldview glorifies God and does justice to his position and prerogatives. It should accurately deal with human nature and the human dilemma as well as offer a realistic resolution that grants peace and transforms people. Second, the formal adequacy of a worldview deals with its authority, evidence, and credibility. Here, the apologist must examine whether the opponent's claims display arbitrariness, incoherence, and objective evidence. Islam and Judaism fail to provide an adequate account, either formally or materially, for the nature of God, the human condition, and the truths of God's inspired word.[45]

Interestingly, Bahnsen's opening presentation is a well condensed version of redemptive history with a focus on the messiah, Jesus Christ. Bahnsen takes the listeners from creation to Christ, spending a fair bit of time on Old Testament messianic prophecy, particularly, Isaiah 53.[46] Islam and Judaism have no savior to fulfill the Old Testament Scriptures nor can they proclaim an assured word of salvation for sinners. Christianity alone proclaims salvation by grace alone rather than work-righteousness.

For his part, Frame criticizes the attempt to prove Jesus' resurrection at the outset of an aplogetic encounter with a Muslim.[47] The Koran explicitly denies the

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[44]Bahnsen, "Islam," MP3.

[45]Bahnsen, "Islam, Judaism & Christianity, part 1," MP3.

[46]Ibid.

[47]Such an approach is characteristic of "one-step" evidentialists such as Gary

crucifixion of Jesus, thus nullifying a basis for his resurrection (Surah 4:156-58). Hence, a Muslim stands predisposed to reject Jesus' resurrection before the commencement of any dialogue. To the contrary, Christians must engage in preliminary groundwork before tackling Jesus' resurrection.[48]

In another place, Frame seeks to embed historical evidence within a Christian historical framework. Far from relying on miscellaneous facts without an epistemological grounding, Scripture provides both the historical evidence and the "authoritative methods for handling and evaluating that evidence."[49] Dealing with specific religions, Frame avers that the transcendental argument eliminates all religions that do not have a single, absolute personal deity. Moreover, the only Scriptures that reveals this deity is found in the Old and New Testaments. Frame continues, "Since Christianity, Judaism, Islam (yes, even Islam), Mormonism, etc. all claim allegiance to the Scriptures (with some additions and subtractions), the argument between these religious claims will be largely exegetical."[50]

Frame offers a brief outline for an apologetic encounter with a Muslim:

(1) Muslims and Christians agree that the Bible is divinely inspired, but Muslims argue that the Bible has been mistranslated and distorted, and that God has corrected those distortions in the Koran. (2) However, there is no historical basis for the claim that the Bible has been distorted in this way. (3) Therefore, differences between the Bible and Koran must be resolved in the Bible's favor. (4) Insofar as

Habermas who believe that Jesus' resurrection can demonstrate the strong probability of Jesus' claims, and thus by extension, the truth claims of Christianity.

[48]Frame and Hays, "Johnson on Van Til."

[49]John M. Frame, "A Second Response to Martin" [on-line]; accessed 19 November 2002; available from http://www.reformed.org/apologetics/martin/ frame_contra_martin2.html; Internet.

[50]John M. Frame, "Frame's Final Response" [on-line]; accessed 19 November 2002; available from http://www.reformed.org/apologetics/martin/frame contra martin2.html; Internet.

Islam compromises the biblical doctrine of God, it loses the only possible transcendental ground of science, logic, and ethics.[51]

In confronting the worldview of Islam, Bahnsen and Frame primarily employ exegetical argumentation. In particular, they argue that the Koran contradicts itself by simultaneously affirming and denying the biblical revelation. They cast doubt upon Islam's claim of koranic incorruptibility and biblical corruptibility. Overall, the transcendental arguments used against Islam appear much different than against naturalism.

Strengths

The transcendental approach offers two primary advantages: its recognition that worldviews are guided by bedrock principles (presuppositions) and its reliance upon Scripture as the absolute presupposition of the Christian worldview. Though these two strengths are linked, it will be helpful to discuss them separately. A vital component of this strategy, and one that its proponents tirelessly emphasize, is that worldviews ultimately boil down to presuppositions. Bahnsen writes,

> Factual argumentation may become necessary, but it is never sufficient. What one takes to *be* factual, as well as the *interpretation* of accepted facts, will be *governed* by his underlying *philosophy of fact*—that is, by more basic, all-pervasive, value-oriented, categorizing, possibility-determining, probability-rating, supra-experiential, religiously-motivated *presuppositions*. It is at the presuppositional level that the crucial work in defending the faith must thus be done.[52]

In the task of worldview analysis, the apologist cannot ignore the importance of presuppositions. Otherwise, the two interlocutors will continually "talk past" one another, meaning the apologists will present evidence for their respective worldviews that the other person will dismiss if it does not comport with his or her presuppositions.

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[51]Frame, "A Second Response to Martin."

[52]Greg L. Bahnsen, *Always Ready: Directions for Defending the Faith*, ed. Robert R. Booth (Nacogdoches, TX: Covenant Media Foundation, 1996), 71.

A second strength of the transcendental approach is its reliance upon Scripture as the foundation of evangelical worldview analysis. If worldviews are undergirded by ultimate presuppositions, it is imperative that these presuppositions are strong and sure. The word of God provides such a firm foundation. Its source is a perfect, omniscient, and benevolent God. Therefore, the content and truth it contains provides as strong a foundation as possible in which to construct a worldview and to analyze opposing ones.

The transcendental approach rightly interprets the relationship between Scripture, or special revelation, and general revelation. The latter is the universal revelation of God given to humanity through creation (Ps 19:1-2) and conscience (Rom 2:12-14). Consequently, all of humanity knows that God exists and knows the general nature of his being and attributes (Rom 1:18-20). General revelation, then, is a valuable component in the Christian worldview. Indeed, it is inherently intertwined with special revelation. Redemption, or re-creation, depends upon an initial creation. As Van Til writes, "The two forms of revelation must therefore be seen as presupposing and supplementing one another . . . . Revelation in nature and revelation in Scripture are mutually meaningless without one another and mutually meaningful when taken together."[53] Apologists must aver from driving a wedge between special and general revelation with the aim of establishing the former apart from the latter. The two forms of divine revelation are inherently interdependent.[54]

However, as this approach maintains, special revelation interprets general revelation. Without Scripture, human beings remain incapable of knowing God and properly interpreting the world because of their inherent sinfulness that suppresses God's

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[53]Cornelius Van Til, "Nature and Scripture," in *The Infallible Word*, ed. N. B. Stonehouse and Paul Woolley (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1946), 267, 269.

[54]Bahnsen, *Van Til*, 195.

general revelation. In order to overcome this barrier, God revealed himself in redemptive speech and acts throughout history, particularly in the nation of Israel and ultimately, in the life of Jesus Christ (Heb 1:1-3). Special revelation discloses God's triune identity and his plan of reconciliation.

To understand themselves properly, human beings must understand God because he sheds light on their situation that is unattainable through general revelation alone. As John Calvin wrote in the opening of *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, "It is certain that man never achieves a clear knowledge of himself unless he has first looked upon God's face, and then descends from contemplating Him to scrutinize himself . . . . Just as old or bleary-eyed men and those with weak vision, if you thrust before them a most beautiful volume, even if they recognize it to be some sort of writing, yet can scarcely construe two words, but with the aid of spectacles will begin to read distinctly, so Scripture, gathering up the otherwise confused knowledge of God in our minds, having dispersed our dullness, clearly shows us the true God."[55] Proponents of the transcendental approach correctly emphasize the need for both special and general revelation while understanding the primacy of the former.

False Charges against Transcendental Analysis

Transcendental worldview analysis has been attacked on numerous fronts. Some of these critiques are misguided, seemingly due to a lack of careful understanding of the distinctive approach. In particular, these charges are the following: no common ground with unbelievers, no knowledge possible for unbelievers, and fideism. Before looking at the *substantive* arguments levied against this approach, it is worth discussing some of the misguided attempts.

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[55]John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.1.2., 1.6.1, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, Library of Christian Classics, vol. 20 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 37, 70.

No Common Ground with Unbelievers

A primary objection to transcendental worldview analysis is that no common ground exists with unbelievers. According to this view, the transcendental argument begins with Scripture as the starting point but because of the fall of Adam, human beings lack the desire and ability to understand special revelation. Thus, the incommensurable worldviews of the opponents erects an impenetrable barrier.

This objection falters on several counts. First, it fails to understand the difference between neutral ground and common ground, an important distinction in grasping transcendental reasoning. To begin with, the transcendental apologist should categorically reject any notion of neutral ground because God is the creator and sustainer of everything in the universe. Consequently, there is not one inch of creation that remains neutral. Bahnsen states, "Since God is the creator of all things, since He sovereignly controls every event, and since He clearly reveals Himself in every fact of the created order, it is utterly impossible that there should be any neutral ground, any territory or facet of reality where man is not confronted with the claims of God, any area of knowledge where the theological issue is inconsequential."[56]

In terms of finding common ground, one needs to look no further than the very world that God created and presently sustains. Both believer and unbeliever share the same planet, history, human essence, and a host of other areas because God is Lord. Moreover, both parties are made in the image of God.[57] Obviously, the fall of Adam corrupted the image of God, but unregenerate people still bear the image nonetheless. Consequently, they can discern the voice of their Creator. Concerning the biblical view, Van Til notes,

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[56]Bahnsen, *Always Ready*, 45.

[57]For Van Til, the image of God, comprised of both intellectual and moral aspects, provided all human beings, including lost persons, the ability to perceive constantly God's natural revelation.

It is assured of a point of contact in the fact that every man is made in the image of God and has impressed upon him the law of God. In that fact alone he may rest secure with respect to the point of contact problem. For that fact makes man always accessible to God . . . . Only by thus finding the point of contact in men's sense of deity that lies underneath his own conception of self-consciousness as ultimate can we both be true to Scripture and effective in reasoning with the natural man.[58]

In addition to the fact that both persons share the image of God, it is important to recognize that both persons can assume the other's worldview for the sake of argument. The sheer possibility of adopting the other person's worldview for the sake of argument vitiates any notion of strict incommensurability. Clearly, by placing oneself in the worldview of the apologetic's opponent, one is not adopting the other's viewpoint as an accepted conclusion. Rather, this hypothetical assumption allows both persons common ground from which to discuss their opposing presuppositions. This procedure allows the unbeliever "to step" into the world of the believer and hopefully comprehend its merits. Van Til states, "The Christian apologist must place himself upon the position of his opponent, assuming the correctness of his method merely for argument's sake, in order to show him that on such a position the 'facts' are not facts and the 'laws' are not laws. He must also ask the non-Christian to place himself in the Christian position for argument's sake in order that he may be shown that only upon such a basis do 'facts' and 'laws' appear intelligible."[59]

Finally, unbelievers often operate on epistemological "borrowed capital." In other words, they implicitly think and live under the principles and pretenses of a Christian worldview while at the same time explicitly rejecting such a framework. For example, when engaging in scientific experimentation and explanation, an atheistic scientist neglects his or her naturalistic worldview. The scientist seeks a rational, logical explanation. Thus, he or she must neglect the naturalistic framework of matter, time, and

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[58]Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith*, 94-95.

[59]Ibid., 100-01.

chance controlling the flow of universal history. To arrive at such a conclusion, the scientist must opt for a worldview structure that provides a basis for scientific experimentation and explanation. Hence, the scientist unwittingly adopts a worldview capable of such explanation, a position the transcendental interlocutor will contend is only rational within a Christian worldview. In summary, as it relates to establishing common ground, the believer can capitalize on the well-worn paths that the unbeliever has trod to cross over to the Christian position.

Fideism

One complaint commonly lodged against a presuppositional apologetic approach is that it tends towaard fideism. In fact, this charge has been levied by several prominent apologists such as John Warwick Montgomery,[60] Norman Geisler,[61] Mark Hanna,[62] Harold Netland,[63] Clark Pinnock,[64] C. Stephen Evans,[65] and R. C. Sproul, John Gerstner, and Arthur Lindsley.[66] If true, the transcendental method would fail to qualify

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[60]John Warwick Montgomery, "Once Upon a Priori," in *Jerusalem and Athens: Critical Discussions on the Philosophy and Apologetics of Cornelius Van Til*, ed E. R. Geehan (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1971), 391.

[61]Norman Geisler, *Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), 57.

[62]Mark M. Hanna, *Crucial Questions in Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 96.

[63]Harold Netland, "Apologetics, Worldviews, and The Problem of Neutral Criteria," *Trinity Journal* 12 (1991): 44.

[64]Clark Pinnock, "The Philosophy of Christian Evidences," in *Jerusalem and Athens: Critical Discussions on the Philosophy and Apologetics of Cornelius Van Til*, ed. E. R. Geehan (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1971), 425. At this point in his scholarly activity, Pinnock aligned himself with conservative evangelicalism, but subsequently drifted toward less conservative views on scriptural authority. Pinnock would not be included among contemporary conservative apologists.

[65]C. Stephan Evans, *Faith Beyond Reason: A Kierkegaardian Account*, Reason and Religion (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 19, 103.

[66]R. C. Sproul, John Gerstner, and Arthur Lindsley, *Classical Apologetics: A Rational Defense of the Christian Faith and a Critique of Presuppositional Apologetics*

as an apologetic approach since it fails to present rational argumentation for the defense of the Christian faith. The core of this critique relies on the notion of circular reasoning, a fact not denied by Van Til, Frame, or Bahnsen. William Lane Craig states his case as such: "As commonly understood, presuppositionalism is guilty of a logical howler: it commits the informal fallacy of *petitio principii*, or begging the question, for it advocates presupposing the truth of Christian theism in order to prove Christian theism."[67]

In response to the charge of fideism, it must first be noted that the label itself is not always consistently applied. Stephen Spencer, in his article dealing with this matter, writes, "The diversity in the definitions of fideism is striking. Anything approaching unanimity is lamentably silent. It is not that the definitions are antithetical, but rather that their nuances vary significantly."[68] From the outset, it appears that the term may lack a clear, concise locus of critique. However, it seems appropriate to grant that the term carries a general comport, namely a lack of rational argumentation for one's assertion or position. In terms of a fideistic approach to Christian apologetics, Boa and Bowman believe it would argue, "The truths of faith cannot and should not be justified rationally."[69]

With this definition in mind, the charge falls flat against the transcendental argument. First, proponents of the transcendental argument do not advocate shrinking back from engagement with unbelievers, but instead call on Christians to pursue rational, fervent discussion. In their survey of numerous apologists of this stripe, Boa and

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(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 304-09.

[67]William Lane Craig, "A Classical Apologist's Response," in *Five Views on Apologetics*, ed. Steven B. Cowan (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 232-33.

[68]Stephen R. Spencer, "Fideism and Presuppositionalism," *Grace Theological Journal* (1987): 90.

[69]Boa and Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 365.

Bowman assert, "It is a fact . . . [that they] vigorously repudiated fideism in name and substance."[70] In fact, Van Til states, "The Reformed apologist maintains that there is an absolutely valid argument for the existence of God and for the truth of Christian theism. He cannot do less without admitting that God's revelation to man is not clear."[71]

With regard to circular reasoning, Frame counters that circular reasoning is commonplace in the philosophical circles. Frame cites several prominent examples of circular reasoning in the realm of philosophy:

> Every philosophy must use its own standards in proving its conclusions; otherwise, it is simply inconsistent. Those who believe that human reason is the ultimate authority (rationalists) must presuppose the authority of reason in their arguments for rationalism. Those who believe in the ultimacy of sense experience must presuppose it in arguing for their philosophy (empiricism). And skeptics must be skeptical of their own skepticism (a fact that is, of course, the Achilles' heel of skepticism.[72]

Frame distinguishes between broad and narrow circular reasoning. The latter type would consist of a statement such as the "The Bible is the word of God because it is the word of God." Such narrow argumentation, while not necessarily false, fails to be persuasive to an unbelieving interlocutor. Therefore, Frame employs broad circular reasoning that would contend that "the Bible is the word of God because of certain evidences." The argument remains circular because the evidence(s) is controlled by the prevailing presupposition, namely that the Bible is the word of God. However, its broader nature holds greater promise in appearing persuasive to the non-Christian. Thus, although the argument may be circular, it is also as broad as the universe because "every fact witnesses to the truth of God."[73]

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[70]Ibid., 356. The authors categorize Van Til as a Reformed apologist along with others who would differ with his transcendental approach.

[71]Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith*, 104.

[72]Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God*, 10.

[73]Ibid., 14.

In the end, it seems best to agree with Bahnsen's synopsis of those who falsely labeled Van Til a fideist: "Such inaccuracy is difficult to account for. All we can do is point out the inaccurate scholarship of such critics in reading Van Til or in understanding philosophy.[74] Thus, critics may disagree with the methodology and conclusions of transcendental apologists, but fideism fails to stick as a legitimate criticism.

Weaknesses

Before discussing weaknesses of the transcendental approach, two general reservations about it should be registered. First, many philosophers would contend that transcendental arguments are inherently ambiguous as evidenced by the various forms and approaches in contemporary literature. Moltke Gram observes, with a bit of overstatement, "The history of transcendental arguments is the chronicle of a series of disputed claims to a title."[75] Perhaps the best explanation for such ambiguity is the diversity in the Kantian corpus.[76]

Undoubtedly, a minimal core of similarities is traceable among the various formulations. Beyond that, though, the nature and aims of transcendental arguments remain somewhat opaque. Christian Illies, who himself proposes a transcendental argument for moral realism, acknowledges,

> There are many rivals for what is the most adequate account of the structure of transcendental arguments. Further, it is unclear whether all arguments which call

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[74]Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic*, 75.

[75]Moltke S. Gram, "Do Transcendental Arguments Have a Future?," *Neue Hefte fur Philosophie* 14 (1978): 23, quoted in Christian Illies, *The Grounds of Ethical Judgement: New Transcendental Arguments in Moral Philosophy*, Oxford Philosophical Monographs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), 31. Presumably, Illies translated the German text into English.

[76]According to A. C. Genova, Kant formulates four different types of transcendental arguments: hypothetical deduction, metaphysical deduction, transcendental deduction, and transcendental refutation; see A. C. Genova, "Good Transcendental Arguments," *Kant-Studien* 75 (1984): 479-80.

themselves 'transcendental' have sufficient structural similarity to be categorized as one species (or at least one family) of arguments by any account. In addition, transcendental arguments are often linked with other types of reasoning or reflections . . . . It is particularly confusing when philosophers label the resulting *combination* of structurally different forms of reasoning 'transcendental argument'.[77]

Rather than classifying transcendental arguments as a single argument, it seems safer to speak of a "family" resemblance.

Second, Kant never intended transcendental arguments to be used for theological purposes, but for showing certain preconditions necessary for human experience. God, if he existed at all, fell outside of human experience. Sami Pihlström states, "No argument, transcendental or otherwise, can entitle our belief in God in the way in which we are entitled to believe in causality, for instance, or in the forms of pure intuition, space and time. According to Kant, we simply cannot know, either *a priori* or *a posteriori*, that God exists; God is neither an object of possible experience nor a transcendental presupposition of the possibility of experience."[78] God was excluded *a priori*; thus, he could never figure into any transcendental argumentation. Eckhart Forster explains, "About such objects of classical metaphysical speculation such as God, the soul, or the world *toto genere*, which necessarily lie beyond all possible experience, he argues, no theoretical knowledge is humanly possible. The knowledge we do have of things within our field of experience, on the other hand, is inevitably empirical or *a posteriori*, not *a priori*."[79]

The implications for evangelical worldview analysis should appear obvious: if transcendental arguments are variously understood, a precise methodology will always

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[77]Illies, *The Grounds of Ethical Judgement*, 31.

[78]Sami Pihlström, "Pragmatic and Transcendental Arguments for Theism: A Critical Examination," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 51 (2002): 201.

[79]Eckhart Förster, "How Are Transcendental Arguments Possible?," in *Reading Kant: New Perspectives on Transcendental Arguments and Scepticism*, ed. Eva Schaper and W. Vossenkuhl (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 4.

remain extremely challenging. Moreover, if Kant rejected the argument's usage for theological purposes, the question lingers over its applicability. It should be recognized that few Christian apologists have intertwined contemporary philosophical discussion of transcendental arguments and worldview analysis. The waters remain relatively untested as to the viability of the approach and proponents must take into account the uncertainty of the transcendental tradition. Now, an examination of three weaknesses of evangelical transcendental worldview analysis will be put forward.

Psychological and Ontological Chasm

The domain of Kant's transcendental arguments always lies within the empirical world. The point of such arguments was to demonstrate the necessary preconditions of human experience such as causality or the forms of pure intuition—space and time. For Kant, the external world exists but not fully independent of the human mind. It was simply impossible to establish anything intrinsic about external objects. Rather, the human subject imposes its categories upon disparate empirical experience, thus constituting external reality. Kant referred to this doctrine as "transcendental idealism." Its importance is evident by the fact that without it, a transcendental argument is impossible because no bridge exists between the human mind and the external world.

Contemporary philosophers, though, almost uniformly dismiss the notion of transcendental idealism because it compromises the objectivity of knowledge. However, the elimination of transcendental idealism presents contemporary proponents with an apparently insuperable problem: the chasm between psychological and ontological necessity. In other words, even if a transcendental argument could prove the necessity of believing something, it would not entail its existence. According to Barry Stroud, the privileged belief(s) are incapable of proof or disproof:

> One thing that *has* seemed essential to the transcendental strategy is the deduction of substantive truths about the way the world is from nothing more than the

conditions of the possibility of thought and experience of a world . . . . What is problematic is that the conclusions of the most ambitious transcendental arguments without transcendental idealism are apparently meant to state how things are—that they are enduring objects, for example, or that events are related causally, or that there are persons with thoughts or feelings, and so on—in a way that in itself says nothing about anyone's thinking or believing that things are those ways. But such conclusions about the world are to be reached transcendentally by *a priori* reflection on the conditions of our thinking and experiencing the things we do. That appears to mean that transcendental reflections start from statements like 'We think or experience in such-and-such ways' or "We believe that things are so-and-so," and proceeds by necessary steps to conclusions like "Things are so-and-so." We start with what we can call psychological premisses—statements whose main verb is a psychological verb like "think" or "believe"—and somehow reach non-psychological conclusions which say simply how things are, not that people think things are a certain way.[80]

Stroud, the progenitor of this critique, believes that contemporary arguments inherently rely on a form of a verification principle. Anthony Brueckner describes the essence of a verification principle: "The existence of language or conceptualization requires the availability of the knowledge that the skeptic questions (since verificationism has it that meaningful sentences expressing coherent concepts, e.g. 'There are tables', must be verifiable by what is given in sense experience)."[81] Thus, dependence upon the verification principle would render transcendental arguments superfluous since the verification principle by itself accomplishes the anti-skeptical work.

Applying this potential weakness to evangelical worldview analysis, it would constrain the goal of the argument. At best, the argument would prove that it was psychologically or conceptually necessary to believe in the Christian worldview as the necessary precondition for rationality or morality. However, whether this world truly and actually exists remains uncertain. A yawning chasm exists between the psychological and ontological realms that appears, at first blush, unbridgeable.

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[80]Barry Stroud, "The Goal of Transcendental Arguments," in *Transcendental Arguments: Problems and Prospects*, ed. Robert Stern (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 160-161.

[81]Brueckner, "Transcendental Argument," 926.

Noting this difficulty, Sami Pihlströom offers a stinging criticism of theistic transcendental arguments. In particular, Pihlström discusses Charles Taylor's transcendental argument from morality, noting the Achilles' heel of transcendental arguments:

> Taylor does not, it seems, give us a sufficient rational reason for believing in God, and hence his argument is not apodictically certain . . . . Taylor may succeed in showing that we need to believe in God in order to account for the phenomenology of our moral experience: he cannot show that our belief must be true. It is quite obviously one thing to claim that we cannot help believing that p and another thing to claim that our belief that p accurately represents the fact, or the way the world is independently of our beliefs.[82]

David Hoover, in his article "For the Sake of Argument: A Critique of the Logical Structure of Van Til's Presuppositionalism," formulates an objection along these lines.[83] Hoover, though, applies this critique specifically to Van Til's transcendental argument for Christian theism. Hoover pinpoints the transcendental strategy of adopting the opponent's worldview "for argument's sake." According to Hoover, this leads to a result different than Van Til's stated aims: "Hypothetical premises can never be made to logically yield more than hypothetical conclusions . . . . The Christian necessarily both starts and finishes his argument at the level of hypothesis."[84] Thus, the Christian apologist cannot prove the certainty of the Christian worldview, a Van Tillian desideratum, because his or her argumentative strategy is entirely hypothetical or psychological.

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[82]Pihlström, "Pragmatic and Transcendental Arguments for Theism," 204.

[83]David P. Hoover, "For the Sake of Argument: A Critique of the Logical Structure of Van Til's Presuppositionalism" (Hatfield, PA: Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1982) [on-line]; accessed 4 July 2005; available from http://www.ibri.org/11vanTil.htm; Internet. Michael R. Butler, "The Transcendental Argument for God's Existence," in *The Standard Bearer: A Festschrift for Greg L. Bahnsen*, ed. Steven M. Schlissel (Nagcogdoches, TX: Covenant Media Foundation, 2002), 87 n.38, considers Hoover's objection the most powerful argument as well as the most difficult to answer.

[84]Ibid.

Bahnsen, in turn, offers this rejoinder to Hoover:

Because this is an apologetic dialogue (giving reasons, expecting arguments, etc.), both parties have assumed that the true viewpoint must affirm rationality. Van Til argues that if the unbeliever's worldview were true, rationality would be repudiated, whereas if Christianity were true, rationality would be affirmed and required. So while the whole argument may be stated in hypothetical terms, the conclusion is actually established as true, since the hypothetical condition was granted from the outset by both parties. (If the unbeliever realizes this and now refuses to grant the legitimacy, demand, or necessity of rationality, he has stepped outside the boundaries of apologetics. Furthermore, he forfeits the right to assert or believe that he has repudiated rationality, since without rationality assertion and belief are unintelligible).[85]

According to transcendental apologist Michael Butler, Bahnsen's argument silences the opponent for the most part. The transcendental approach establishes Christianity as the necessary precondition for human experience, including rationality.[86] Thus, the opponent cannot rationally reject Christianity. However, the door remains ajar concerning the metaphysical truthfulness of the Christian worldview. As Butler points out, "The problem with this, of course, is that although Christianity may be the necessary precondition of experience, it does not follow from this Christianity is true."[87] It remains conceivable that the experience of these phenomena is necessary but illusory.

If this is the case, the transcendental approach cannot make the strong claim it seeks. Butler comments,

It seems that the best the presuppositionalist can do at this point is to argue that the most likely explanation for the fact the Christian worldview is the necessary precondition is that Christianity is true. But notice that even if it is granted that this is the most likely explanation, the argument for God's existence is reduced to one of probability claim. And if it is probable or even highly probable that God exists, it follows that there is some possibility that He does not exist – even if the probability is relatively low."[88]

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[85]Bahnsen, *Van Til*, 485-86 n.37.

[86]Butler's assertion still remains too strong as the critique in the next section points out.

[87]Butler, "The Transcendental Arguments for God's Existence," 89.

[88]Ibid., 122. In his essay, Butler attempts to overcome this perceived setback. He draws a distinction between the Christian worldview and a conceptual scheme. Though overlapping, the Christian worldview far exceeds a mere conceptual scheme

Thus, it appears that the strong claim of the transcendental strategy has not been reached and the chasm between conceptual and ontological necessity remains unbridged. The specter of probability has yet to be vanquished.

Hypothetical Worldviews

As mentioned earlier, the first substantial critique of transcendental arguments after Strawson's catalyzing work came from Stephan Körner who questioned the notion of a unique conceptual structure. Körner contends that even if a transcendental argument can rule out an alternative proposal, it cannot rule out every conceivable one. Consequently, it cannot establish its conclusion of absolute uniqueness. As Körner writes, "The person propounding a transcendental argument assumes that every and any thinker employs the same categorical framework as he does himself, and tries to show that, and why, the employment of this particular framework is 'necessary'. The defect of all transcendental arguments is their failure to provide a uniqueness-proof, i.e. the demonstration that the categorical framework is unique."[89]

Ross Harrison further explains this problem: "In transcendental arguments, necessary conditions are often demonstrated by discovering the unique conditions which enable some kind of thought to be had."[90] However, the uniqueness of any structure "could only be demonstrated by the elimination of all possible rivals. Yet although we may eliminate all rivals that occur to us, there may always be a possibility that we might

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because it "posits a sovereign, creator God who is both personal and absolute in His nature." Moreover, this God has revealed truths about himself and the world, and this reality forms the basis for believers knowing the truth about the Christian worldview. Butler states, "On the basis of His revelation, therefore, which is itself the necessary precondition of experience, we can know truths about the word of God" (123). However, Butler seems to assume the very thing he asserts, namely the metaphysical truthfulness of the Christian worldview based on God's existence.

[89]Stephan Körner, *Categorical Frameworks* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974), 72.

[90]Harrison, "Transcendental Arguments," 453.

have overlooked or might not be able to envisage."[91] As Richard Rorty colorfully

proclaims about transcendental arguments, "Nothing in heaven or earth *could* set limits to

what we can *in principle conceive*; the best we might do is to show that nobody has in

fact conceived of an exception."[92]

Körner sketches three possibilities of establishing the uniqueness of a

conceptual scheme: comparing it (1 with undifferentiated experience or (2 with other

alternative schemes or (3 examining it from within. The first option yields no such

uniqueness because "even if there were undifferentiated experience, one could at best

show that a certain schema 'reflects' it, and not that some other schema could not also

reflect it."[93] Comparing conceptual schemes fares no better because such a strategy

"presupposes what we have no reason to presuppose: that all possible schemes – all

possible competing schemes – can be exhibited."[94] Accordingly, the last possibility is

not feasible because it would only demonstrate how a scheme differentiates a region, not

that it is the only possible scheme to do so. As J. E. Malpas, observes, "Körner's basic

complaint about all three methods is that no such uniqueness demonstration can rule out

all possible competitors to the scheme in question . . . . Yet ruling out the possibility of

any competing or alternative scheme is just what a uniqueness demonstration must do."[95]

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[91]Ibid.

[92]Richard Rorty, "Transcendental Argumentation and Its Form," in
Transcendental Arguments and Science: Essays in Epistemology," ed. Peter Bieri, Rolf-
Peter Horstmann, and Lorenz Kruger, Studies in Epistemology, Logic, Methodology, and
Philosophy of Science, vol. 133 (Dordrecht, Holland: Reidel, 1979), 83.

[93]Stephan Körner, "The Impossibility of Transcendental Deduction," *The
Monist* 51 (1967): 321.

[94]J. E. Malpas, "Transcendental Arguments and Conceptual Schemes: A
Reconsideration of Körner's Uniqueness Argument," *Kant-Studien* 81 (1990): 234.

[95]Ibid.

Körner's debunking of transcendental arguments has not gone unanswered. In particular, critics believe that Körner failed to exclude the second option, namely that conceptual schemes are always, in principle, comparable. Donald Davidson, though not explicitly dealing with transcendental deductions, argues forcefully for the impossibility of a plurality of conceptual schemes.[96] In his widely discussed article, "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme," Davidson asserts that the ability to interpret language requires a certain degree of agreement between parties, known as the "principle of charity." If the conceptual schemes were incommensurable, no recognition would be possible. Consequently, the notion of two completely alien conceptual schemes is implausible.

Davidson offers poignant insights upon the issue of alternative conceptual schemes. It remains doubtful, though, if his argument carries its purported weight. An important difference remains between the ability to prove the *existence* of another conceptual scheme and to prove the *impossibility* of another conceptual scheme. Davidson, at best, appears to succeed in the former but not the latter. William Maker suggests that the relativist might say:

> Maybe every attempt to present, to articulate an alternative conceptual scheme requires that we translate it into our own. But it does not follow that we can rule out conclusively the possibility of an alternative conceptual scheme. For there may be a view in which we have translated, but massively misunderstood, that is mistranslated, without knowing it. Unbeknownst to us, our translation may be in error. You cannot demonstrate that such mistranslation is impossible; at best what you've shown is that we shouldn't be able to *recognize* the misunderstanding/mistranslation. For even if translation requires agreement about truth conditions, it might be the case that I have unwittingly misconstrued what you regard as truth conditions.[97]

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[96]Davidson's concerns with this argument pertain to conceptual and linguistic relativism.

[97]William Maker, "The Renewed Appeal to Transcendental Arguments," in *Philosophy without Foundations* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 212. Butler adopts Davidson's argument in his defense of transcendental arguments. This move is precarious for two reasons. First, the critique above reveals that Davidson does not accomplish his strong claim. Second, Davidson's proposal is not simply that there is only one conceptual scheme. He denies the very intelligibility of a conceptual scheme because he collapses any sort of scheme/content dualism. Concerning Davidson, Malpas

Unquestionably, Davidson is correct in the recognition that humans possess significant cognitive overlap, otherwise even the notion of disagreement would be incongruous. Davidson reveals severe problems in the relativist's position, but does not completely refute this position. In essence, the other side of the principle of charity demands that "it does not make sense to claim that language *must*, by and large, be 'getting things right' unless we can make sense of at least of the possibility of it by and large 'getting things wrong.'"[98]

What is the significance of the above discussion for evangelical transcendental worldview analysis? Granting Davidson's point about the constraints upon the relative number of conceptual schemes, it still seems possible to postulate hypothetical conceptual schemes or worldviews. Therefore, one cannot rule out a hypothetical worldview opponent of Christianity, especially one that is roughly identical.[99] For example, the opponent might change the doctrine of the Trinity to the doctrine of the Quadrinity or omit a doctrine like the Second Coming of Christ.

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writes, "Our beliefs about the world can only be identified and interpreted through their connection with the world. But the notion of a conceptual scheme is the notion of a set of beliefs considered independently of the world, and this notion therefore makes no sense to Davidson since the connection of those beliefs with the world is already presupposed in their identification and interpretation. Thus there is no sense to the idea of a scheme as distinct from its content." Jeff Malpas, "Transcendental Arguments and Conceptual Schemes," *Kant-Studien* 81 (1990): 243. The end result of Davidson's solution is the elimination of any possible transcendental argument that includes a scheme/content distinction. Thus, traditional Kantian arguments are ruled out as well as ones for the Christian worldview. As Malpas says of Davidson's argument, and borrowing a phrase from Richard Rorty, it may be "a transcendental argument to end all transcendental arguments" (245).

[98]Maker, "The Renewed Appeal to Transcendental Arguments, 215.

[99]It should be clarified that this objection is different from positing actual worldviews that oppose Christianity such as naturalism. If the objection only dealt with a concrete worldview, Christianity would not be stripped of its claim of being a necessary condition.

To counter this objection, Bahnsen rejects the validity of this alleged opponent since it derives its existence from Christianity. In addition, it is the entirety of the Christian worldview that grounds the necessary conditions of human experience, not a stripped down version. The Christian worldview, as Van Til repeatedly asserted, is all or nothing.

However, Bahnsen's rebuttal falls short. The fact that the alternative worldview has derived from Christianity does not negate its validity. According to Butler, the hypothetical worldview only attempts to demonstrate that "while Christianity may indeed be a sufficient precondition, it is not necessary."[100] At this point, both worldviews can claim to be sufficient conditions but neither can claim to be necessary conditions. As for Bahnsen's claim that the entirety of the Christian worldview must be presupposed and not some pared down version, Butler faults Bahnsen for merely asserting this claim and not proving it.

Recognizing that Bahnsen's response is "not completely adequate,"[101] Butler argues that changing the doctrine of the Trinity to the Quadrinity will change other doctrines as well. Butler states, "Christian doctrine is systemic, and a change in one area will necessarily require changes in others."[102] The opponent must spell out the hypothetical worldview and all of its attenuated differences with its progenitor. Until the opponent comes through, the apologist can rest assured that "there is no conceivable worldview apart from Christianity that can provide the preconditions of experience."[103]

Butler concedes, though, that it would be possible to suppose a close but not identical hypothetical worldview. For example, such a worldview might remove the

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[100]Butler, "The Transcendental Argument for God's Existence," 87.

[101]Ibid.

[102]Ibid., 119.

[103]Ibid.

book of Jude from the canon. However, Butler contends that "this is not a worldview that is *relevantly* different from the Christian worldview."[104]

To the contrary, it appears that Butler concedes the weakness of Bahnsen's response but fails to construct a strong refutation of this objection. For one thing, the transcendental approach as advocated by Van Til and Bahnsen allows no room for tinkering with the canon of Scripture in its absolute entirety. Butler's category of "relevant" difference fails to account for the strong language of his mentors. Moreover, Butler's claim is merely asserted and not argued. It seems conceivable to imagine portions of the Scripture altered, supplemented, or deleted without changing the essential content of the Christian worldview.

Clearly, the transcendental argument as formulated by Van Til, cannot logically rule out hypothetical worldviews. The number of basic worldview categories appears relatively minimal.[105] However, the number of derivatives from these worldviews can mushroom rapidly. The transcendental strategy of Van Til seems incapable in principle of excluding the possibility of such derivative worldviews. Harrison reflects on the dilemma of transcendental arguments:

> This argument is most persuasive, however, when applied to cases where it is attempted to establish something not just by elimination, but where the elimination is of all but one of a large and heterogeneous collection of alternatives. The larger the collection and more various the alternatives are, the more likely it is that one has been overlooked. By contrast, if we know in advance that there are only two alternatives to consider, then the argument is not so compelling.[106]

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[104]Ibid., 120.

[105]As argued in chapter 1, the number of viable worldview categories appears to be three: theism, naturalism, and pantheism.

[106]Ross Harrison, "Atemporal Necessities of Thought, or Not to Bury Philosophy by History," in *Reading Kant: New Perspectives on Transcendental Arguments and Critical Philosophy*, ed. Eva Schaper and Wilhelm Vossenkuhl (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 48-49.

In addition to hypothetical worldviews, transcendental arguments fail to rule out theistic worldviews such as Islam and Judaism, the closest actual competitors to Christianity. It remains doubtful if the transcendental strategy delivers its claims of reducing its opponent, either Judaism or Islam, to absurdity. Noted atheist Michael Martin argues that the deity of Judaism and Islam could provide the necessary epistemological foundations for the transcendental argument as well as the Christian deity. Martin states, "Unless objective grounds for distinguishing the two cases are provided, one is entitled to conclude that the exclusion of Islamic and Jewish uses of the argument is arbitrary. Failure to provide such grounds would in turn provide reasons for claiming that a Christian based epistemology is a subtle form of subjectivism."[107] Martin's argument appears unanswerable. It seems that transcendental worldview analysis can demonstrate the necessity of theism but not of Christian theism. The other monotheistic faiths, in particular Judaism and Islam, would apparently *not* be excluded from the conclusion of a transcendental approach.

This weakness of the transcendental approach is revealed in its analysis of Islam and Judaism. With these religions, the only transcendental argument offered concerns Islam's claim of continuity with earlier Scripture while contradicting it at certain points. However, it remains unclear if this is a distinctly transcendental argument or simply basic logic. Beyond that, the other approaches are evidential in nature, involving biblical exegesis and historiographic studies. Moreover, in dealing with these two religions in particular, transcendental apologists are forced to utilize independent criteria. Netland writes, "In presenting their views presuppositionists make widespread appeal to principles and categories which are not presuppositions and which are logically

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[107]Michael Martin, "Martin Responds: Is a Non-Christian Worldview Futile?" [on-line]; accessed 22 November 2002; available from http://www.reformed.org/ apologetics/martin-jones/jones_martin3.html; Internet.

independent of their particular system, e.g. general principles of adequacy, simplicity, coherence, consistency, and the logical principles of identity, noncontradiction, etc."[108] Put simply, transcendental apologists cannot consistently use their method to demonstrate the impossibility of other theistic worldviews. They must supplement their approach with other forms of argumentation and evidence. If Islam and Judaism cannot be defeated transcendentally, this reveals a fundamental limitation of this approach, namely that it only amounts to a theistic proof, not one of full-orbed Christianity.[109]

Canonicity

For proponents of the transcendental approach, the Christian worldview as revealed in Scripture is the necessary precondition of human experience. Scripture serves as the source and judge of all thinking, experience, and meaning. As Bahnsen states, "God's word (in Scripture) has absolute authority for us and is the final criterion of truth."[110] Moreover, Scripture stands in no need of outside attestation, confirmation, or evidence to support its authority. Indeed, the self-attestation of Scripture is the highest form of authority. Frame writes,

> If Scripture is the ultimate justification for all human knowledge, how should we justify our belief in Scripture itself? By Scripture, of course! There is no more ultimate authority, no more reliable source of information, and nothing that is more certain by which Scripture might be tested.[111]

Unquestionably, the Scripture attests the inherent authority and enduring nature of God's word (Matt 24:35). The problem for the transcendental argument

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[108]Harold A. Netland, "Shopping for Truth in a Supermarket of Worldviews," in *Faith and Modernity*, ed. Philip Sampson, Vinay Samuel, and Chris Sudgen (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1994), 109.

[109]Boa and Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 330

[110]Bahnsen, *Always Ready*, 24.

[111]John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God: A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1987), 129.

develops with the notion of the canon of Scripture, in particular the New Testament. Evangelicals affirm the inspiration of sixty books in the Bible. However, nowhere does Scripture explicitly list the canon or even offer criteria for canonization. George Mavrodes states, "The plain fact is that the list of canonical books is nowhere 'expressly set down in Scripture,' nor does the Bible contain anywhere any set of statements from which that list can be deduced 'by good and necessary consequence.'"[112] Consequently, the all-important starting point of the transcendental approach, the Scriptures, is greatly hindered because it is not self-validated by the highest authority, namely Scripture itself.

In the defense of the transcendental approach, it seems reasonable to warrant the full inclusion of the Old Testament canon because of Jesus' personal affirmation of "the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms" (Luke 24:44).[113] In the New Testament, the words of Jesus would carry self-attestation as the incarnate Son of God. Also, the apostles Paul and Peter on several occasions indicated that their teachings bore divine authority (1 Cor 14:37; 1 Thess 2:13; 2 Thess 2:15; 2 Pet 1:20-21).

The question arises though: How do Christians know that the other portions of the New Testament are inspired? Jesus promised the apostles that the coming Holy Spirit would "teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (John 14:26). However, this does not necessarily imply divine inspiration nor do any of their writings offer self-attestation as Scripture. Further, several books were penned by individuals who were not apostles (Mark, Luke, James, and Jude). To affirm the

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[112]George I. Mavrodes, "Revelation and Epistemology," in the *Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark: A Festschrift*, ed. Ronald H. Nash (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1968), 251. The quotation marks within Mavrodes' quote indicate his citation of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Mavrodes' critique was aimed at Gordon Clark's deductive usage of Scripture and proved insightful for this application to transcendental worldview analysis.

[113]It is not the purpose here to discuss the matters of the books of the Old Testament canon, including the apocrypha. The traditional designation seems well evidenced and thus will be assumed.

canonicity of these writings, one must accept the testimony of the early church fathers because they lack self-validation.

With that said, it needs to be made clear that the early church did not *make* these writings inspired or authoritative. The writings inherently possessed such characteristics, and the church *recognized* them as such. In an article about the canon, Bahnsen draws a distinction between "the nature of the canon" and "the recognition of certain writings as canonical." He states, "The legitimate authority of canonical books exists independently of their being personally acknowledged as authoritative by any individual or group. The nature (or gounds) of canonicity is thus logically distinct from the history (or recognition) of canonicity."[114] Evangelical theology clearly affirms this understanding of the inspiration of Scripture and its canonization.

The rub, though, comes with the transcendental apologist's claim that Scripture must offer self-attestation, coupled with the claim that one must assume all or none of it.[115] Bahnsen writes, "Only God can identify His own word. Thus God's word must attest to itself – *must* witness to its own divine character and origin."[116] However, this attestation is indeed lacking in significant portions of the New Testament. The shrewd critic will always inquire about the authority of the unattested Scriptures, forcing the apologist to resort to external validation. These writings, it can be argued, are inspired but one must broaden the circle of evidence to include the early church's testimony and/or the inner witness of the Holy Spirit. Such a maneuver, though necessary,

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[114]Greg L. Bahnsen, "The Concept and Importance of Canonicity," *Antithesis* 1:5 (1990) [journal on-line]; accessed 14 July 2005;available from http://www.cmfnow.com/articles/pt093.htm; Internet.

[115]Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic*, 202.

[116]Bahnsen, "The Concept and Importance of Canonicity." Italics mine.

effectively cripples the stronger claim of the self-attestation of the entire Scripture.[117]

This claim is part and parcel with transcendental worldview analysis.

Value of Transcendental Arguments

While transcendental arguments are not fully applicable at the worldview level,

they still possess great value for the Christian apologist in three areas. First,

transcendental arguments can prove the existence of important aspects of the Christian

worldview such as the law of noncontradiction and external realism.[118] Regarding the

former, Christian Illies explains, "The necessary condition for the possibility of any

intelligible sceptical assertion is that the principle of non-contradiction is valid.

Therefore, a sceptic cannot deny the principle without self-defeat."[119] Ultimately, the

relationship between the law of non-contradiction and transcendental arguments are

mutually necessary. Ralph Walker writes, "It is therefore a presupposition of any

transcendental argument, and a presupposition of any argument at all, that the rules of

elementary logic should be valid. To say this, however, is effectively to provide a

transcendental argument for their validity."[120]

Related to this benefit, transcendental arguments can offer powerful refutations

of certain elements of opposing worldviews. Naturalism, for example, is susceptible to

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[117]Frame, *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 131. Frame agrees with the notion of a "broad circle" as he would include findings from history, philosophy, and archaeology. However, for Van Til and Bahnsen, such findings would not provide the necessary attestation for employing Scripture as a starting point.

[118]For a defense of external realism, see John Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1995), chap. 8.

[119]Illies, *The Grounds of Ethical Judgement*, 45. Justification for the law of non-contradiction is "apagogic," meaning that it "does not have a necessity deduced from any presupposed axioms, but it is seen to be true because it cannot reasonably be questioned and thus it cannot be false" (46).

[120]Ralph Walker, "Transcendental Arguments against Physicalism," in *Objections to Physicalism*, ed. Howard Robinson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 62.

devastating transcendental analysis. Walker writes,

> Transcendental arguments can help us establish certain things which are incompatible with a thoroughgoing materialism. One of these is that there are in the universe certain objective laws, which cannot themselves be material (in any plausible sense of that word) or reducible to anything material. Another is that there are persons, beings who are capable of following these laws or of failing to follow them. Such persons may be material entities in the sense that they are made of matter, but their behaviour in following laws cannot adequately be accounted for in materialistic terms.[121]

The law of non-contradiction reduces worldviews with conflicting elements to absurdity. One thinks of the many contradictions in pantheistic worldviews as noted above in the discussion of Buddhism.

Third, transcendental arguments are usable in debates over the existence of God.[122] Several notable examples of theistic transcendental arguments have been formulated in recent years. With human knowledge, Alvin Plantinga's warrant epistemology, while not explicitly referred to as "transcendental," certainly bears great affinity.[123] James Anderson explains, "By an analysis of the necessary and sufficient conditions for warrant, the argument from proper function contends that our having belief-producing faculties constructed according to a good design plan is precondition of our having knowledge."[124] The strong implication is that the design plans bears the marks of God's handiwork.

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[121]Ibid., 61.

[122]James Anderson, "If Knowledge Then God: The Epistemological Theistic Arguments of Plantinga and Van Til," *Calvin Theological Journal* (2005): 15, makes this interesting assessment: "Van Til considered these to be representative illustrations or applications of his apologetic strategy; as such, they are perhaps best thought of as subarguments of one overall transcendental argument. But despite Van Til's all-or-nothing rhetoric, such arguments may also be taken as self-contained theistic arguments in their own right, albeit ones rather more modest in their scope and conclusions."

[123]William Lane Craig calls Plantinga's work an "extended transcendental theistic argument." Craig, "A Classical Apologist's Response," in *Five Views on Apologetics*, ed. Steven B. Cowan (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 234.

[124]Anderson, "If Knowledge Then God," 26.

Stephen Parrish proposes a transcendental argument along the lines that "the existence of the God of classical theism is a necessary presupposition for all justified belief."[125] Parrish argues that a chance universe or a necessary universe (equivalent to naturalistic and pantheistic worldviews) destroy the possibility of knowledge because "neither can successfully account for the universe as it is, and . . . neither can provide a justification for any thought or proof at all."[126]

Finally, prominent Christian ethicist Gordon Graham turns the problem of evil into a case for God. Graham states his argument as such: "The existence of an omnipotent, benevolent, divine Providence is a necessary presupposition of hopeful endeavour in the face of evil. It only *begins* to do so, however, because for all that has been said so far, it is open to us to conclude that moral endeavour, our moral endeavour, is indeed hopeless, which is to say, based upon the false belief that a world such as ours can be significantly improved by merely human moral agents."[127] Graham contends that God must exist as the necessary condition for humans to persist in such a radically wicked world.

As powerful as these theistic arguments are, they too are constrained by the nature of the transcendental argument itself. In other words, they can only demonstrate that it is conceptually necessary to believe that God exists, not that his existence is ontologically necessary. However, to compel the opponent to grant that it is necessary to believe in God's existence possesses apologetic value in dealing with adherents of naturalistic or pantheistic worldviews.

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[125]Stephen E. Parrish, *God and Necessity: A Defense of Classical Theism* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1997), ix.

[126]Ibid., 184.

[127]Gordon Graham, *Evil and Christian Ethics,* New Studies in Christian Ethics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 105.

In light of the failure of "ambitious" transcendental arguments, several prominent thinkers opt for a "self-directed" transcendental argument. Cassam states his rationale for a self-directed version:

> On this reading, transcendental arguments might be described as *self-directed* rather than as world-directed. Just as world-directed arguments tell us something about the nature of the world in which our thinking and experience takes place, so self-directed arguments tell us something about the cognitive faculties of the thinking or knowing self. If it is a necessary condition of the possibility of a certain cognitive achievement that our cognitive faculties are thus and so, then, given the assumption that the achievement is actual; it follows that our cognitive faculties *are* thus and so.[128]

Cassam further argues that the purpose of self-directed arguments is explanatory in that "they purport to explain . . . why it is important for us to think of and experience the world in certain ways rather than others."[129]

Deane-Peter Baker applies Cassam's thinking to the question of theism:

> The "modest" or "self-directed" transcendental argument cannot by definition show that God exists, but at best that is the 'Best Account' (in Taylor's term) of our experience that it be understood in theistic terms. While this is a weaker conclusion, it is certainly not powerless. In part the objections raised against the transcendental argument by Stroud and others are raised on behalf of the mythical 'skeptic,' who will accept nothing that cannot be conclusively proven, no matter how intuitively obvious. The religious skeptic, on the hand, is neither mythical nor as hard to convince, for there are some things that are simply accepted. In this sense, the modest Transcendental Argument for the Existence of God may well prove to have real power, in that it serves as a kind of transcendental inference to the best explanation.[130]

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[128]Quassim Cassam, "Self-Directed Transcendental Arguments," in *Transcendental Arguments: Problems and Prospects*, ed. Robert Stern, Mind Association Occasional Series (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 85. In the same volume, Barry Stroud argues for "modest" transcendental arguments similar to Cassam's approach; Stroud, "The Goal of Transcendental Arguments," 155-72.

[129]Ibid., 109.

[130]Deane-Peter Baker, "Imago Dei: Toward a Transcendental Argument for the Existence of God," in *Explorations in Contemporary Continental Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Deane-Peter Baker and Patrick Maxwell (New York: Rodopi, 2003), 153.

Conclusion

The transcendental argument created an indelible impression upon Christian apologetics. It brought to the forefront the significance of presuppositions and worldviews as well as the vitality of Scripture in apologetic engagement. Moreover, the transcendental argument serves as a powerful tool in analyzing opposing worldviews.

The potency of the strategy, though, falls short of the claims of its proponents. An underlying failure of the strategy remains its inability to provide an indubitable argument that will bridge the chasm between conceptual and ontological necessity as well as categorically rule out alternative worldviews, particularly concrete theistic worldviews as well as hypothetical ones. In addition, the strong claim that Scripture provides divine self-attestation to its entire corpus is without merit. Again, the claim of absolute certainty remains a chimera. Van Til and Bahnsen never fully recognized and responded to the weaknesses of transcendental analysis. The challenges require much more detailed argumentation and analysis that has yet to be produced.[131]

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[131]Anderson examines Van Til's usage of transcendental arguments and notes that Van Til "never formally states his transcendental argument at any time in his published works." Anderson ,"If Knowledge Then God," 15. Anderson attempts to reconstruct what Van Til's arguments would have appeared like, such as the problems of the one-many and the unity of knowledge.

CHAPTER 3

ABDUCTIVE WORLDVIEW ANALYSIS

Introduction

Without knowing the term, people engage in "abductive" reasoning on a daily

basis. In fact, abduction appears to be an inescapable element of human rationality. The

word "abduction" comes from *ab* and *duco* meaning "to lead back," reflecting the pattern

of arguing backward from some phenomenon to its cause or explanation. Christopher

Hookway suggests that abductive reasoning "accepts a conclusion on the grounds that it

explains the available evidence."[1] In more formulaic form, abduction can be represented

by the following:

D is a collection of data (facts, observations, givens).

H explains D (would, if true, explain D).

No other hypothesis can explain D as well as H does.

Therefore, H is probably true.[2]

Examples abound of abduction in daily life. For instance, if all the electric

appliances cease functioning simultaneously, a person typically theorizes that a fuse has

blown. In this case, the theory that a fuse has blown provides the best explanation for the

collection of data at hand, namely the simultaneous lose of electricity in the house. This

is abduction.

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[1]C. J. Hookway, "Abduction," in *Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, ed. Ted Honderich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 1.

[2]John R. Josephson, "Conceptual Analysis of Abduction," in *Abductive Inference: Computation, Philosophy, Technology*, ed. John R. Josephson and Susan G. Josephson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 5.

A classic example of abduction comes in the realm of science from the field of astronomy. Early in the twentieth century, scientists knew of only seven planets in the solar system: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, and Uranus. Intriguingly, it was observed that the orbit of Uranus differed slightly from normal calculations. This phenomenon needed an explanation. Paul Moser describes how the scientists "reasoned that if there were an as-yet-unobserved eighth planet beyond Uranus, the gravitational effect of that eighth planet on Uranus would nicely explain the orbit they actually observed. They postulated that such a planet exists, and eventually they observed it through powerful telescopes right where it was expected to be."[3] The planet, of course, was Neptune.

In addition, abduction is vital to a wide array of human inquiry. Abductive reasoning is implemented by a doctor engaging in medical diagnosis, a historian reconstructing an ancient battle, a scientist conducting experiments, or a lawyer articulating the plaintiff's defense. Paul Thagard offers a nice summation of the prevalence and significance of abduction in contemporary thought:

> In recent decades . . . there has been renewed interest in abductive inference from primary sources. Philosophers of science have recognized the importance of abduction in the discovery and evaluation of scientific theories, and researchers in artificial intelligence have realized that abduction is a key part of medical diagnosis and other tasks that require finding explanations.[4]

Both in routine endeavors as well as specialized thought, abduction plays a crucial role in human rationality.

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[3] Paul K. Moser, Dwayne H. Mulder, and J. D. Trout, *A Theory of Knowledge: A Thematic Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 177. Also, Gilbert Harman states, "Inference to the best explanation corresponds approximately to what others have called abduction." Gilbert Harman, "Inference to the Best Explanation," *Philosophical Review* (1965): 88-89.

[4] Paul Thagard, "Foreword," in Lorenzo Magnani, *Abduction, Reason, and Science: Processes of Discovery and Explanation* (New York: Kluwer Academic, 2001), ix.

The term "abduction," as discussed below, was coined relatively recently. Abduction is used interchangeably with the phrase "inference to the best explanation" in the literature of the philosophy of science and epistemology.[5] Douglas Walton, who has written voluminously on informal logic and argumentation, states, "Abductive inference has often been equated with inference to the best explanation."[6] Vogel defines abduction as *the procedure of choosing the hypothesis or theory that best explains the available data*.[7] For this paper, abduction will serve as the primary designation for the mode of worldview analysis with the understanding that references to "inference to the best explanation" (hereafter, IBE) carry the same meaning.

In this chapter, the notion of abduction will be explored on several levels. First, the relationship between abduction and the other primary modes of reasoning, deduction and induction, will be examined, with a particular focus on the latter. Second, a brief historical survey of abduction will be delineated, including an overview of its relationship with induction, including a discussion of the religious usage of abduction, particularly among Christian worldview thinkers. Third, an outline of abductive worldview analysis will be described followed by examples of such usage with Buddhism and Islam. Finally, the strengths and weaknesses of abductive worldview analysis will be discussed.

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[5]Moser, Mulder, and Trout, *A Theory of Knowledge*, 175. A similar conclusion is reached in Hookway, "Abduction," 1 n.1.

[6]Douglas Walton, *Abductive Reasoning* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2004), 4.

[7]Jonathan Vogel, "Inference to the Best Explanation," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward Craig, vol. 4, *Genealogy—Iqbal* (London: Routledge, 1998), 766.

Historical Survey

The threefold schema of human reasoning—deduction, induction, and abduction—is commonly used in contemporary discussions. In the past, philosophers primarily focused upon deduction and induction in terms of classifying the forms of rationality. The first mode of reasoning, deductive, is clearly distinct from induction and abduction. Geisler and Brooks define a deductive argument as one "where (if valid) the conclusion follows necessarily from the premises; arguing from a general concept to a particular situation."[8] The classic example is the following: Given that all men are mortal and that Socrates was a man, Socrates was indeed mortal. In other words, given these premises, the conclusion necessarily follows: Socrates was a mortal.

Though deduction guarantees certainty, it comes at a price. The reasoning process does not produce certainty but unpacks the information contained in the premises: "What makes a deductive argument valid is just that it has a formal structure such that the conclusion can never say anything more than was already assumed from the start."[9] In essence, deduction is tautological, yielding no new information.

The other primary mode of reasoning is induction. Geisler and Brooks describe an inductive argument as one "where the conclusion follows with some degree of probability from the premises; moves from particular to general."[10] With induction, the propositions are either true or false, but human beings cannot possess absolute certainty regarding which category to place the propositions. There always remains the possibility of error. Thus, probability is the aim of induction. For example,

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[8]Norman L. Geisler and Ronald M. Brooks, *Come Let Us Reason: An Introduction to Logical Thinking* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 189.

[9]Robert T. Pennock, *Tower of Babel: The Evidence against the New Creationism* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1999), 51.

[10]Geisler and Brooks, *Come Let Us Reason*, 191.

A, B, C and D all have qualities p and q.

A, B, and C all have quality r.

Therefore, D has quality r also.

The conclusion is probable but not certain. If the first three letters (A, B, C) correspond to the birds cardinals, robins, and eagles that possess wings (p) and feathers (q), D will likely be true. However, if D is a penguin, the conclusion is false because it possesses wings and feathers but cannot fly.[11] Thus, inductive arguments only reach probable conclusions.

As mentioned above, abduction has generally escaped the close scrutiny of philosophers.[12] Thagard offers a possible reason for this neglect: "The study of abductive inference was slow to develop, as logicians concentrated on deductive logic and on inductive logic based formal calculi such as probability theory."[13] Regardless, such an oversight certainly surprises some contemporary thinkers. John Josephson says, "Considering its apparent ubiquity, it is remarkable how overlooked and underanalyzed this inference pattern is by some 2,400 years of logic and philosophy."[14]

Although abductive reasoning was not closely scrutinized, it still was implemented.[15] One of the clearest and most influential examples of such thought was

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[11]Ibid., 133-34. The example is borrowed from Geisler and Brooks.

[12]It should be pointed out that little work has been done in analyzing work of ancient philosophers. Walton observes, "Greek philosophers were very familiar with forms of inference closely related to abductive inference, and there is a long but not well-known history linking these ancient notions to modern notions of plausible inference. Much historical work on the development of informal logic remains to be done, and much is simply not yet known." Walton, *Abductive Reasoning*, 277 n.3.

[13]Thagard, "Foreword," ix.

[14]John R. Josephson, "Smart Inductive Generalizations Are Abductions," in *Abduction and Induction: Essays on Their Relation and Integration*," ed. Peter A. Flach and Antonis C. Kakas (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic, 2000), 32.

[15]Paul Thagard, "The Best Explanation: Criteria for Theory Choice," *The Journal of Philosophy* (1978): 77, thinks the phrase "inference to the best explanation" is relatively new but the concept is old: "Inference to scientific hypotheses on the basis of what they explain was discussed by such nineteenth-century thinkers as William Whewell and C. S. Peirce, and earlier still by David Hartley, Leibniz, and Descartes."

Charles Darwin's theory of evolution by means of natural selection. In *The Origin of Species*, Darwin explains how his theory accounts for a large variety of facts such as the distribution of species and the existence of atrophied organs. At the same time, these facts remained inexplicable according to the reigning paradigm of origins—creationism. Darwin described his mode of reasoning like this:

> It can hardly be supposed that a false theory would explain, in so satisfactory a manner as does the theory of natural selection, the several large classes of facts above specified. It has recently been objected that this is an unsafe method of arguing; but it is a method used in judging of the common events of life, and has often been used by the greatest natural philosophers.[16]

The dearth of close analysis about abduction remained until the seminal work of Charles Peirce, one of the greatest American philosophers. Peirce excelled in many areas of thought and the field of logic was one of his strongest. In particular, Peirce pioneered the area of abductive analysis. Atocha Aliseda claims Peirce was the first philosopher "to give to abduction a logical form."[17] Peirce identified abduction as a distinct kind of reasoning along with deduction and induction.[18] Moreover, these three forms of reasoning—abduction, deduction, and induction—corresponded with the three stages of scientific inquiry: hypothesis generation, prediction, and evaluation.

Clearly, Peirce's work was programmatic for future research. Interestingly, though, many commentators recognize that the evolution of Peirce's thought concerning abduction is partially to blame for the lack of conceptual clarity among modern

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[16]Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, 6th ed. (New York: Collier, 1962), 476.

[17]Atocha Aliseda, "Abduction as Epistemic Change," in *Abduction and Induction: Essays on Their Relation and Integration*, ed. Peter A. Flach and Antonis C. Kakas (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 2000), 47.

[18]Not all of Peirce's interpreters would agree with this assessment. Tomis Kapitan, for example, believes that Peirce failed to offer a unique form of reasoning: "When the full structure of abductive argumentation – as viewed by the mature Peirce – is clarified, every inferential step in the process can be seen to dissolve into familiar forms of deductive and inductive reasoning." Tomis Kapitan, "Peirce and the Autonomy of Abductive Reasoning," *Erktennis* 37 (1992) [on-line]; accessed 29 June 2005; available from http://www.niu.edu/phil/~kapitan/abduction.html; Internet.

theoreticians.[19] In this sense, Peirce's ambiguity resembles the impact of Immanuel Kant upon transcendental argumentation. Jaako Hintikka wryly but astutely remarks,

> It is sometimes said that the highest philosophical gift is to invent important new philosophical problems. If so, Peirce is a major star in the firmament of philosophy. By thrusting the notion of abduction to the forefront of philosophers' consciousness he created a problem which—I will argue—is the central one in contemporary epistemology.[20]

One of Peirce's chief ambiguities concerned the exact relationship between abduction and induction. In the beginning, Flach and Kakas says that Peirce advocated a more syllogistic approach, but later moved toward an inferential understanding where abduction represents "the hypothesis generation part of explanatory reasoning."[21] In addition, Ilkka Niiniluto notes that Peirce's notion of abduction included the justification of explanations, what is currently labeled "inference to the best explanation."[22]

This ambiguity is reflected in modern discussions. While deduction clearly stands apart from abduction and induction, the relationship between the latter two modes of reasoning is more intertwined, leaving room for debate concerning the precise degree of similarity and distinction. For many, what distinguishes abduction from induction is its "ampliative" capacity of generating a hypothesis, thus going beyond the data.[23] Robert O'Connor writes, "In an abduction, one reasons from an observed effect to an unobserved cause not by examining past cases of such effects to determine what cause

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[19]Flach and Kakas, "Abductive and Inductive Reasoning," 5.

[20]Jaako Hintikka, "What is Abduction? The Fundamental Problem of Contemporary Epistemology," *Transactions of the Charles S. Pierce Society* 34 (1998): 503.

[21]Flach and Kakas, "Abductive and Inductive Reasoning," 5.

[22]Ilkka Niiniluoto, "Defending Abduction," *Philosophy of Science* 66 (1999): 442.

[23]On the opposing side, John Josephson believes, "It is possible to treat every good . . . inductive generalisation as an instance of abduction" ("Conceptual Analysis of Abduction," 19).

was invariably present, but rather by *inventing* a cause considered sufficient to account

for that effect."[24]

To illustrate the difference between abduction and induction, some use the

metaphor of a bucket and a flashlight. Induction is likened to a bucket that people gather

and place facts and information. As Robert Pennock states,

> One tests a hypothesis as one tests a flashlight—by turning it on and seeing whether
> and how well it can illuminate one's surroundings. If the light is dim one might
> have to twiddle the bulb or clean the contacts. If it provides no light at all one might
> have to put in some batteries or just get a whole new flashlight. Particularly
> powerful theories are like searchlights that shed a broad, bright, and sharply focused
> beam upon the world, allowing to see clearly and distinguish its features.[25]

Thus, abduction possesses the ability to *generate* theories whereas induction does not.

For this reason, worldview analysis must be driven by abduction because at their root,

worldviews explain phenomena not simply offer generalizations. Moreover, worldviews,

like science, postulate unobservable entities (God, the soul, etc), thus making abduction

indispensable since sense experience prescribes the limits of induction.[26]

In terms of *evaluating* the content of worldviews, the relationship between

abduction and induction is less clear. Some fuse the two modes of reasoning at this point.

Flach and Kakas write, "We think it is will be useful to unify abduction and induction

when concentrating on hypothesis evaluation. On the other hand, when considering

hypothesis generation we often perceive a distinction between abduction and

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[24]Robert Charles O'Connor, "Abductive Inference to Theological Realism" (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 1989), 23.

[25]Robert T. Pennock, *Tower of Babel: The Evidence against the New Creationism* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1999), 54. Pennock's examples refer specifically to abduction and enumerative induction.

[26]O'Connor writes, "Very often, there is no independent means of verifying the existence of the theoretical entities postulated in scientific theories; thus, scientists accept these entities based solely on their explanatory adequacy. Moreover, just as the scientist utilizes the best explanation strategy to formulate theories regarding the theoretical entities, structures, relations, and process of the natural world. . . the theologian might use the same methodological procedure to garner insight into unseen supernatural entities and processes." O'Connor, "Abductive Inference to Theological Realism," 14.

induction."[27] Some theoreticians claim that abduction covers both theory generation and evaluation. For example, Walton sees "two components of abduction that represent two different tasks undertaken during the execution of abductive reasoning,"[28] For this paper, the latter position will be taken but not without recognizing that abductive worldview analysis will include induction and deduction along the way. Thus, induction might be implanted in the gathering and generalizing of evidence and deduction might be used in a *reductio absurdum* transcendental argument. However, abduction serves as the overarching, umbrella strategy of worldview analysis.

Evangelical Abductive Arguments

This section turns to the subject of Christian worldview analysis. In particular, methodology will be examined along with the important matter of criteria. Finally, abductive worldview analysis will be applied to Buddhism and Islam. In this application, the primary focus will concern the worldviews of these respective religions rather than Christianity. Obviously, in a worldview dialogue, both sides will undergo examination. However, for the purposes of this dissertation, it is assumed that Christianity passes muster in this regard, the focus will stay on its worldview competitors.

Methodology

Heavily influenced by the success and influence of scientific models of inquiry, religious thinkers have also implemented abduction. In particular, some observed the similarities between wide-ranging scientific theories and religious worldviews. William Hasker observes that metaphysical theories or worldviews

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[27]Peter A. Flach and Antonis C. Kakas, "Abductive and Inductive Reasoning: Background and Issues," in *Abduction and Induction: Essays on Their Relation and Integration*," ed. Peter A. Flach and Antonis C. Kakas, Applied Logic Series (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 2000), 27.

[28]Walton, *Abductive Reasoning*, 22.

"function for us in ways that are similar, though not identical, to the functioning of

scientific theories; they serve to unify areas of our experience and make them

understandable to us."[29] Moreover, science uses abduction in explaining the existence of

unobservable entities. The Christian worldview can borrow the same principles in

explaining an unseen deity.

One locus of theistic philosophic revitalization has been in the area of

cumulative case arguments which are essentially abductive in nature.[30] Charles

Taliaferro observes, "There is a growing trend in philosophy of religion to see arguments

as part of comprehensive positions. That is, rather than viewing arguments as completely

independent, solitary lines of reasoning, it is now often thought that several distinct

arguments can be mutually supportive and part of a 'big picture' of what is at stake."[31]

Cumulative case arguments have experienced a tremendous upsurge in

popularity and usage among theistic philosophers. Philosophers realized that such

arguments have application in many fields of study, including religious beliefs.[32]

William Abraham writes on the dramatic change in recent years:

> The revival of cumulative case arguments in modern philosophical theology is a
> remarkable development. The list of participants is impressive by any standards.
> Any thorough historical survey would have to include figures as diverse as Charles

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[29]William Hasker, *Metaphysics: Constructing a World View*, Contours of Christian Philosophy (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 25-26.

[30]Interestingly, the previous generation of philosophical theists generally ignored such an approach for several reasons. First, philosophers spent the majority of their efforts with the nature of religious language. Second, cumulative case argument proponents such as C. S. Lewis and G. K. Chesterton were not professional philosophers, primarily addressing a popular audience. Third, cumulative case arguments appeared lacking in contrast to the standard philosophical arguments. William J. Abraham, "Cumulative Case Arguments for Christian Theism," in *The Rationality of Religious Belief: Essays in Honour of Basil Mitchell*, ed. William J. Abraham and Steven W. Holtzer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 17-18.

[31]Charles Taliaferro, *Contemporary Philosophy of Religion: An Introduction*, Contemporary Philosophy Series (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 8.

[32]Thagard, "The Best Explanation," 92. Thagard asserts that arguments concerning the best explanation are useful with problems such as "scientific realism, other minds, the external world, and the existence of God" (92).

Hartshorne, Richard Swinburne, Elton Trueblood, Basil Mitchell, J. R. Lucas, Austin Farrer, and Gary Gutting. All of these have in one way or another deployed cumulative case arguments to support the rationality of religious belief.[33]

In terms of Christian worldview analysis, Basil Mitchell pioneered the notion that what was at stake was not merely theism but Christian theism. As Abraham notes, "What is striking about Mitchell's case is that it seeks to establish the rationality of belief in traditional Christian theism . . . . What is being supported rationally is a whole cluster of beliefs which hang together and which need to be evaluated not just in isolation but as a whole."[34] Mitchell's work is important because the apologist must be able to distinguish between Christianity and other theistic worldviews, in particular Islam, Christianity's chief religious nemesis in the twenty-first century.

Paul Feinberg asserts that the cumulative case is "not simply a defense of God's existence or theism, it is an apologetic for Christianity. Put a bit differently, if successful, it establishes the Christian worldview, not just a theistic worldview."[35] Similarly, prominent apologist William Lane Craig says,

> A successful apologetic for the Christian faith should be in an appropriate sense a cumulative case and is, therefore, I think, best thought of as a project undertaken by a community of scholars, each contributing from his area of expertise to the cumulative weight of the case for the Christian *Weltanschauung*. The arguments in which I have specialized should be seen, not as links in a single chain of reasoning, which is, after all, only as strong as its weakest link, but rather as links in a coat of chain mail, in which all the links serve to reinforce one another.[36]

Harold Netland, a prominent Christian thinker in the area of world religions and Christian missions, links the approach of cumulative case arguments and IBE (abduction):

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[33]Abraham, "Cumulative Case Arguments for Christian Theism," 17.

[34]Ibid., 23.

[35]Paul Feinberg, "Cumulative Case Apologetics," in *Five Views on Apologetics*, ed. Steven B. Cowan (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 152.

[36]William Lane Craig, "A Classical Apologist's Response," in *Five Views on Apologetics*, ed. Steven B. Cowan (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 173.

What seems the most promising approach involves what is often called a cumulative case argument, or a comprehensive argument based upon inference from the best explanation. This approach maintains that a strong case for the truth of Christian theism can be established through the careful accumulation and analysis of a wide variety of data from various dimensions of our experience and the world. While none of these phenomena, either individually or collectively, entail the truth of Christian theism, the argument claims that Christian theism provides a more plausible explanation for the data than do other alternatives.[37]

Thus, for many Christian scholars, worldview analysis requires abduction or inference to the best explanation that take the form of cumulative case arguments. Wainwright states, "Attempts to show that a worldview is superior to its rivals are inferences to the best explanation."[38]

In terms of specific procedure, abductive worldview analysis would follow three steps.[39] First, the Christian apologist and his or her opponent will find some features common to human existence. Both parties must agree or else dialogue will not continue. Thus, it is important to focus on broad areas where agreement is more likely. Areas commonly identified include human morality, rationality, and mortality as well as scientific, historical, and archaeological evidence.

Next, both sides will forward their worldview as the best explanation for the given facts. In this step, one observes the arguing "backwards" that characterizes abduction. Finally, the Christian apologist will contrast his or her position with the opponent's over the matters in question. The contrastive nature of abduction highlights the strength of the theory in contrast to its competitor or what some refer to as the

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[37]Harold A. Netland, "Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth," in *Biblical Faith and Other Religions: An Evangelical Assessment,* ed. David W. Baker (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004), 38-39.

[38]William Wainwright, "Worldviews, Criteria, and Epistemic Circularity," in *Inter-religious Models and Criteria*, ed. John Kellenberger (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 87.

[39]Philip Clayton, "Inference to the Best Explanation," *Zygon* 32 (1997): 386. Clayton proposes a four-step strategy that roughly corresponds to the one above.

"foil."[40] The discussion concludes as the believer points to the Christian worldview as the superior explanation.

Criteria

Integral to abduction is the usage of criteria to help determine the superior explanation. Abductive theoreticians follow the lead of science in their usage of such criteria. After finding great similarities between worldviews and scientific theories, Hasker states, "It ought to be possible to evaluate metaphysical theories using criteria which are similar to those used for scientific theories."[41]

The choice of criteria remains far from a settled matter as will be discussed below in more detail. Among those engaging in worldview analysis, no universal agreement exists upon a set of criteria. For now, it will be helpful to mention the most commonly acknowledged criteria for determining the best explanation:

1. *Explanatory scope*. The best hypothesis will explain a wider range of data than will rival hypotheses.

2. *Explanatory power*. The best hypothesis will make the observable data more epistemically probable than rival hypotheses.

3. *Plausibility*. The best hypothesis will be implied by a greater variety of accepted truths and its negation implied by fewer accepted truths than rival hypotheses.

4. *Less ad hoc*. The hypothesis will involve fewer new suppositions not already implied by existing knowledge than rival hypotheses.

5. *Accord with accepted beliefs*. The best hypothesis, when conjoined with accepted truths, will imply fewer falsehoods than rival hypotheses.

6. *Comparative superiority*. The best hypothesis will so exceed its rivals in meeting conditions (1) through (5) that there is little chance of a rival hypothesis's exceeding it in fulfilling those conditions.[42]

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[40]Peter Lipton, *Inference to the Best Explanation*, International Library of Philosophy (London: Routledge, 2004), 33.

[41]Hasker, *Metaphysics*, 26.

[42]J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 62.

Other worldview theories posit additional criteria. Well known comparative religions scholar Ninian Smart suggests the following: religious experiences, history, charismatic authority, ethical fruits, "modernity," and psychological relevance.[43] William Wainwright offers six criteria, three of them formal (consistency, coherence, and simplicity), two concerning the system's explanatory power (scope and explanatory adequacy), and the final dealing with the existential effects.[44]

Criteria help determine which interlocutor's worldview provides the best explanation for the relevant phenomena. Obviously, several factors challenge the clear recognition of the superiority of one worldview over another. For one thing, background assumptions greatly influence the verdicts reached by both participants. People do not engage in worldview analysis from neutral vantage points but with presuppositions that affect every aspect of their processes. In addition, the knowledge and communication skills impact the overall presentation on either side. Obviously, the more knowledgeable and adept an apologist, the greater will be the effectiveness. These challenges are daunting, hindering every mode of worldview analysis. While not solving them, this study later seeks the best proposal to handle them.

Buddhism

In this sketch of an abductive analysis of the Buddhist worldview, two powerful arguments will be marshaled. The proponents of these arguments, both advocates of cumulative case arguments, employ criteria in their evaluation of Buddhism.

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[43]Ninian Smart, "Truth, Criteria, and Dialogue between Religions," in *Religious Pluralism and Truth: Essays in Cross-Cultural Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Thomas Dean, SUNY Series in Religious Studies (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 69-70. Smart acknowledges the possibility of other criteria.

[44]William Wainwright, "Doctrinal Schemes, Metaphysics and Propositional Truth," in *Religious Pluralism and Truth: Essays in Cross-Cultural Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Thomas Dean, SUNY Series in Religious Studies (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 81.

In his masterful volume *An Apology for Apologetics*, Paul Griffiths offers a hypothetical apologetic engagement with Buddhism.[45] While not an exhaustive argument, Griffiths' proposal proves illuminating because of his expertise on the subject.[46] In his work, Griffiths examines the doctrine of personhood in Buddhism and Christianity, a vital element in both worldviews. Griffiths' analysis reveals a conspicuous lack of internal consistency in the Buddhist worldview.

Griffiths distills the Buddhist notion of the person into three propositions, doing likewise with Christianity. One of these propositions directly contradicts the Christian statements for Buddhism if wrong. The proposition in question is: "All personal proper names refer to causally connected continua of events and to nothing else; an exhaustive analysis of the human person may be given in terms of these continua of events."[47] Buddhists deny the ongoing existence of a personal self. Instead, a person consists of five aggregates: physical form, sensation, conceptualization, volitions, and consciousness. Thus, the concept of the "self" is analogous to the concept "chariot." There is no one part of a chariot that one would label as such. Rather, the term "chariot" is merely a linguistic convention, not an ontological reality.

Griffiths couples the denial of the self with a common Buddhist presupposition: "Any specific continuum of causally connected events conventionally

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[45]Paul J. Griffiths, *An Apology for Apologetics: A Study in the Logic of Interreligious Dialogue* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991). Griffiths makes the important disclaimer that there is not one Buddhist position, but a diversity of viewpoints within this tradition. The same could be said of all religious worldviews in varying degrees. Griffiths states, "I want only to sketch positions that represent some of the more important trajectories of thought and intellectual strategies visible in the works of the representative intellectuals of each tradition" (86).

[46]Paul J. Griffiths, *Being the Buddha: The Classical Doctrine of Buddhahood*, Toward a Comparative Philosophy of Religions (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).

[47]Griffiths, *An Apology for Apologetics*, 104.

called a human person does not cease with death."[48] The Buddhist doctrine of

reincarnation does not alter the understanding of the person upon death—there remains

no individual self, only the aggregates which existed beforehand. There is no substantial

self that dies and is reborn. Griffiths surmises, "The nature and extent of personal

continuity across many lives is qualitatively no different from the nature and extent of

personal continuity within one life."[49]

The problem lies in the coexistence of the above two propositions. In

particular, the phenomenon of death appears to obviate the criteria that distinguished one

continuum from another. In the present life, the five aggregates differentiate one person

from another, though of course these aggregates do not compose a personal self. In

Buddhist thought, though, the continua of aggregates are distinguished. However, death

wipes away these criteria. Griffiths pinpoints the difficulty:

> The problem is that none of these differentiating characteristics – those things that
> make continuum X John Smith, and not, say Ronald Reagan – may be found in the
> (postulated) continuation of continuum Z in another life. The reborn John Smith
> does not have the previous John Smith's memories, his body, or his character traits.
> In what sense, then, is he John Smith? . . . In order to give content to the assertion
> that a given continuum does not cease with death, the criteria that demarcate the
> continuum in question from others must be stated. We must know – and be able to
> say – in what sense continuum X is still continuum X and not continuum Y. For the
> Buddhist metaphysician this gives rise to an insoluble problem: the precision and
> fullness with which such criteria of demarcation are stated is in inverse proportion
> to the compatibility of the resultant view with the standard no-Self doctrine.[50]

The incoherence of the doctrine of the person leaves the Buddhist worldview on the horns

of a dilemma with no apparent way of escape: "The dilemma may be put this way: If the

self is not a fiction, then reincarnation and karma may be coherently described, but then a

fundamental teaching of Buddhist tradition . . . is in jeopardy. But if the self is a fiction,

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[48]Ibid., 105.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Ibid., 105. As Griffiths points out, the doctrine of *karma* presupposes such
distinctions. By eliminating any criteria to distinguish continua, Buddhists would
contradict an important pillar in its worldview.

then the process of reincarnation is difficult to defend consistently."[51] With either choice, the Buddhist deals a heavy blow to the integrity of his or her worldview.[52]

In his work *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, Harold Netland analyzes Buddhism, in particular Zen Buddhism. In his assessment, Netland applies the moral awareness criterion which can serve as a negative test for worldview analysis: "The adequacy of a worldview depends in part upon its capacity for accommodating and accounting for the basic features of moral experience. In other words, a worldview is called into question to the extent that it is unable to account for, or has commitments that are incompatible with, basic features of morality."[53]

Netland follows the thought of leading Zen Buddhist thinker Masao Abe, who retains a clear Buddhist ontology and epistemology. In the Zen Buddhist worldview, there is a distinction between two levels of truth and reality: "(1) a provisional level in which we normally live and in which distinctions and duality apply . . . (2) ultimate Truth and Reality—*sunyata*, or emptiness—that transcends all such dualities and in which conceptual and logical categories do not apply."[54]

In Netland's application of the moral criterion, he is not arguing that Buddhism is amoral. Buddhism is greatly concerned with morality as evidenced by the Buddha's

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[51]Taliaferro, *Philosophy of Religion*, 182.

[52]Bruce Reichenbach, *The Law of Karma* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 132, says, "We have argued that there is an ambiguity in the Buddhist account of the human person. On the one hand, personal identity is merely ascribed; selfhood is a fiction. We are easily misled into thinking that there is personal identity and continuity when in fact there is nothing but series of events. This perspective entails that rebirth is a fiction, as are the doctrines of karma and liberation. On the other hand, the doctrine of karma is held to have empirical content; karma and liberation are experienced realities. This perspective entails that the person is reborn. We have seen that it falls to karma to provide the objective ground for the personal identity and continuity found in rebirth. These two hands are not consistent. Is the self a fiction or not?"

[53]Harold Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism: The Challenge to Christian Faith and Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 303.

[54]Ibid., 304.

"Four Noble Truths" which explicitly calls for the cultivation of moral virtues in right conduct, speech, and livelihood. Buddhist laity are expected to adhere to the "Five Precepts"—not to take life, steal, speak falsely, engage in sexual misconduct, and drink intoxicating liquor. Buddhist monks are expected to cultivate moral virtue to prepare them for higher degrees of spiritual attainment. Obviously, morality is an important matter for Buddhists. The issue at hand, though, according to Netland, is whether "the metaphysical commitments of Buddhism, and Zen in particular, allow for the moral insights and imperatives we find within Buddhist traditions."[55]

Netland focuses on the lack of ontological grounding for good and evil. For Zen Buddhism, *sunyata* (emptiness) is ultimate reality not God. *Sunyata* transcends all objectification and duality. Abe states, "Buddhism has no need of a notion of one God because the fundamental principle of Buddhism is 'dependent origination.' This notion indicates that everything in and out of the universe is interdependent and co-arising and co-ceasing: nothing whatever is independent and self-existing."[56] This ontological commitment eliminates any sort of absolute distinction between good and evil, a point that Abe clearly recognizes:

> Good and evil are completely dependent on one another. They always co-arise and co-cease so that one cannot exist without the other. There is, then, no supreme good which is self-subsistent apart from evil, and no absolute evil which is an object of eternal punishment apart from good. To Buddhists both the supreme good and absolute evil are illusions."[57]

The denial of a distinction between good and evil runs counter to the beliefs of many world religions, not to mention the daily thoughts and habits of human beings. In particular, most people recognize horrible, atrocious events like the Holocaust as evil.

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[55]Ibid.

[56]Masao Abe, "The Problem of Evil in Christianity and Buddhism," in *Buddhist-Christian Dialogue: Mutual Renewal and Transformation*, ed. Paul Ingram and Frederick J. Streng (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986), 145.

[57]Ibid.

Abe responds to such criticisms by postulating three dimensions of reality and their relationship to evil. The first dimension is the nonhuman realm where such things as tornadoes and floods occur. The second dimension is human interaction and the apparent presence of good and evil. The third dimension is the level of ultimate reality where all dualities are transcended, including good and evil. Here, even an event like the Holocaust is not evil in an absolute sense: "While in a human, moral dimension the Holocaust should be condemned as an unpardonable, absolute evil, from the ultimately religious point of view even it should not be taken as an absolute but a relative evil."[58]

As a whole, Netland finds insuperable problems in the Buddhist worldview concerning the moral criterion. He writes, "In sum, the relativizing of the distinction between good and evil in Zen points to a fundamental twofold problem with Zen as a general worldview: First, it is unable to account for, or explain adequately, the phenomena of moral obligation. Second, Zen's ontology clashes sharply with a widely shared aspect of human experience, namely the awareness of a real and irreducible distinction between good and evil, right and wrong."[59]

Overall, abductive worldview analysis reveals several devastating weaknesses within the Buddhist worldview. Its doctrine of personhood appears to be logically contradictory as well as failing the moral criterion. At the same time, while not developed here, it can be argued that Christianity satisfies the criteria concerning these areas of worldview discussion.

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[58]Abe, Masao, "Kenotic God and Dynamic Sunyata," in *The Emptying God: A Buddhist-Jewish Conversation*," ed. John B. Cobb, Jr. and Christopher Ives, Faith Meets Faith Series (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990), 52-53.

[59]Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 307.

Islam

Of all the major religious worldviews, perhaps none poses a greater challenge
to Christianity than Islam, one of the world's fastest growing religions. As the world
becomes increasingly interconnected, interfaith dialogue with Muslims will be a vital part
of Christian apologetics. Therefore, a penetrating worldview analysis of this major
religion is essential.

A helpful place to examine a worldview analysis with Muslims is the work of
William Lane Craig, one of evangelical Christianity's premier apologists. Craig, though
not a specialist in Islam, has lectured[60] and engaged in several debates with those whom
he deems the "premier" spokesmen for Islam in North America—Shabir Ally and his
mentor, Jamal Badawi.[61]

For Craig, his strategy focuses on the central questions raised between
Christianity and Islam—Who is God?, Who is Jesus of Nazareth?, Did Jesus rise from the
dead?, and How are people saved? In fact, these four subjects encompass the topics
debated with Ally. Such questions are vital elements of worldview analysis in these
religions that share much common ground.

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[60]William Lane Craig, "Equip to Engage Islam" (audiocassette), Signal Hill:
CA, Stand to Reason ministries.

[61]Shabir Ally is president of the Islamic Information & Dawah Centre
International based in Toronto, Canada. He earned a BA in religious studies from
Laurentian University in Ontario and hosts a weekly television program "Let the Qur'an
Speak" viewed throughout Canada. Ally has represented Islam in numerous debates,
dialogues and public lectures in the U.K., Canada, USA, Norway, Trinidad. Shabir
Ally's website accessed 21 October 2005; available from http://www.shabirally.com;
Internet. Jamal Badawi is a professor at Saint Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia,
Canada where he is currently a cross-appointed faculty member in the Departments of
Religious Studies and Management. He completed his undergraduate studies in Cairo,
Egypt and his Masters and Ph.D. degrees at Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.
Badawi authored several works on Islam and researched, designed and presented a 352-
segment television series on Islam, shown in many local TV stations in Canada, the
United States of America, and other countries. In addition to his participation in lectures,
seminars and interfaith dialogues in North America, Badawi was invited as guest speaker
in various parts of the world. Badawi is the founder/chairman of the Islamic Information
Foundation. Online-Islamic-Store[on-line]; accessed 21 October 2005; available from
http://onlineislamicstore.com/jamalbadawi.html; Internet.

A crucial difference between Islam and Christianity revolves around the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Muslims believe that Jesus is a great prophet but not God (Surah 5:75, 115). Therefore, Islam is incompatible with orthodox Christianity. The question remains, "Who is right?" According to Craig, it is futile simply to appeal to Scripture as inspired and inerrant because it leaves an apologetic stalemate. To break the deadlock, one must examine the historical credibility of the respective portraits of Jesus. Therefore, Craig approaches the New Testament as simply a collection of ordinary Greek documents from the first century.[62]

For Craig, the task requires "objective criteria" that historians use in evaluating historical documents, both the New Testament and other ancient sources. Borrowing from the work of New Testament historian John Meier, Craig lists five criteria.[63] First, *multiple, independent sources* decrease the likelihood of theological invention by a common source. Second, *dissimilarity* refers to a saying or event of Jesus that is different from prior Judaism and later Christianity. For example, Jesus' self-designation "the Son of Man" fits this description in that it was not prevalent in antecedent Judaism or in the early church (one appearance outside the four Gospels).

Third, *embarrassment* refers to a saying or event of Jesus that is embarrassing or difficult for the early church to explain, thus making it likely to come from Jesus himself. For example, Jesus' submission to the baptism of John, a baptism of repentance for sin, seems an unlikely invention by the early church in light of Jesus' purported sinlessness. Such awkwardness lends weight to its authenticity. Fourth, *the rejection and execution of Jesus* because of its indisputable historical attestation. It is the best known

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[62]William Lane Craig and Shabir Ally debate, "Did Jesus of Nazareth Physically Rise from the Dead?," [on-line]; accessed 17 November 2005; available from http://www.shabirally.com/debates.asp; Internet.

[63]John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 1, *The Roots of the Problem and the Person*, Anchor Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1991).

fact of the life of Jesus, deriving from independent Christian and non-Christian sources such as Josephus and Tacitus. In fact, Craig argues that other elements and teachings of Jesus can be assessed on whether they lead to the rejection and execution of Jesus. Finally, *coherence* comes into play once an established body of evidence accumulates from the other criteria. Additional facts are accepted or rejected depending upon its conscilience with the established evidence.

With these five criteria in hand, Craig asks, "Which is apt to be more historically reliable?" On one side, the Christian documents were written within the lifetime of the first generation of eyewitnesses, bolstering their authenticity. On the other side, the Koran was penned over six hundred years later by one individual (Muhammad), living in Arabia, and with no independent sources other than the Christian traditions passed down to him. The historical analysis clearly favors the Christian view of Jesus. The criteria gives great credence to the plausibility of the New Testament's portrayal of Jesus while the Koran fails each of the criterion.

In addition, by employing the criteria, three important features emerge about Jesus of Nazareth that clearly distinguish him from the koranic account: Jesus' radical self-concept, trial and crucifixion, and his resurrection. Craig enlists the support of the majority of New Testament scholars to support these unique elements about the historical Jesus.[64] Craig views this approach as a sound, failsafe apologetic because it produces an account that will withstand the Muslim charge of textual corruption because the majority of scholars agree upon the authenticity of these passages. Moreover, these passages are theologically significant because they reveal the uniqueness and authority of Jesus.[65] To

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[64]In the debate, "Did Jesus of Nazareth Physically Rise from the Dead?", Craig notes Jesus' honorable burial and the origin of the disciples' belief in Jesus' resurrection.

[65]Craig, "Equip to Engage Islam" (audiocassette), reveals that his strategy of using historical criteria on authentic passages in the gospels bears great similarity to his dealings with radically critical scholars like those found in the Jesus Seminar.

make matters worse for the Muslim, the Koran commands Muslims to believe the words

of Jesus. If these passages are authentic, they place the Muslim in an impossible position.

If they accept the passages as true, they must believe Jesus' words which means they

cannot believe the Koran's statements denying his divinity. If they deny the passages as

true, they stand at odds with the established findings of historical scholarship.

On the Muslim side, the Koran fails to offer evidence for its claims about the

historical Jesus. In particular, Craig calls the denial of the crucifixion its "most

egregious" historical error. Instead, Allah placed another person on the cross, often held

to be Judas Iscariot. The crucifixion is universally accepted by New Testament scholars,

even critical scholars. Abdul Saleeb writes,

> When we come to the topic of Jesus' crucifixion, we can be confident that we are
> standing on the firmest historical grounds of our faith, whereas, exactly at this point,
> the Qur'an faces its weakest historical claim. If there is one thing that all biblical
> scholars across the whole theological spectrum agree about the historical Jesus, even
> all the liberal scholars whom Muslims love to quote, is the fact that Jesus of
> Nazareth died on the cross. The significance and the aftermath of the cross are hotly
> debated issues, but the fact of his death by crucifixion are beyond doubt.[66]

Thus, the denial of Jesus' crucifixion is the theological equivalent of the "flat earth"

theory.

The Koran also assimilated apocryphal stories of Jesus that the early church

universally rejected. Examples include the fancifully embellished birth narrative,

complete with Jesus' teaching immediately after delivery (Surah 19:25) and the tale from

the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* where Jesus creates birds from clay (Surah 5:110).

Though regarded by the early church as apostolic forgeries, the Koran treats these

legendary stories as factual.

In addition, the Muslim denial of Jesus' crucifixion fails to explain this

particular conviction by the writers of the New Testament who made it the central part of

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[66]Abdul Saleeb, "Islam," in *To Everyone an Answer: The Case for the Christian Worldview*, ed. Francis J. Beckwith, William Lane Craig, and J. P. Moreland (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 366.

their message. The resurrection appearances of Jesus seem incongruous with a prior

crucifixion. Finally, Muslim apologists need to explain why God rescued Jesus but made

it appear that he died on the cross. This act of deception, one of the greatest in human

history, misled the immediate disciples of Jesus and multiplied millions since that time.

Strangely, God waited six hundred years before correcting this misconception via his

revelation to Muhammad.[67] Such an act impugns the goodness of God.

Certainly, the historical evidence lies in the favor of the Christian worldview.

Obviously, the matter of Jesus' death on the cross is essential to the Christian worldview

as it was the atoning work of salvation for all believers. The question remains as to

whether this belief is essential to a Muslim worldview. To this question, Netland answers

"Only Muslims can answer this question."[68] At the least, it strikes a blow to the Muslim

claim concerning the Koran's divine inspiration.

The second plank in Craig's case against Islam is its portrayal of God. With

this argument, Craig assumes the historical reliability of both the Bible and the Koran,

relying instead on theological and philosophical argumentation. If God exists, he must

by nature be the greatest conceivable being. Thus, a perfect being must be perfectly

loving. His contention is that the Muslim view of God is "rationally objectionable"

because of its morally deficient view of God (Ally debate).[69]

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[67]Ibid., 367-68.

[68]Harold A. Netland, *Dissonant Voices: Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 187.

[69]William Lane Craig and Shabir Ally debate, "Concept of God in Islam and Christianity" [on-line]; accessed 17 November 2005; available from http://www.shabirally.com/debates.asp; Internet. Craig defends the Christian conception of God against Muslim arguments. In particular, Craig argues that the trinitarian God is "rationally unobjectionable." Craig insists that Muhammad misunderstood the doctrine of the Trinity, thus leading to the widespread Muslim belief in polytheism. Instead, there is one God but three centers of consciousness.

To begin with, Craig depicts the biblical view of God who loves sinners. In Jesus' teachings (Parable of the Prodigal Son) and actions (fellowship with sinners), he disclosed God's love for sinners, even before they love him. Moreover, Jesus commanded his followers to love not only those who loved them but even their enemies (Matt 5:43-48). In short, the Father's love for sinners is unconditional, universal, and impartial.

In contrast, the Koran repeatedly emphasizes that Allah does not love sinners (Surah 9:105, 2:280, 19:95).[70] Allah is regarded as all-compassionate and merciful, but only if you believe in him and perform good works. Thus, the love of Allah is conditional. For Craig, Allah's love rises no higher than the love exhibited by sinners who only respond to those who first love them (Matthew 5:46).

In addition to Allah's conditional love, the Muslim deity commands the destruction of unbelievers. Craig firmly contends that though Islam is portrayed as a religion of peace, its teachings clearly validate holy war against infidels. Of particular interest are Muhammad's commands in the ninth Surah against pagans, Jews, and Christians because they reflect the prophet's final thoughts about unbelievers. In contrast to the heavenly Father's love for sinners, the Koran enjoins violence if they do not submit to Allah.[71] Even Muslims who fail to carry out holy war are likewise to be killed (Surah 9:52). Finally, martyred Muslims are guaranteed the pleasures of paradise, complete with beautiful surroundings, choice delicacies, alcohol, and voluptuous virgins. Craig puzzles

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[70]Ibid. Ally points to similar biblical teachings, but Craig responds by arguing that the five or six passages are found in the wisdom literature and sound hermeneutics uses clear didactic passages to interpret difficult ones. Craig underscored the ratio of passages describing the love of God toward sinners compared to his hatred.

[71]Craig, "Equip to Engage Islam" (audiocassette), distinguishes Islamic holy war with Joshua's battles against the Canaanites. The latter was divine judgment upon a sinful, wicked people who were given ample opportunity to repent. Thus, Israel was an instrument of judgment, much as God used later pagan empires to judge Israel.

over the heavenly promise of illicit sex and alcohol consumption when such activities are forbidden in the present life. Apparently, Allah rewards with sin.

In addition to being morally deficient with the attribute of love, Allah is not perfectly just. According to Islamic theology, there is no doctrine of atonement. Therefore, the sin of Muslims are never atoned for but simply overlooked, thus compromising the perfect justice of God. In contrast, God atones for sins by the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The Bible teaches that God is both "just and the justifier of the one who has faith in the Jesus" (Rom 3:26). Thus, the Muslim portrayal of God is morally deficient.

Another aspect of love that Craig analyzes is Islam's Unitarian conception of God. Borrowing from Richard Swinburne, Craig asserts that the very nature of love is self-giving. Therefore, if God is to be perfectly loving, he must give his love to another. The creation cannot be the object of divine love because God is not necessarily Creator. In other words, in some possible worlds, God may not have created the universe, thus leaving him no objects to love. Since God's love is necessary, he must love another necessary person. With a Unitarian deity, this requirement cannot be met, leaving God self-absorbed. With a Trinitarian deity, this requirement can be met in the tri-personal Godhead.[72]

Overall, Craig employs an abductive approach to worldview analysis with regard to Islam. Using historical criteria, Islam's version of Jesus of Nazareth lacks credibility while Christian sources yield a unique and authoritative Jesus. In addition, the Islamic conception of God appears morally deficient in both love and justice. The Christian conception of God appears rationally unobjectionable. Gathering these lines of

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[72]Craig, "Concept of God in Islam and Christianity," used the argument concerning self-giving love in the Ally debate.

evidence together, the Christian God stands as the superior explanation to the crucial issues of the historical Jesus and a maximally perfect being.

Strengths

Abductive worldview analysis possesses several significant strengths. First, abduction is an extremely common mode of reasoning used in ordinary life as well as specialized disciplines. As J. L. Mackie states, "There is every reason to believe that this kind of thinking has been and is intelligible to reasonable people at all periods of history and in all cultures."[73] Abduction does not require formal philosophical or scientific expertise to practice. Such training could prove useful in formulating specific arguments, and greater adeptness with such evidence would certainly increase one's effectiveness in worldview analysis. However, the actual usage of abduction lies open for the ordinary person.

Second, abduction allows the apologist to tap into a wide spectrum of evidence such as biblical and theological studies, history, archaeology, comparative religions, and science. The range of phenomena opens possibilities for exploration according to the person's background and interest. In addition, the wide ranging choice of evidence allows the proponent greater options of worldview engagement. For example, one may have little interest or training in science, especially particular fields such as astronomy and biology. Since worldviews cover the entire spectrum of human thought and life, it is necessary to have a corresponding methodology. Abduction fills this capacity.

A third strength is the range of phenomena to choose from removes the burden of producing a decisive, knockdown argument. The advantage here is obvious. No single argument in worldview analysis will likely compel one's opponent to commit to a

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[73]J. L. Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism: Arguments for and against the Existence of God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 5.

Christian worldview. Therefore, if the argument fails to persuade, one is not left without further lines of evidence or proof.

Finally, abduction seems to follow the contours of human thinking with regard to worldviews. For example, its emphasis upon a range of phenomena explains why many individuals switch worldviews only after looking at an assortment of lines of evidence. Likewise, because there is such a spectrum of phenomena to cover, worldview "conversion" is difficult. Those who have engaged in inter-religious dialogue recognize the accuracy of this assessment.

Weaknesses

Question of Criteria

Essential to abductive reasoning is the notion of choosing one theory above competing theories. In his seminal article on IBE, Gilbert Harman wrote,

> In making this inference, one infers from the fact that a certain hypothesis would explain the evidence, to the truth of that hypothesis. In general, there will be several hypotheses which might explain the evidence, so one must be able to reject all such alternative hypotheses before one is warranted in making the inference. Thus one infers, from the premise that a given hypothesis would provide a "better" explanation for the evidence than would any other hypothesis, to the conclusion that the given hypothesis is true.[74]

The question arises as to the process of selecting the best explanation, a question that Harman fails to answer.[75] Inevitably, abduction must employ criteria to determine the superior explanation.

However, the matter of criteria for theory explanation poses potential difficulties for abduction. At issue is whether criteria really adjudicate rival explanations and if so, which criteria does one implement. In both philosophy of science and religion, the matter of criteria selection is hotly debated. Ninian Smart believes that one of the major tasks of the philosophy of religion will be "to clarify the criteria for determining

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[74]Harman, "Inference to the Best Explanation," 89.

[75]Thagard, "The Best Explanation," 76.

the truth as between worldviews."[76] Consequently, worldview abductive analysis must wrestle with these issues. Netland writes, "Perhaps the most daunting task for the Christian apologist in the coming decades emerges from the fact of competing religious and secular worldviews and the accompanying problem of determining acceptable criteria for the assessment of alternative worldviews."[77]

The first critique about the usage of criteria is *arbitrary selectiveness*. In other words, what standards guide the process of selecting criteria for abduction or the evidence to be analyzed? Unfortunately, there are no neutral standards to guide either the selection of criteria or the evidence. Thus, the issue of arbitrariness will inevitably arise with abductive worldview analysis.

Concerning arbitrary criteria selection, typically worldview disputants will not agree on the appropriate ones to choose. For example, in Swinburne's cumulative case argument for theism, a decisive factor tipping the scales in the balance of the existence of God is the criterion of simplicity. In particular, Swinburne believes that the God of classical theism is the simplest explanation rather than a truncated version of the deity. Swinburne writes,

> Theism postulates a God with capacities which are as great as they logically can be. He is infinitely powerful, omnipotent. That there is an omnipotent God is a simpler hypothesis than the hypothesis that there is a God who has such-and-such limited power (e.g., the power to rearrange matter, but not the power to create it).[78]

However, simplicity is a disputed criterion itself, which some reject as invalid. Wilko van Holten writes, "Simplicity is itself a notoriously difficult notion: philosophers

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[76]Ninian Smart, "The Philosophy of Worldviews, or the Philosophy of Religion Transformed," in *Religious Pluralism and Truth: Essays in Cross-Cultural Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Thomas Dean (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 24.

[77]Harold A. Netland, "Apologetics, Worldviews, and the Problem of Neutral Criteria," *Trinity Journal* 12 (1991): 41.

[78]Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 14 n.

do not agree on the proper analysis, let alone the application, of the concept . . . . It is by no means clear that simplicity is an indicator of truth, or even a sign of the long term success of a theory: many philosophers of science tend to see simplicity therefore as a pragmatic rather than an epistemic criterion."[79] Consequently, if the lynchpin of Swinburne's argument falters, it entails a lethal blow to his overall cumulative case approach.

Moreover, the criterion of simplicity might be used in such a way to count against the Christian worldview in a discussion with Muslims who have traditionally and passionately rejected the doctrine of the Trinity. At face value, a Muslim could argue that the Trinity unnecessarily multiplies entities. The three persons of the Godhead mutually indwell one another, a doctrine known as "perichoresis." Moreover, each is indivisibly involved in the creation and sustenance of the world and the redemption of humanity. With such indivisible unity of person and work, would the criterion of simplicity demand a removal of the additional personages, leaving a strictly Unitarian deity? If judged by simplicity alone, some might regard Islam as the simplest and hence best explanation along the lines of Ockham's razor.

Most worldview apologists will appeal to evidence that best supports their position, even if there is agreement about criteria. The Christian worldview is grounded in historical reality, thus it will typically appeal to its correspondence with established facts. In contrast, a Hindu worldview views the reality as illusion, thus it will typically reject an appeal to correspondence with established facts. The criteria selected will reflect the different emphases of the person's worldview.

Several examples will demonstrate this tactic. Jeff Johnson argues abductively for the nonexistence of God based upon the existence of evil in the world. Johnson

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[76]Wilko van Holten, "Theism and Inference to the Best Explanation," *Ars Disputandi* 2 (2002) [journal on-line]; accessed 25 June 2005; available from http://www.arsdisputandi.org/publish/articles/000081/article.pdf; Internet.

adroitly avoids the burden of arguing that God and evil cannot logically exist, a tactic few philosophers of religion pursue because the claim is too extravagant. However, an abductive approach, while more modest, can still deal Christianity a powerful blow.

Johnson sidesteps the standard Christian response of "human free will." He finds the free will defense inadequate, but recognizes it possesses enough plausibility to warrant its belief. Consequently, Johnson focuses on what he calls "physical evil," namely natural occurrences such as earthquakes, disease, and birth defects where no human volition lay at the root cause.

Picking up on a suggestion from Alvin Plantinga that Satan and his angels are the cause of physical evil, Johnson starts his attack. To begin with, such an explanation appears to multiply causes unnecessarily. Employing the criterion of simplicity, Christianity suffers under the hand of Ockham's razor. If a scientist can explain an earthquake sufficiently well through plate tectonics, there seems little need for adding another entity, namely Satan.

Even more penetrating, Johnson questions the evidence in support of Satan's existence. According to Johnson, ultimately the argument is circular:

> The only answer [for Satan's existence] would seem to be the tremendous amount of physical evil in the world. But this is a strange thing to point to as evidence. Physical evil first entered our discussion as an explanatory problem of theism. The account of physical evil in terms of the activities of Satan was an attempt to solve this problem. Do we not now need some independent evidence for the existence of Satan? The major worry that is being expressed here is whether the expanded free will explanation [Satan's free will] is ad hoc.[80]

In response to such attacks, Christians often will point to the "soul-making" theodicy which contends that evil is necessary to develop otherwise unattainable virtues such as patience and courage. Johnson, however, again points to the presence of physical evil, this time the pain and suffering endured in the biological world as a whole. He questions the relevance of creaturely suffering for human spiritual development:

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[80]Jeff Johnson, "Inference to the Best Explanation and the Problem of Evil," *Journal of Religion* 64 (1984): 65.

Only a very small percentage of the total pain and suffering experienced by sentient creatures affects human beings at all, even indirectly. It is very hard to understand why an omnipotent and morally perfect being would be interested in allowing the continued agony of biological survival for creatures that are not moral agents and have no souls to be made or tested. The problem of animal pain counts as a serious explanatory hurdle for the soul-making theodicy. We are never told why this evil is logically required for the shaping of human and angelic souls. It seems quite implausible to suppose that the pain experienced by prey and predator in the depths of the ocean has anything to do with the fabrication or confirmation of human virtues.[81]

Thus, Johnson questions the rationale for animal suffering when it is not their fault as non-moral agents and it (apparently) serves no purpose in the spiritual development of human beings.

The second critique about the usage of criteria is *arbitrary significance*.[82] In other words, participants in worldview analysis may agree upon the criteria to be discussed but disagree upon the significance attached to them. To some, this reveals an inherent weakness of the criteria. Wainwright comments, "While there is some agreement concerning the criteria which are to be used in assessing metaphysical systems, these criteria are vague, indeterminate and difficult to apply . . . . It is not, therefore, surprising that intelligent and informed people can employ these criteria and come to radically different conclusions."[83]

Notable atheist Jeffery Jay Lowder offers a cumulative case argument for atheism.[84] Lowder puts forward standard atheistic arguments such as gratuitous evil,

[81]Ibid., 67.

[82]Certainly, arbitrary selectiveness and significance are intertwined as most apologists will select criteria and evidence that best supports their position. However, their conceptual differences, though slight, can play out variously.

[83]Wainwright, "Doctrinal Schemes, Metaphysics, and Propositional Truths," 83.

[84]Jeffery Jay Lowder, "A Brief Survey of Evidential Arguments for Atheism" [on-line]; accessed 25 June 2005; available from http://www.infidels.org/~jlowder/atheism/overview.html. Before commencing his argument, Lowder writes, "Although I believe that each of my arguments constitute good, independent reasons for believing atheism and rejecting theism, my arguments are even stronger when considered together."

religious pluralism, and biological evolution. Interestingly, he also focuses on domains

that are claimed by theists. Most Christians point to the created order and its rich, diverse

complexity and design. Lowder points to the same created order and asks, "If theism is

true, why would God create a world in which all sentient beings savagely compete with

one another for survival? Does anyone really believe that this could be morally

justified?"[85] Instead of approaching creation from the perspective of design, Lowder

approaches it from the perspective of atheism and finds support for his worldview,

particularly when these worldviews purport to explain the same facts.

Another prominent example of attributing different significance to the same

evidence is found in the work of J. L. Mackie, a leading philosopher of religion in his

time, and also an ardent atheist. His widely read work *The Miracle of Theism*

implements an abductive analysis of theism and finds it wanting. Indeed, Mackie utilizes

the same criteria and lines of evidence as theistic proponents such as Swinburne. He

writes,

> All the evidence that they [theists] can muster is easily explained in natural terms, without any improbabilities worth taking into account. Consciousness and the actual phenomena of morality and valuing as a human activity are explained without further improbabilities, given that the natural world is such as to allow life to evolve, so the only improbabilities to be scored against the naturalistic kind of explanation are whatever may be involved in there being causal regularities, the fundamental laws and physical constants being as what they are, and there being any world at all . . . . In the end, therefore, we can agree with what Laplace said about God: we have no need of that hypothesis. This conclusion can be reached by an examination of precisely the arguments advanced in favour of theism, without even bringing into play what have been regarded as the strongest considerations on the other side, the problem of evil and the various natural histories of religion. When these are thrown into the scales, the balance tilts further against theism . . . . The balance of probabilities, therefore, comes out strongly against the existence of God.[86]

The arbitrary selectiveness and significance of criteria and evidence selection

point to the underlying challenge of abductive worldview analysis: background

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[85]Ibid.

[86]Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism*, 252-53.

assumptions. Though proponents of abductive reasoning strive for an objective method

of choosing among alternative worldviews, presuppositions play an integral and

inescapable role in the process. In particular, background assumptions can override what

is otherwise a better explanation. Day and Kincaid point to the example of Newtonian

physics:

> The mechanistic philosophy which underlay seventeenth-century physics asserted
> that causes cannot act at a distance. Given this picture of causation, IBE would
> naturally favor hypotheses contiguous causal processes over those that did not. Yet
> Newtonian physics fell precisely in the latter camp and was accepted because of its
> superior predictive adequacy. As an explanation, its appeals to gravity were
> inferior; as a basis for predictive scope, simplicity, and so forth, gravitational
> hypotheses won the day.[87]

The example of Newtonian physics reveals the crucial role of background

assumptions. Newton's theory became the dominant paradigm for physics in large part

because of its predictive accuracy. A similar phenomenon occurred in the twentieth

century with quantum mechanics. In sum, these examples "involve accepting hypotheses

despite the fact that they are not the best explanations — because they are overridden by

other epistemic factors."[88]

In terms of religion, the same phenomena can receive different explanations

depending upon one's background assumptions. John Hick refers to the "religiously

ambiguous" nature of the universe: "Alternative total views confront one another, one

interpreting . . . data naturalistically and the other religiously. Each may in principle be

complete, leaving no data unaccounted for; and the acceptance of either arises from a

basic cognitive choice, or act of faith."[89]

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[87]Day and Kincaid, "Putting Inference to the Best Explanation in Its Place,"
280.

[88]Ibid., 281.

[89]John Hick, "The Rationality of Religious Belief," in *Contemporary Religious
Perspectives on Epistemology*, ed. R. Douglas Geivett and Brendan Sweetman (New
York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 315.

Clearly, background assumptions can greatly affect abductive reasoning, shaping the usage and interpretation of evidence. Background assumptions often confer higher levels of certainty than the evidence warrants. Moreover, because worldviews touch upon the central issues of human existence, their respective proponents typically hold on to them with great tenacity. Consequently, people will not abandon their worldviews at the first sign of trouble. Indeed, it is rationally commendable to hold strongly one's background assumptions because it seems proper to investigate competing worldviews thoroughly before undergoing a worldview shift or conversion.

Despite the prevalence and power of background assumptions, some Christian thinkers believe a *formal*, cumulative case argument can be constructed for Christianity. Instrumental to this approach is the usage of the probability calculus known as Bayes' theorem "to assign values to the degree of support the evidence lends to each of alternative hypotheses."[90] Among Christian proponents, Swinburne's work is the most sophisticated and influential. Swinburne combines a series of theistic arguments, none of which are singularly persuasive, to make a case that theism is more probable than not.

As impressive as Swinburne's arguments are, his reliance upon Bayes' theorem hampers his project. First, Bayes' theorem is highly idealized by nature and thus remains very difficult to apply to concrete theories such as particularized worldviews. Second, and more importantly, the theorem appears problematic even in principle. Van Holten explains,

> For Bayes' theorem to work, it is essential to assign a value to the 'prior probability' of both the hypothesis and the evidence at hand, that is, to their initial probabilities relative to background knowledge alone. Yet it has been objected to this that the assignment of such 'priors' is a highly subjective matter because of its dependence on the background knowledge of working scientists and that for this reason the calculated posterior probability of a hypothesis on a given evidence will vary with the varying personal estimates of the relevant prior probabilities by individual scientists.[91]

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[90]Van Holten, "Theism and Inference to the Best Explanation."

[91]Ibid.

Ultimately, background assumptions partially, if not largely, determine the values assigned to the alleged probabilities. Participants in a worldview debate will inevitably assign different numbers to the pieces of evidence depending upon their respective worldviews. Because this type of argument depends upon formal quantitative measures, the presence of background assumptions renders it implausible. Kelly Clark, whose dissertation examined such arguments for and against the existence of God, concluded, "The arguments suffer from the problems of assigning probability values to the various propositions that figure in the arguments."[92] Thus, any hope of constructing an objective, formal cumulative argument appears vain.

The question remains about the usage of *informal* abductive arguments. Do background assumptions nullify these more modest attempts? Some would answer in the affirmative, citing Thomas Kuhn's thesis of the incommensurability between paradigms or in this case worldviews. However, the very notion of incommensurability is self-refuting and impractical. To even postulate that two worldviews are incommensurable requires a certain degree of convergence. In simple terms, harmony must precede difference. The notion of hermetically sealed worldviews ultimately renders the choice of a worldview arbitrary and "the notion of the truth of a worldview would evaporate."[93]

If abduction worldviews analysis does not fall prey to incommensurability, it is inherently too subjective? Background assumptions are an *inherent* weakness to abduction, but not an *insuperable* one. It seems mistaken to conclude that a person cannot discern the difference between truth and error. Abraham states,

> It is alarmist to think that our ability to weigh evidence will necessarily be influenced adversely by prejudice, bias, emotion, and the like. It is a simple *non sequitur* to argue that because personal judgement is sometimes biased that it will always be biased . . . . Given care and an eye for self-deception the sensible person

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[92]Kelly James Clark, "Probabilistic Confirmation Theory and the Existence of God" (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 1985), 165.

[93]Smart, "Truth, Criteria, and Dialogue between Religions," 68.

can generally notice when he or she is allowing his or her wishes, predispositions, passions, and the like to tilt the scales in a particular direction.[94]

Without minimizing the effect of sin on a person's ability to engage in worldview analysis, it goes too far to claim a complete inability to recognize inconsistencies and errors in his or her beliefs. Otherwise, it would nullify dialogue and paint the Christian God as disingenuous to commission his followers to evangelize unbelievers who are completely incapable of recognizing their errors.

In addition, it remains questionable why abductive worldview analysis must abide by different standards than other disciplines of inquiry that employ abductive analysis, including science. Such disciplines produce what most people consider genuine instances of knowledge without attaining objective certainty. Abraham mentions some of the fields which utilize such rationality: "It is sometimes assumed . . . that a good argument is not only sound but such that its premisses would be accepted as true by any (fully informed) rational being. I would suggest that very few (no?) significant arguments in philosophy, the history of religion, biblical scholarship, law or literary criticism (etc.) meet these standards."[95]

If such disciplines failed to produce true knowledge, a great deal of purported knowledge would be lost. However, most people accept the conclusions of persons working in these areas without the same level of scrutiny as theological explanations, or in this case worldview analysis. If worldview analysis cannot rise above the level of certainty of other areas of inquiry, this fact alone should not disqualify it from careful implementation. Perhaps Aristotle's advice deserves heeding that one should only expect as much certainty as the subject matter permits.[96] John Henry Newman cautioned against

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[94]Abraham, "Cumulative Case Arguments for Christian Theism," 34.

[95]Ibid., 30.

[96]Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics, 1.3: Translation, Introduction, and Commentary*, trans. Christopher Rowe, commentary Sarah Broadie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 96.

over precision in delineating the structures and processes of argumentation in quantifiable terms:

> It is plain that formal logic sequence is not in fact the method by which we are enabled to become certain of what is concrete: and it is equally plain, from what has been already suggested, what the real and necessary method is. It is the culmination of probabilities, independent of each other, arising out of the nature and circumstances of the particular case which is under review; probabilities too fine to avail separately, too subtle and circuitous for such conversion, even were they convertible.[97]

Worldview analysis, like the aforementioned areas of inquiry, is simply too complex to a reduce to a formal argument.[98] Moreover, complexity complicates worldview analysis as does comprehensiveness. Van Holten explains, "The wider in scope a theory, the more difficult it becomes to provide a straightforward proof or disproof of them. Since metaphysical schemes range literally about everything, that is, about the widest possible set of data, it is not surprising that it is difficult to argue for them in a precise manner."[99]

A final rejoinder to the charge of subjectivism is that many worldview analysts do agree upon some of the same criteria and their significance, thus minimizing the level of arbitrariness. For example, the laws of logic, in particular the law of noncontradiction, seem an inescapable element of human rationality. Epistemological relativists often contend that logic is a Western mode of thinking, not a universal phenomenon. To make their case, they point to Eastern thought with its unabashedly illogical patterns of thinking. Obviously, the argument goes, if such a large portion of humanity fails to think logically, it must not be a universal criterion of rationality.

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[97] John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 230.

[98] Scott R. Burson and Jerry C. Walls, *C. S. Lewis & Francis Schaeffer: Lessons for a New Century from the Most Influential Apologists of Our Time* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 246.

[99] Van Holten, "Theism and Inference to the Best Explanation."

However, the division between Eastern and Western modes of thinking is not as clear and decisive as proponents would claim. Netland observes, "Recent scholars of Eastern traditions have emphasized, although there clearly are traditions that reject such logical principles, there are also rich and dominant traditions in the East that quite self-consciously acknowledge their normativity."[100]   One such scholar is Paul Griffiths, a recognized authority on Buddhism, who studied how followers of Ramanuja and Anglican communities defended their respective positions. He observed that both sides shared basic logical principles and argument forms. Moreover, after extensive research upon Buddhist philosophical arguments, Griffiths wrote, "The empirical part of the cultural relativist's thesis is at least very dubious: it just isn't clear that as a matter of fact the criteria for rationality and truth are so different from culture to culture. I would argue that, as far as Indian Buddhism and Anglo-American analytic philosophy are concerned, they are close to identical."[101] Netland summarizes, "It is simply impossible to refute the principle of noncontradiction, since any attempt at refutation appeals to the principle itself. Any meaningful affirmation about anything at all, regardless of how cryptic, vague, paradoxical or imprecise the statement might be, if intended as true, makes implicit appeal to the principle by ruling out its negation as false."[102] The laws of logic clearly cross all worldview boundaries.

This criteria applied to actual worldviews can produce a lethal blow if contradictions are found. Van Holten states,

> Comprehensive views of reality should be internally consistent and display as great a measure of coherence as possible. Obviously, a self-contradictory worldview cannot provide an adequate explanation, solution or illumination of anything whatever, since a contradictory explanation at the same time nullifies what it attempts to propose and thus fails to propose or explain anything in the first place.

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[100]Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 294.

[101]Paul J. Griffiths, "Philosophizing Across Cultures: Or, How to Argue with a Buddhist," *Criterion* 26 (1987): 13.

[102]Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 296.

If follows from that though no metaphysical scheme can be confirmed solely on logical grounds, it can in principle be refuted on such grounds alone.[103]

Moreover, the criterion of explanatory power (which seems to encompass the criterion of comprehensiveness), it could be argued, is a necessary precondition in worldview analysis. To deny it would make worldview analysis pointless since worldviews are explanatory by nature. Thus, it seems inescapable both to utilize and assess a worldview's explanatory power. Moreover, the same comments appear appropriate for pragmatic power since worldviews inherently offer guidance for life, seeking to maximize personal satisfaction.

In sum, the task of worldview analysis cannot produce the standard of formal, quantifiable certainty. However, this is no inherent weakness of the endeavor since a great many rational endeavors likewise fail to reach such unattainable standards. Worldview analysis, with its usage of criteria, will inevitably maintain an element of personal judgment because there is no mechanical way to use the criteria. However, such limitations are only that, limitations, and not negations. Wainwright, while acknowledging the weaknesses of criteria in abduction, still advocates their usage:

> Even if the relevant criteria are not fully adequate (and what counts as adequacy should be partly determined by the subject matter) and doctrinal disagreements cannot be resolved by reason alone, that is, even if the adoption of a worldview inevitably involves a decision to venture beyond the evidence, it does not follow that these disputes need be a-rational, or that anything goes. That reason is insufficient does not entail that reason is unnecessary or even that it should not largely determine one's decision to adopt a worldview.[104]

The usage of such criteria may not settle all or even many disputes, but they are tools to reveal error and confirm truth. Ultimately, if empowered by the Holy Spirit and in accordance to God's sovereign purposes, they can lead to personal conversion.

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[103]Van Holten, "Theism and Inference to the Best Explanation. "

[104]Wainwright, "Doctrinal Schemes, Metaphysics, and Propositional Truth," 84.

Leaky Buckets

A second objection to abduction, or more precisely to cumulative case arguments specifically, is that if an argument or a piece of evidence is implausible, than a collection of them will hardly suffice either. In fact, according to probability theory, if one increases the number of such implausible arguments, it will likewise increase the overall improbability of the case at hand. Anthony Flew, the longtime atheist now turned deist, famously stated "the leaky bucket" argument:

> It is occasionally suggested that some proof, although admittedly failing as a proof, may sometimes do useful service as a pointer. This is a false exercise of the generosity so characteristic of examiners. A failed proof cannot serve as a pointer to anything, save perhaps to the weaknesses of those who have accepted it. Nor, for the same reason, can it be put to work with other throw outs as part of the accumulation of evidences. If one leaky bucket will not hold water that is no reason to think that ten can.[105]

Similarly, Alasdair McIntyre dismissed such as an approach as well:

> One occasionally hears teachers of theology aver that although the proofs do not provide conclusive grounds for belief in God, they are at least pointers, indicators. But a fallacious argument points nowhere (except to the lack of logical acumen on the part of those who accept it). And three fallacious arguments are not no better than one.[106]

Swinburne, a prominent advocate of the cumulative case approach, responds to Flew's leaky bucket analogy with an analogy of his own: "Clearly if you jam ten leaky buckets together in such a way that holes in the bottom of each bucket are squashed closes to solid parts of the bottoms of the neighbouring buckets, you will get a container that will hold water."[107] Swinburne's reply has intuitive appeal, but upon closer scrutiny, it does not appear to answer fully Flew's objection. The problem with Swinburne's reply is that ten leaky buckets only retard drainage but do not prevent it.

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[105]Anthony Flew, *God and Philosophy* (New York: Delta, 1966), 62-63.

[106]Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *Difficulties in Christian Belief* (London: SCM Press, 1959), 63.

[107]Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 14 n.

It is important to remember that analogies inevitably break down at some point. The battle over the leaky bucket analogy shows the weakness of the analogy but perhaps not the weakness of the method. J. P. Moreland, himself a cumulative case proponent, rejects the leaky bucket analogy in favor of the analogy of a rope: "A rope metaphor is more appropriate. Just as several strands make a stronger than just a few strands, so the many-stranded case for God is made stronger than would be the case with only a few strands of evidence."[108]

Multiple (good) arguments not only compound the worldview's explanatory scope but also can overlap to strengthen areas of deficiency. Thus, one element may bolster another element at its particular point of weakness. Scott Burson and Jerry Walls write, "The essential insight of cumulative case arguments is that the various considerations accumulate, pile up and together make a strong case, a case that none of the individual pieces of evidence make in isolation. The various factors can accumulate in this fashion because they cohere in a certain pattern. They mutually reinforce and relate to one another."[109] To give an example, Feinberg believes one could employ the theistic arguments to demonstrate that God's existence does not run contrary to reason to an opponent who dismisses God according to psychological explanations.[110] Thus, the leaky buckets arguments fail as a decisive blow to abductive worldview analysis.

Need for Structure

Finally, Christian cumulative case arguments, at least from the literature surveyed, suffer from a final defect: a lack of structure. They typically proceed in a

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[108]J. P. Moreland, "Atheism and Leaky Buckets: The Christian Rope Pulls Tighter," in *Does God Exist? The Debate between Theists and Atheists* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1993), 240.

[109]Burson and Walls, *C. S. Lewis & Francis Schaeffer*, 246.

[110]Feinberg, "Cumulative Case Arguments," 156.

rather random and haphazard fashion, never laying out a programmatic approach to carry out worldview analysis. Abraham comments about Basil Mitchell's seminal volume, *The Justification of Religious Belief*, that "the most puzzling feature" is its "lack of detailed argument for traditional Christian theism."[111]

One might respond that the nature of cumulative case arguments requires a sort of amorphousness to their structure. To a certain degree, this is true in that they can tap into a wide variety of evidence and proofs. However, an eclectic approach without an underlying trajectory proves nothing but a collection of facts. Cumulative case arguments must both follow and fill out the path of a given framework.

Moreover, cumulative case proponents rightly understand that apologetic argumentation does not begin in a vacuum but from an ultimate foundation. Burson and Walls write,

> This approach recognizes that we do indeed reason from some fundamental hypothesis, presupposition, paradigm or first premise. Moreover, we do so unavoidably. But such fundamental commitments are subject to verification and confirmation or, on the other hand, disconfirmation or falsification. This is not to deny that a sufficiently ingenious person may not be able to interpret virtually any piece of data to fit his or her first premise. However, not all such hypotheses and first premises are created equal, and not all account equally well for the various and multifaceted data that need to be explained in a satisfying worldview?[112]

What precisely are those ultimate commitments that form the framework? Abraham believes, "One indicates in broad terms the content of a substantial theological vision and develops the exposition of that vision as one expounds the various pieces of evidence which support it as a whole."[113] Abraham is correct in noting that the framework begins with a theological vision and not simply an eclectic array of facts, proofs, and phenomenon as is often practiced among Christian apologists. Abductive analysis proceeds along a structure.

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[111]Abraham, "Cumulative Case Arguments for Christian Theism," 27. Abraham sympathetically supposes that Mitchell thought the task impossible.

[112]Burson and Walls, *C. S. Lewis & Francis Schaeffer*, 259.

[113]Abraham, "Cumulative Case Arguments for Christian Theism," 25.

As it will be argued in greater detail in the next chapter, the proper framework should follow the contours that Scripture lays down itself—the fundamental plot line of redemptive history. This plot line is creation—fall—redemption. These are the fundamental turning points of redemptive history and provide a "theological vision" that faithfully reflects salvation history. In addition, these turning points, creation—fall—redemption, impact world history as well as the core existential issues that humanity has wrestled with throughout the ages, namely, human origins, predicament, and resolution. Consequently, this approach offers the best means of building bridges with the background beliefs of unbelievers in hopes of demonstrating that the Christian worldview offers the best explanation to these pressing matters, evidentially and existentially.

Conclusion

It may prove helpful to summarize briefly some points of contrast and similarity between transcendental and abductive worldview analysis. In terms of differences, transcendental worldview analysis emphatically begins with the word of God as the starting point of apologetic engagement. Abductive analysis has no assumed starting point, but as mentioned above, this is a point of weakness. Transcendental analysis claims apodictic certainty while abduction settles for probability.

In terms of similarities, both rely almost exclusively on logical consistency in their analysis of Buddhism with its many inherent contradictions. Of those studied, only Netland discussed the universal presence of morality that fails to correspond with Buddhist theory. In dealing with Islam, the criterion of logical consistency is applied to the Koran's contradictions with the Bible despite its claims of continuity. However, the primary emphasis concerns historical inaccuracies in the Koran that cast doubt upon its authenticity and teachings that offend the human conscience (Craig and Bahnsen discuss jihad and Craig points out Allah's deficient moral character).

Both sides attempt to find common ground with their opponents from a wide array of human experience. Both approaches forward their position as a hypothesis. Transcendental proponents may respond that this tactic is simply "for argument's sake," because of the indirect nature of the argument. Regardless of the disclaimer, it still retains the approach. Moreover, abductive proponents would not assert the tentativeness of Christianity in principle but only in apologetic practice.

Thus, the two sides are more similar in worldview analysis than is sometimes recognized, especially as proponents contend for their methodology as the superior one. The similarities become more evident in the actual practice of engaging religious worldviews as evidenced by the examples of Buddhism and Islam. In fact, at times the two sides appear almost indistinguishable, especially as transcendental opponents blend their methodology in certain instances with abductive reasoning.

In the final assessment, abductive analysis alone possesses the conceptual capacity to engage alternative worldviews. However, it is the contention of this dissertation that evangelicals should reflect more deeply about this methodology of worldview analysis, hopefully achieving greater precision and more effective apologetics. This effort will be the purpose of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW APOLOGETICS

Introduction

In the preceding two chapters, this study has examined two modes of worldview analysis popular among evangelicals: transcendental and abductive. After a thorough assessment, it was determined that abductive worldview analysis, while not flawless, is the superior methodology. However, the specific *content* of this methodology needs clearer and more cogent development. This chapter will work toward that goal.

To begin with, this chapter will examine the importance of biblical theology and its role in worldview formulation and analysis. Evangelicals, in general, have not adequately explored the riches of biblical theology in relation to worldview thinking. Biblical theology provides the framework to formulate the Christian worldview, thus providing the necessary structure vital to abductive reasoning. In particular, this paper contends that a biblically faithful and apologetically effective matrix is creation—fall—redemption. The remainder of the chapter outlines a defense of this schema as the best model of evangelical abductive worldview analysis.

Biblical Theology

Before discussing Christian worldview construction, the content and role of the discipline of biblical theology must be established. What is biblical theology? Geerhardus Vos, evangelicalism's pioneer in the field, defines it as the "branch of

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exegetical thought which deals with the process of the self-revelation of God deposited in

the Bible."[1] In contemporary times, Brian Rosner states,

> Biblical theology is principally concerned with the overall theological message of
> the whole Bible . . . . *It proceeds with historical and literary sensitivity and seeks to
> analyse and synthesize the Bible's teaching about God and his relations to the
> world on its own terms, maintaining sight of the Bible's overarching narrative and
> Christocentric focus.*[2]

Has not theology always been biblical? Yes, in the sense that the Bible was

theology's authoritative source, though this principle certainly weakened in the Middle

Ages during the apex of the Roman Catholic Church. No, in the sense that it did not

follow the essential contours and framework of Scripture. In this regard, the discipline of

biblical theology is relatively new.

The impetus to the rise of biblical theology was the Reformation's cry of "*sola

scriptura*" and a renewed focus on the canonical text.[3] In this era the seeds were planted

for the later development of biblical theology. Many scholars trace the origin of biblical

theology as a specific academic discipline (distinct from systematic/dogmatic theology)

to Johann Philipp Gabler's famous speech "The Proper Distinction Between Biblical and

Dogmatic Theology and Specific Objectives of Each" in 1787.[4] For Gabler, biblical

theology differed from systematic theology in its emphasis upon the historical nature of

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[1]Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948; reprint, England: Banner of Truth, 1996), 5-6.

[2]B. S. Rosner, "Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology,* ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 3, 10.

[3]Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 25.

[4]C. H. H. Scobie, "History of Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology,* ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 13. Scobie points out the precursors to Gabler, including the work of John Calvin and especially Johannes Cocceius' *Summa et Testamento Dei Doctrina de Foedre* (12).

Scripture. Over time, the discipline increasingly relied upon historical critical methods, typically used to critique orthodox theology. Moreover, biblical theology became isolated to the academy, divorced from the life of the church.[5]

More recently, in the early twentieth century, there arose a renewed interest in biblical theology. The discipline, like most any other in modern times, has experienced an explosion of new information. Thus, biblical theologians usually focus on either the Old or the New Testament. Some even preferred to speak of "theologies" within the Old Testament (Yahwist, Deuteronomistic, and Priestly) and the New Testament (Paul, John, and Luke).[6] To critics, the manifold theologies militate against the achievement of a unified biblical theology. This objection, along with the late canonization of Scripture, present the two most pressing challenges to the viability of biblical theology.[7]

The tendency toward diversity, though, has been tempered with the increased focus on Scripture as a complete canon. Among adherents of this approach, Brevard Childs offered the most notable contribution with his *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments*.[8] Despite Childs' over reliance upon historical critical conclusions, his work has spurred greater commitment in assuming the whole canon of Scripture. From a more conservative perspective, Charles Scobie recently released a massive canonical

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[5]Ibid.

[6]Ibid., 15.

[7]P. Balla, "Challenges to Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology,* ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 20. The late canonization of the church has nowhere near the bite its proponents claim. Peter Balla writes, "Arguments may be advanced for an early beginning to the process of 'canonization', and for a 'canonical awareness' on the part of the early Christians long before the 4th century, even if they did not use the term 'canon' to refer to a list of sacred writings until then" (23). For more extensive work, see Balla's *Challenges to New Testament Theology,* Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, vol. 95 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997).

[8]Brevard Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992).

theology entitled *The Ways of Our God*.[9] Moreover, several publishers have produced series in biblical theology: Fortress Press' *Overtures to Biblical Theology*, Abingdon's *Biblical Encounters*, and InterVarsity Press' *New Studies in Biblical Theology*. Despite its critics, the discipline of biblical theology appears to have a fruitful future in store.

Biblical Theology and the Christian Worldview

It is the contention of this study that biblical theology plays an indispensable role for Christian worldview formulation and analysis. Unfortunately, this linkage has not received the attention and development it deserves. This section will explore three distinctives of biblical theology as well as its relation to other Christian disciplines. Finally, the section will close with a discussion of biblical theology's importance for the Christian worldview.

Redemptive History

In contrast to the Scriptures of most religions, the Bible is undeniably a historical book. Its contents span the entire course of human history, from the beginning of creation to the end of time. In fact, it provides the broad history of Israel for two thousand years with ancillary discussions of other ancient Near Eastern nations. Thus, Vos states, "The Bible is not a dogmatic handbook but a historical book full of dramatic interest."[10] Importantly, the believer's faith relies upon the actual *historicity* of God's redemptive acts. Wolfhart Pannenberg correctly states, "A faith that lacks a historical basis with no obligation to square them with history is impossible to distinguish from superstition or illusion."[11]

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[9]Charles H. H. Scobie, *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

[10]Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 17.

[11]Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Revelation as History* (New York: Macmillan, 1969), 120, quoted in Alan Sell, *Confessing and Commending the Faith: Historic Witness and*

However, Scripture does not pretend to be a comprehensive or neutral source of history. Lints writes, "Biblical history is obviously not intended to be an exhaustive account of human history from creation to the end time. Much is left out, and many seemingly minor events are so emphasized that the modern interpreter cannot but help to affirm the theological purposes in the telling of the story."[12] Clearly, then, it is history related from a theological perspective in the dealings of God with his covenant people: "Its dramatic interest lies in the unfolding of God's redemptive purposes in human history. The Bible, in its form and its content, records the dramatic story of God reaching into human history and redeeming a people for himself."[13]

For biblical theologians, then, the importance of Scripture lies in its historical progression along the axis of redemption. God orchestrates his eternal plan of salvation in and through the medium of history. Scripture is the witness of God' redemptive acts. Moreover, as Lints points out, "Scripture not only witnesses to God's redemption but is an effective agent of that redemption."[14]

Importantly, in the New Testament, it is the historical event of Jesus' atoning sacrifice that assumes preeminence and makes salvation a reality. This truth was taught and proclaimed by the early church. Herman Ridderbos stressed that for Christianity "it is not a dogma that is central, but the fact of redemptive history itself, which makes such announcements as justification possible. Without minimizing the importance of the former, it is not the *ordo salutis*, but the *historia salutis* which is primary for Paul."[15]

Apologetic Method (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), 203.

[12]Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993; reprint, Eugene: OR; Wipf and Stock, 1999), 267.

[13]Ibid., 64.

[14]Ibid., 263.

[15]Herman Ridderbos, *When the Time Had Fully Come: Studies in NT Theology*

Scripture is not reducible to one theme or idea to describe its corpus, but it relates the

redemptive acts of the triune God throughout history.

Biblical Framework

Biblical theology attempts to follow the essential contours and framework of

the Scriptures. Lints provides a helpful elaboration on this point:

> It is important to see the theological project as embedded in the Scriptures
> themselves rather than as merely an overlay on them, for this will make it easier to
> see how the theological project can be restructured to more nearly mirror the
> structure of Scripture . . . . The Christian theological framework is not created by a
> masterful human imagination. In fact, it is not fundamentally a human construct at
> all.[16]

Likewise, Peter Stuhlmacher, a prominent German proponent states, "A biblical theology

. . . must attempt to interpret the Old and New Testament tradition as it wants to be

interpreted."[17] This point is vital. Evangelicals affirm the inspiration of Scripture,

understanding that God guided the flow of holy writ. Thus, the plot line of Scripture is

no accident but represents the intention of the divine mind. The categories and

framework, then, should not be ignored or twisted but allowed to stand as is: "One is not

free to find any pattern in the text that suits one's fancy."[18] It is best to allow revelation

to provide the interpretive categories. D. A. Carson states, "Biblical theology . . . even as

it works inductively from the diverse texts of the Bible, seeks to uncover and articulate

the unity of *all* the biblical texts taken together, resorting primarily to the categories of

those texts themselves."[19]

(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 48.

[16]Lints, *The Fabric of Theology*, 261, 64.

[17]Peter Stuhlmacher, *How to Do Biblical Theology*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1995), 1.

[18]Lints, *The Fabric of Theology*, 284.

[19]D. A. Carson, "Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology,* ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner

Christocentricism

Finally, biblical theology is also unashamedly christocentric. The rationale for this christocentric hermeneutic is the storyline of Scripture revolves around the person and work of Jesus Christ. Jesus himself taught, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me" (John 5:39). After his resurrection, Jesus instructed the two disciples on the road Emmaus according to a christocentric hermeneutic: "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27).

From beginning to end, the Bible foreshadows, describes, and applies the significance of Jesus and his redemptive ministry. Graeme Goldsworthy writes, "Jesus is the goal and fulfillment of the whole Old Testament and, as the embodiment of the truth of God, he is the interpretative key to the Bible."[20] In particular, it is the death and resurrection of Jesus that holds preeminent importance. Richard Gaffin writes about Paul's theology, "His primary interest is seen to be in the *historia salutis* as that history has reached its eschatological realization in the death and especially the resurrection of Christ."[21] Biblical theology, then, stresses redemptive history as the framework that revelation unfolds. The centerpiece of biblical revelation is the person and work of Jesus Christ, culminating in his death and resurrection.

Relation to Other Christian Disciplines

In terms of other Christian disciplines of thought and practice such as systematic theology, apologetics, biblical theology is foundational, laying out the content

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(Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 101.

[20]Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 25.

[21]Richard Gaffin, Jr., *The Centrality of the Resurrection: A Study in Paul's Soteriology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), 13.

and framework for the others to follow.[22] With biblical theology in place, the systematic

theologian can assume his or her task. Until then, though, it is presumptuous for the

systematician to commence work without the establishment of the biblical categories. In

artistic terminology, before filling in the colors, one must first sketch the basic lines in

which to color. Thus, Vos rightly states, "Biblical theology is of the greatest importance

and value for the study of Systematic Theology."[23]

Certainly, the disciplines share a fair amount of overlap. For instance, the

Bible serves as the source of final authority, their conclusions are provisional, and both

are influenced by other disciplines, including one another. The differences, though, are

striking enough to warrant their distinction. Carson delineates these divergences:

> The ordering principles of the former [systematic theology] are topical, logical, hierarchical, and as synchronic as possible; the ordering principles of the latter trace out the history of redemption, and are (ideally) profoundly inductive, comparative and as diachronic as possible. Systematic theology seeks to rearticulate what the Bible says in self-conscious engagement with (including confrontation with) the culture; biblical theology, though it cannot escape cultural influences, aims to be first and foremost inductive and descriptive, earning its normative power by the credibility of its results. Thus systematic theology tends to be a little further removed from the biblical text than does biblical theology, but a little closer to cultural engagement. Biblical theology tends to seek out the rationality and communicative genius of each literary genre; systematic theology tends to integrate the diverse rationalities in its pursuit of a large-scale, worldview-forming synthesis.[24]

In sum, the two disciplines are inextricably intertwined, but biblical theology provides the

framework for systematic theology. Importantly, though, systematic theology

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[22]Obviously, biblical theology depends upon the results of exegesis that interpret and explain Scripture. However, exegesis is always fragmentary, never articulating a comprehensive portrait of the entire canon. That is the role of biblical theology.

[23]Geerhardus Vos, *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Selected Shorter Writings of Geehardus Vos*, ed. Richard Gaffin, Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980), 23.

[24]Carson, "Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology," 103.

supplements biblical theology in the development of a Christian worldview as it

addresses cultural issues as well as implements philosophical rigor and insight.

Apologetics too must share a common commitment to the authority of God's

word. The apologist must allow Scripture to inform and guide his or her endeavors.

Consequently, apologetics should follow the biblical framework as laid out by Scripture

(biblical theology) and should incorporate systematic theology's cultural and

philosophical insights. The insights of theology provide the structure and content of the

Christian worldview.

What, then, is the role of apologetics? The distinctive role of apologetics is the

defense of the Christian worldview. Apologetics, therefore, carries an enormous

responsibility in the church's overall testimony to the world: "Apologetics cannot be

allowed to become a pragmatic discipline; it both rests on and reflects the intellectual

integrity of the Christian faith to which it bears witness."[25]

Biblical theology plays a programmatic role in the task of apologetics, a fact

sometimes lost on philosophically-driven apologists.[26] David Clark points out, "A

serious flaw of traditional apologetics is its heavy reliance on philosophical

argumentation."[27] Alister McGrath discusses the proper relationship between theology

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[25]Alister E. McGrath, "Evangelical Theological Method: The State of the Art," in *Evangelical Futures: A Conversation on Theological Method* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 24.

[26]While apologetics relies on scriptural authority, and by extension, systematic theology, the relationship is not reciprocal. Greg L. Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic: Readings & Analysis* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1998), 44, writes, "The work of the theologian, philosopher, or evangelist cannot be carried out without to some degree defending the truth of Christianity—in apologetics." The reciprocal relationship between apologetics and theology does not negate the priority of the latter. Apologetics sharpens and defends the content that theology provides. As William D. Dennison, *Paul's Two-Age Construction and Apologetics* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986), 98, writes, "One cannot defend the message of Christianity unless one has that content firmly intact: the what (content) precedes the that (defense)." The asymmetric relation should be obvious.

[27]David Clark, "Narrative Theology and Apologetics," *Journal of Evangelical*

and apologetics: "Theological analysis thus identifies apologetic possibilities. Apologetics is thus much more than the art of communication and persuasion; it is a theological science, undergirded by a rigorous analysis of the nature of the gospel on the one hand and the situation and nature of those to whom it is addressed on the other."[28] Apologetics flows out of theology, it does not precede it. The great Dutch thinker Hermann Bavinck expounds,

> Apologetics cannot precede faith and does not attempt a priori to argue the truth of revelation. It assumes the truth and belief in the truth. It does not . . . precede theology and dogmatics. It is itself a theological science through and through, which presupposes the faith and dogmatics and now maintains and defends the dogma against the opposition to which it is exposed.[29]

Very often, Christian apologists have reversed this sequence, asserting that apologetics must first defend Scripture. For example, Benjamin Warfield believed the unbeliever "must first have Scriptures authenticated to him as such, before he can take his standpoint in them."[30] Warfield's approach, followed by many other prominent apologists, moves the ultimate locus of authority from Scripture to human reason. While the two are inextricably intertwined, Scripture must always take the place of final arbiter.

However, not just traditional apologists fail to follow the biblical contours in their defense of the faith. A similar charge can be laid at the feet of presuppositional apologists Cornelius Van Til and his pupil John Frame. Van Til rightly asserts that apologetics defends the content of theology. In addition, Van Til understood the role of biblical theology:

Theological Society 36 (1993): 512.

[28]McGrath, "Evangelical Theological Method," 26.

[29]Herman Bavinck, *Prologmena*, vol. 1 of *Reformed Dogmatics*, trans. John Bolt, ed. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003) 515.

[30]Benjamin B. Warfield, "Introduction to Francis R. Beattie's Apologetics," in *Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield*, vol. 2, ed. John E. Meeter (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1973), 98.

Biblical theology takes the fruits of exegesis and organizes them into various units and traces the revelation of God in Scripture in its historical development. It brings out the theology of each part of God's Word as it has been brought to us at different stages, by means of various authors. Systematic theology then uses the fruits of the labors of exegetical and biblical theology and brings together a concatenated system.[31]

However, Van Til failed to appropriate adequately the insights of biblical theology in his systematic theology, and by extension, his apologetics.[32] While highly sympatheic to Van Til, William Dennison writes, "Van Til never really placed the topics of systematics totally within the concrete activity of our sovereign God in history."[33]

Instead, Van Til's theology followed the traditional systematic rubric (*ordo salutis*) rather than the contours of Scripture (*historia salutis*). In particular, Van Til applied the concept of analogy to the rationality of God's revelation instead of also applying it to the process of history. Dennison writes,

It is clearly evident to me that if man is to acquire a proper rational formulation of God's knowledge, he must submit to the manner in which God rationally reveals Himself to man. God has made Himself rationally understandable through the progressive revelation of Himself in redemptive history. Van Til simply fails to apply his concept of analogy to the historical process of God's revelation, and therefore, we can understand why he fails to correct the order of the traditional topics of systematics.[34]

Van Til's failure to implement the biblical framework hampered his work in systematic theology, making it too abstract rather than redemptive-historical.[35] His apologetic

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[31]Cornelius Van Til, class syllabus (*An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1966), 2.

[32]This omission is strange in light of his close relationship with colleague Geerhardus Vos, evangelicalism' pioneer in biblical theology.

[33]Dennison, *Paul's Two-Age Construction and Apologetics*, 94. Dennison proposes to begin apologetics according to the two-age understanding of Paul, setting the ages in antithetical contrast. Dennison deserves appellation for seeking an apologetic more in line with biblical theology but his proposal suffers in that "it does not provide a whole apologetic system" (105).

[34]Ibid., 92.

[35]Curiously, Dennison in a later essay writes that Van Til's epistemology "was always shaped by the simple progressive story of the economic Trinity revealing himself in the facts of redemptive history." William A. Dennison, "Analytic Philosophy and Van

suffered from the same defect—it was highly abstract and overly philosophical. For

example, Van Til makes little of the centerpiece of redemptive history, the resurrection of

Jesus Christ.[36]

Likewise, Frame assumes Scripture as his starting point in worldview analysis.

Frame, though, does not align himself as strongly with those who believe redemptive

history is the framework of interpreting Scripture. Frame states, "I am therefore willing

to say that Scripture is a redemptive history, but I am reluctant to say that this is the only

way or the most important way of characterizing Scripture . . . . Theology is not,

therefore, to be controlled exclusively by redemptive history, in opposition to other

aspects or perspectives."[37] Frame believes biblical books such as the Psalms and

Proverbs do not fall under the rubric of redemptive history unless one defines the term

too loosely.

In response, it must be granted that Scripture contains genres other than

history. However, it seems utterly feasible to recognize this diversity while still tracing

the overarching theme of redemptive history. Lints, for instance, takes issue with

Frame's position. Lints proposes a "redemptive matrix" for Scripture under the theme

"The God Who Creates and Re-Creates for His Glory." While acknowledging the

tentative nature of his proposal, Lints still contends, "The fact that this framework is

properly subject to reform should in no way be taken to imply that the Scriptures

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Til's Epistemology," *Westminster Theological Journal* 57 (1995): 54. It is not clear how
Dennsion reconciles the two assessments of Van Til.

[36]In Greg Bahnsen's lecture "Answer to Frame's Critique of Van Til: Reply to
Frame's Criticisms of Van Til" (MP3); available from Nagcogdoches, TX: Covenant
Media Foundation GB 1460, he mentions a concern he has held for a number of years,
"It's sometimes possible to present a transcendental argument . . . in a way that seems to
leave out the redemptive work of Christ . . . . I think we need to do a lot more work on the
redemptive necessity of the Christian worldview."

[37]John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God: A Theology of
Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1987), 209-10.

themselves contain data that may be organized in any number of conflicting fashions or indeed that there are a variety of competing frameworks in the Scriptures themselves."[38]

Frame's reticence in adopting and following a biblical theological framework becomes evident in his postulation of the essentials of a Christian worldview: the absolute personality of God, the distinction between Creator and creature, the sovereignty of God, and the Trinity.[39] Certainly, these categories are vital to the Christian worldview but they hardly reflect the flow of redemptive history.[40] Carson, while affording Frame a great deal of respect, offers this analysis of Frame's categories:

> The categories by which Frame seeks to establish 'the Christian worldview' are logical/systematic/philosophical. I certainly have no objection to such categories, and of course they are in line with Frame's specialist interest. But the fact remains that the Bible as a whole document tells a story, and properly used, that story can serve as a metanarrative that shapes our grasp of the entire Christian faith. In my view it is increasingly important to spell this out to Christians and non-Christians alike—to Christians, to ground them in Scripture, and to non-Christians, as part of our proclamation of the gospel.[41]

Carson's incisive comments point to a fundamental weakness in Frame's worldview construction. By failing to incorporate the categories of redemptive history, Frame adopts overly philosophical ones.[42] Thus, Frame's worldview formulation does not

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[38]Lints, *The Fabric of Theology*, 288. Lints specifically identifies Frame's view as articulated in *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 206-14.

[39]John M. Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God: An Introduction* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1994), 34.

[40]Dennison, "Analytic Philosophy and Van Til's Epistemology," 49-53, argues that Frame has shifted Van Til's apologetic from an idealistic context to an analytical one. As a result, Frame dehistoricizes Van Til's epistemology and the Christian worldview.

[41]D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 194.

[42]Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 77, offers this caution: "Since the Bible does not consist of a lot of abstract ideas or philosophical thoughts, but rather emphasizes the acts of God within creation and in history, it is necessary for biblical theology to avoid the merely abstract and to concentrate on the actual events and their interpretations as given in the Bible."

appear to mesh with the biblical framework, thus weakening the link to Scripture that his apologetic methodology espouses.

Indeed, it is imperative for biblical theology to serve as the structure and content for Christian worldview formulation and analysis. Albert Wolters rightly states, "What then, is the relationship of worldview to Scripture? The Christian answer to this question is clear: our worldview must be shaped and tested by Scripture . . . . It is essential to relate the basic concepts of 'biblical theology' to our worldview—or rather to understand these basic concepts as *constituting* a worldview."[43] By following the biblical plot line, both scriptural fidelity and apologetic effectiveness will be optimized.

Creation—Fall—Redemption Matrix

If the Christian worldview should follow the contours of biblical theology, what would this look like? Though Scripture does not explicitly depict a schema, its broad, essential categories are readily apparent.[44] This paper asserts that the paradigm that best depicts the biblical plot-line for worldview formulation is the creation-fall-redemption matrix (CFR). Before discussing the rationale for this choice, it will be helpful to survey briefly others who have discussed this template.

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[43]Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 6, 7.

[44]Kevin Vanhoozer wisely cautions, "The interpretive frameworks never exhaust the meaning of the biblical text itself, because the Bible is both conceptually 'underdetermined' and 'overdetermined.' Biblical language is underdetermined in the sense that it supports more than one conceptual scheme . . . but biblical language is also overdetermined . . . [in that] The story is always richer in meaning than the commentary." Kevin Vanhoozer, "Christ and Concept: Doing Theology and the 'Ministry of Philosophy,'" in *Doing Theology in Today's World: Essays in Honor of Kenneth S. Kantzer*, ed. John D. Woodbridge and Thomas Edward McComiskey (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 139.

Previous Usage of CFR

Other Christian thinkers have utilized this schema in varying degrees, though none in quite the manner of this study. Hermann Dooyeweerd appears to be the first to bring it into prominence.[45] For Dooyeweerd, the ground motive of human beings existed in the heart. Moreover, the basic ground motive was essentially either faithful or apostate to the biblical God. Such apostasy could assume different forms, hence Dooyeweerd's three different ground motives: form-matter, nature-grace, and nature-freedom. In contrast to apostate ground motives, the true biblical one was creation, fall, and redemption.[46]

Francis Schaeffer spoke of the these elements in his apologetic. However, Schaeffer approached the task somewhat differently. He brought in Scripture later in the process akin to traditional apologetics. Schaeffer writes,

> The truth that we let in first is not a dogmatic statement of the truth of the Scriptures but the truth of the external world and the truth of what man himself is. This is what shows him his need. The Scriptures then show him the nature of his lostness and the answer to it. This, I am convinced, is the true order for our apologetics in the second half of the twentieth century.[47]

Schaeffer does not delineate his apologetics along specifically biblical categories.

Wolters concurs that these three categories reflect the Christian worldview. He summarizes the overarching plot line as "the original good creation, the perversion of that

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[45]Lints, *The Fabric of Theology*, 168, notes that the theologians known as the "Reformed Scholastics" typically constructed their systematic theologies "in one of two ways—according to the historical progress of redemption (God, creation, fall, redemption, glorification) or in an analytic manner (e.g., moving from the problem of sin to its resolution in redemption and faith and then to an exposition of the articles of faith."

[46]Albert Wolters argues that the creation, fall, redemption ground motive was "the key to Dooyeweerd's philosophy and to the entire intellectual project to which he devoted his life." Albert Wolters, "The Intellectual Milieu of Herman Dooyeweerd," in *The Legacy of Herman Dooyeweerd: Reflections on Critical Philosophy in the Christian Tradition*, ed. C. T. McIntire (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), 5.

[47]Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 129.

creation through sin, and the restoration of that creation in Christ."[48] In his work,

Wolters unpacks the biblical content of these categories from a Reformed perspective in

the Kuyperian tradition. However, Wolters' description seems lacking in its account of

the fall, focusing upon the cosmic effects.[49] Moreover, there does not appear to be any

significant discussion of apologetic concerns or opposing worldviews.

In her masterful volume *Total Truth*, Nancy Pearcey employs the CFR matrix

to analyze worldviews. As she writes, "A wonderfully simple and effective means of

comparing worldviews is to apply the same grid of Creation, Fall, and Redemption."[50]

Each of these epoch-making events must be kept in proper balance. Pearcey choose this

schema because they are the "fundamental turning points of biblical history."[51] Not only

that, they are the fundamental turning points of human history: "Creation, Fall, and

Redemption are cosmic in scope, describing the great events that shape the nature of all

created reality."[52]

Pearcey offers a brief sketch of her application of the CFR matrix to several

other worldviews: Marxism, Pantheism, and the thought of Jean Jacques Rousseau. Each

worldview must wrestle with the questions that derive from these three concepts.

However, as Pearcey demonstrates, each worldview fails to provide cogent answers to at

least one of the three principles. Because it is not the aim of her volume, Pearcey does

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[48]Wolters, *Creation Regained*, 11.

[49]William D. Dennison, "Dutch Neo-Calvinism and the Roots for Transformation: An Introduction Essay," *Journal of Evangelical Society* 42.2 (1999): 286, points out that "nowhere in Wolters's section on the fall does he mention Romans chapter five."

[50]Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 134.

[51]Ibid., 95.

[52]Ibid.

not develop this matrix in the areas of fall and redemption. Instead, she devotes her attention to the battle over creation.

Other worldview theorists mention discuss the biblical categories along these lines. James Sire writes, "Christians tell the story of creation, fall, redemption, and glorification—a story in which Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection is the centerpiece."[53] More extensively, David Naugle constructs the Christian worldview along the following "issues": objectivity, subjectivity, sin and spiritual warfare, and grace and redemption. Naugle's categories sound rather abstract, but his exposition of them echo the CFR template.[54] Ted Cabal advocates a "Gospel-Centered Apologetics" that nicely weds apologetics and evangelism. Cabal posits the schema creation, fall, redemption, and last things because he believes that "all mature worldviews contain [these] essential doctrines."[55] Harold Netland postulates the following foundational themes for an evangelical theology of religions:

1. The only eternal God is holy and righteous in all his ways.
2. God has sovereignly created all things, including human beings, who are made in the image of God.
3. God has graciously taken the initiative in revealing himself to humankind, and although God's revelation comes in various forms, the definitive revelation for us is the written Scriptures.
4. God's creation, including humankind, has been corrupted by sin.
5. In his mercy God has provided a way, through the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross, for sinful persons to be reconciled to God.

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[53]James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*, 4th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 18.

[54]David K. Naugle, *Worldview: History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 259-90.

[55]Ted Cabal, "The Great Commission and Apologetics," in *The Challenge of the Great Commission: Essays on God's Mandate for the Local Church*, ed. Chuck Lawless and Thom S. Rainer (n.p.: Pinnacle, 2005), 190.

6. The community of the redeemed are to share the gospel of Jesus Christ and to make disciples of all peoples, including sincere adherents of other religious traditions, so that God is honored and worshiped throughout all the earth.[56]

From this brief survey, it is apparent that others have recognized and even implemented the CFR matrix. However, none have specifically developed the Christian worldview with these elements for apologetic purposes, specifically interacting with alternative religions. Therefore, there exists untapped resources here for Christians to engage in worldview analysis.

Defense of the CFR Matrix

Redemptive and World History

These elements are *the* decisive turning points in salvation history. Obviously, the Bible has other important moments such as the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, their conquest of the promised land, and the establishment of the Davidic dynasty. In a full blown biblical theology, certainly such events would require discussion and development.[57]

However, the events corresponding to CFR are unique in that they fundamentally alter not only redemptive history but world history. For example, the (original) sin of Adam, as will be argued below, triggered enormous consequences for all people. Hardly the same could be said, for example, with the sin of Achan in the account of Jericho (Josh 7). Or the sacrificial system in the Old Testament was an important part of God's covenant with Israel as well as foreshadowing future salvific events, but in the

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[56]Harold Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism: The Challenge to Christian Faith & Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 315-25.

[57]For example, Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 12, divide the biblical drama along six acts: creation, fall, redemption initiated, redemption inaugurated, the mission of the church, and redemption completed. The six acts schema unpacks the more succinct CFR schema.

full scope of biblical theology, the decisive moment of redemption occurred with the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In addition to *altering* human history, these categories are comprehensive, meaning they *encompass* human history: "The comprehensive scope of creation, sin, and redemption is evident throughout the biblical story and is central to a faithful biblical worldview."[58] Consequently, these events bear much apologetic weight in that they were public and yield, and continue to yield, evidential backing. Certainly, one does not want to formulate a worldview upon categories that are only relevant to a certain time frame or that lack evidential support. For these reasons, the CFR matrix seems to best reflect the epoch making moments in salvation history.

Existentially Compelling

The CFR corresponds to three existential issues that humanity has pondered throughout history: human origins, predicament, and resolution. First, it is vital to understand the origins of humanity and the world. From ancient times, people have conjectured about the beginning and nature of the universe and such thinking continues to the present day with the most advanced scientific technology. People want to know their origins. Without an accurate knowledge of one's foundation, the rest of the worldview will falter.

Second, humans almost universally affirm that something is wrong with humanity, personally and corporately. The ancient Greek poet Euripedes wrote, "If Zeus were to write the sins of men—the whole heaven would not suffice."[59] In their survey of ten theories of human nature, both religious and secular, Leslie Stevenson and David

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[58]Ibid., 12.

[59]Euripedes, quoted in Hugh Connolly, *Sin*, New Century Theology (New York: Continuum, 2002), 6. No source given for Euripedes' quote.

Haberman maintain that all theories articulate "a diagnosis of what is wrong with us."[60]

The ubiquitous presence of sacrifices and rituals to a higher being(s) in the world's

religions demonstrates people's recognition of their shortcomings and vices.

Lastly, the human predicament calls for a solution, which is usually described

in terms of salvation/liberation/enlightenment. Harold Netland writes, "Most religions

presuppose that human beings, and in some cases the cosmos at large, are presently in

some kind of undesirable predicament, and that, in contrast to this predicament, an

ultimately good and desirable state can be achieved—either through one's own individual

efforts or through the benevolent assistance of one or more higher beings or powers."[61]

No worldview is complete without a solution to humanity's travails. This component is

often the most important aspect of the worldview and where differences come to the fore.

Narrative Nature of Scripture

Everbody loves stories. They are an integral part of human life and culture as

well as enjoyable and memorable. Alasdair MacIntyre wrote, "Man is in his actions and

practice, as well as his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal."[62] Stories provide a

framework for human existence.

Worldviews are essentially stories. Throughout history, people have expressed

their deepest truths in the form of narrative. Brian Walsh and J. Richard Middleton point

out:

> Both Judaism and Islam . . . articulate their worldview in narrative form, appealing
> to the destiny of history as revelatory of God's intent. Even Eastern religions, such

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[60]Leslie Stevenson and David L. Haberman, *Ten Theories of Human Nature*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 9.

[61]Harold A. Netland, *Dissonant Voices: Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 36.

[62]Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 216.

as Hinduism and Buddhism, which are often portrayed as suspicious of history . . . have passed on a rich heritage of myths in storied form, including an epic narrative the Mahabrata (of which the Bhagavad-Gita is a part). Myths and folktales of good, evil and redemption are also the stock-in-trade of the contemporary indigenous religions of Africa, North and South America, and Australia, as well as the classical religions of Greece, Rome, Egypt, and Mesopotamia. In each case, ultimate truths about the world, humanity, evil and salvation are communicated in terms of stories which give guidance and set the parameters for ethical action.[63]

The universality of stories to express religious beliefs point to the importance of narrative in worldviews.

The Bible is no exception. It depicts a unified coherent picture of reality from beginning to end. Goldsworthy concurs, "If we allow the Bible to tell its own story, we find a coherent and meaningful whole. To understand this meaningful whole we have to allow the Bible to stand as it is: a remarkable complexity yet a brilliant unity, which tells the story of the creation and the saving plan of God."[64] Likewise, Rosner states, "Even though the Bible is strictly speaking a collection of books written over hundreds of years with widely varying contents, it does tell a unified story; the tale of creation, fall, judgment and redemption culminates with the gospel according to Jesus Christ."[65]

The canon of Scripture is profoundly narrative. Much of the Old Testament is composed in narrative form (over 40 percent) and the majority of the New Testament is written in this genre (over 60 percent). Thus, narrative is the predominant scriptural genre. Admittedly, Scripture reflects a variety of genres such as didactic, prophetic, and apocalyptic. These genres, however, are incorporated into the overarching story: "The Scriptures have a primary plot running through them, and the Bible weaves many different strands of literature together to form a coherent message."[66] The reliance upon

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[63]Brian Walsh and J. Richard Middleton, *Truth is Stranger Than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 64-65.

[64]Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 22.

[65]Rosner, "Biblical Theology," 9.

[66]Lints, *The Fabric of Theology*, 275.

narrative is no accident but reflects the intention of depicting the sweeping,

comprehensive nature of redemptive history. Kevin Vanhoozer wisely comments,

"Narratives allow storytellers to create a unified whole from a succession of events."[67]

Thus, narrative conveys the smooth linkage of the fundamental turning points of

redemptive history.

Scripture displays the intrinsic elements of a story. As Lints notes, "In form it

has the characteristic parts of a story – features such as tension and vision, pain and hope,

movement and consummation. It is a story with real characters who develop and a God

who actually discloses himself on the pages of history."[68] Moreover, as narrative

theologians like Hans Frei and Harold Lindbeck point out, the narrative form serves as a

vehicle to convey the message of redemption: "Narrative theology has directed our

attention once more to the sequential, episodic, and emplotted character of divine

revelation."[69]

In the Western world, the story of the Bible served as society's dominant

narrative. As the Christian influence waned, Friedrich Nietzsche recognized that Western

culture had lost its story and was left adrift: "Now the mythless man stands eternally

hungry, surrounded by all past ages, and digs and grubs for roots, even if he has to dig for

them among the remotest antiquities. The tremendous historical need of our unsatisfied

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[67]Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 282.

[68]Lints, *The Fabric of Theology*, 275. Henry Vander Goot, *Interpreting the Bible in Theology and the Church*, Symposium Series (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1984), 69, states, "As canon Scripture bears greatest similarity to the narrative texts of literature. In Scripture there is a storyline, a range of scenes and acts through which, as ordered in a sequence, a thread has been woven. There is a motion from beginning to end. Moreover, there is in the overall story falling and rising action and the interaction of characters through which identities are revealed. There is in short an unfolding drama about God's relationship to the world."

[69]Michael S. Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology: The Divine Drama* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 171.

modern culture, the assembling around one of countless other cultures, the consuming

desire for knowledge – what does all this point to, if not the to the loss of myth, the loss

of the mythical home, the mythical maternal womb?"[70] Since humans inevitably cling to

a story to understand themselves, the Western world currently longs for a story to reorient

itself. Perhaps these strivings might be an opportunity to present afresh the Christian

worldview, especially since opposing stories like Marxism have crumbled in recent days

and others like naturalism have experienced significant attacks.[71]

It is the argument of this study that the CFR matrix offers additional apologetic

value because it too is essentially a story. As humans hear the biblical story, the

apologist provides the interlocutor an opportunity to place himself or herself within the

account. Once there, the person (hopefully) will grasp and appreciate the power,

coherence, and, ultimately, the *truth* of the Christian worldview. N. T. Wright rightly

states, "The whole point of Christianity is that it offers a story which is the story of the

whole world. It is public truth."[72]

Outline of CFR Matrix

The CFR matrix comprises the crucial epochs in redemptive history. In what

follows, a theological synopsis of each epoch will be given. Along with each epoch,

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[70]Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and the Case of Wagner*, trans. and commentary by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1967), 135.

[71]One thinks of the rigorous philosophical assessment of naturalism as a worldview such as *Naturalism Defeated?: Essays on Plantinga's Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism*, ed. James Beilby, and *Naturalism: A Critical Analysis*, ed. William Lane Craig and James Porter Moreland, Routledge Studies in Twentieth Century Philosophy (London: Routledge, 2000). Also, there have arisen some devastating criticisms of evolutionary science: Michael Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis* (Bethesda, MD: Adler & Adler, 1986), and Phillip E. Johnson, *Darwin on Trial*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993).

[72]N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (London: SPCK, 1992), 41-42.

several lines of support will be discussed, demonstrating the apologetic strength of these turning points in biblical and human history.

Creation

The opening verse of the Bible proclaims God's creation of the entire universe (Gen 1:1). Scripture extols God alone as the Creator, thus drawing a sharp distinction between God and humanity. The Old Testament corpus repeatedly emphasizes God's handiwork in making *all* things (Pss 33:6, 148:5; Job 33:4; Isa 48:13; Zech 12:1). The New Testament affirms the same teaching, but develops the Trinitarian dimension. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the agent through whom God created (John 1:3; Col 1:15-17; Heb 1:3). The Holy Spirit is "the immanent cause of life and movement in the universe"[73] (Gen 1:2; Job 26:13; Pss 104:30; Isa 40:13; Luke 1:35). The church father Irenaeus poignantly described the Son and the Spirit as "the two hands of God." Creation is indeed an activity of the triune God.[74]

The doctrine of creation is fundamental to Christian worldview formulation. Not only that, it bears much apologetic freight in dialogue about origins of the universe. This paper will discuss creation ex nihilo and the evidence falling under the umbrella of the Intelligent Design movement. As with the other epochs—the fall and redemption—more evidences are available but these lines of support will satisfy the purpose of presenting an outline of the CFR template.

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[73]Herman Bavinck, *God and Creation*, vol. 2, *Reformed Dogmatics*, trans. John Vriend, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 406.

[74]Ibid., 421, Bavinck wisely states, "The Son and the Spirit are not viewed as secondary forces but as independent agents or 'principles' . . . who with the Father carry out the work of creation."

Creation Ex Nihilo

The Christian understanding of creation is inextricably linked to the doctrine of creation ex nihilo. What exactly is creation ex nihilo? Millard Erickson explains, "The whole of what now exists was begun by God's act of bringing it into existence--he did now fashion and adapt something which already existed independently of him."[75] It cannot be emphasized enough that the Christian doctrine teaches everything came into existence from God's creative act. In addition, Robert Jenson lists four important theses about this doctrine:

1. There is indeed other reality than God, and it is really other.
2. That there is other reality than God depends entirely on his will.
3. All the above holds precisely in the present tense. The world at any moment would not be did God not will it.
4. The reality other than God has an absolute beginning.[76]

Creation ex nihilo presupposes the sharp distinction between the Creator and creation. Moreover, it stresses the *absolute* beginning of the universe in contrast to cyclical or progressive models.

In support of creation ex nihilo, William Lane Craig and Paul Copan point to two independent lines of evidence—the expansion of the universe and the second law of thermodynamics. Regarding the former, until the twentieth century, it was almost universally assumed that the size of the universe was static. All that changed in the 1920's with the discovery that the universe was actually expanding. Since the universe was expanding, it was also becoming less dense. By reversing the expansion, "the universe becomes progressively denser until one arrives at a state of infinite density at some point in the finite past. This state represents a singularity at which the space-time

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[75]Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 368.

[76]Robert Jenson, "Aspects of a Doctrine of Creation," in *The Doctrine of Creation*, ed. Colin Gunton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 18-23.

curvature, along with temperature, pressure, and density becomes infinite."[77] This

singularity, in effect, constitutes a boundary to space-time itself. Astronomer Paul

Davies writes,

> If we extrapolate this prediction to its extreme, we reach a point when all distances in the universe have shrunk to zero. An initial cosmological singularity therefore forms a past temporal extremity to the universe. We cannot continue physical reasoning, or even the concept of spacetime, through such an extremity. For this reason most cosmologists think of the initial singularity as the beginning of the universe. On this view the big bang represents the creation event; the creation not only of all the matter and energy in the universe, but also of spacetime itself.[78]

The beginning of the universe at the singularity is commonly known as the

"big bang," derisively coined by Fred Hoyle. This model best fits the known facts with

modern cosmology. Numerous alternative models have been proposed to the big bang

model such as the following: steady state, oscillating, quantum gravity, and ekpyrotic.

Despite these efforts, none of the models have usurped the big bang model, and the

chances appear slim in the near future. Craig and Copan write, "It can be confidently

said, that with regard to the standard big bang model, no cosmogonic model has been as

repeatedly verified in its predictions, as corroborated by attempts at its falsification, as

concordant with empirical discoveries, and as philosophically coherent."[79]

The big bang singularity provides ample backing of the Christian doctrine of

creation ex nihilo. Obviously, Scripture does not delve into the specifics of the creation

event, but the basic outline is present. John Barrow and Frank Tipler write, "At this

singularity, space and time came into existence; literally nothing existed before the

singularity, so, if the Universe originated at such a singularity, we would truly have a

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[77]Paul Copan and William Lane Craig, *Creation out of Nothing: A Biblical, Philosophical, and Scientific Exploration* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 222.

[78]P. C. W. Davies, "Spacetime Singularities in Cosmology," in *The Study of Time III*, ed. J. T. Fraser (New York: Springer Verlag, 1978), 78-79.

[79]Copan and Craig, *Creation Out of Nothing*, 240.

creation *ex nihilo.*"[80] The surprising results have caused some scientists to look again at

the biblical teaching of creation. Robert Jastrow of NASA's Goddard Institute frankly

states, "Now we see how the astronomical evidence leads to a biblical view of the origin

of the world. The details differ, but the essential elements in the astronomical and

biblical accounts of Genesis are the same: the chain of events leading to man commenced

suddenly and sharply at a definite moment in time, in a flash of light and energy."[81]

A second line of evidence in support of creation ex nihilo is the second law of

thermodynamics that asserts that the processes in a closed system will reach a state of

equilibrium. For example, a person preparing a bath mixed of hot and cold water does

not expect the hot water to pool at one end of the tub and the cold at the other. Rather,

the entire tub will contain the mixed water.

Applying the second law of thermodynamics to the universe as a whole, it

strikes down the notion of an eternal universe because it would have reached a state of

equilibrium by now. Obviously, that is not the case or the universe would have destroyed

itself by heat death. Rather, the universe gives abundant evidence of having begun at a

fixed point. Paul Davies writes,

> Today, few cosmologists doubt that the universe, at least as we know it, did have an
> origin at a finite moment in the past. The alternative—that the universe has always
> existed in one form or another—runs into a rather basic paradox. The sun and stars
> cannot keep burning forever; sooner or later they will run out of fuel and die.
> The same is true of all irreversible processes; the stock of energy available in
> the universe to drive them is finite, and cannot last for eternity. This is an example
> of the so-called second law of thermodynamics, which, applied to the entire cosmos,
> predicts that it is stuck on a one-way slide of degeneration and decay towards a final
> state of maximum entropy, or disorder. As this final state has not yet been reached,
> it follows that the universe cannot have existed for an infinite time.[82]

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[80]John Barrow and Frank Tipler, *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle*
(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 442.

[81]Robert Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978),
14.

[82]Paul Davies, "The Big Bang—and Before" (paper presented at the Thomas
Aquinas College Lecture Series, Thomas Aquinas College, Santa Paula, CA, March

In another place, Davis draws a vital conclusion about the scientific data, "The universe can't have existed forever. We know there must have been an absolute beginning a finite time ago."[83] The perennial belief in an eternal universe is effectively shattered. Jastrow offers a fitting portrait of this unexpected scientific turn (to theology): "For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries."[84]

Creation ex nihilo not only corresponds to advances in modern cosmology, it also sets it apart from other religions and systems of thought. As Craig and Copan note, "With majestic simplicity the author of opening chapter of Genesis thus differentiates his viewpoint, not only from the ancient creation myths of Israel's neighbors, but also effectively from pantheism (such as found in religions like Vedanta Hinduism and Taoism), panentheism (whether of classical Neo-Platonist vintage or twentieth-century process theology), and polytheism (ranging from ancient paganism to contemporary Mormonism)."[85] This doctrine alone sets Christianity apart from all but the theistic worldviews—Islam and Judaism. Christians would be wise to begin their worldview apologetics from the very first verse of Scripture.

2002), quoted in Copan and Craig, *Creation Out of Nothing*, 244.

[83]Paul Davies, "The Big Questions: In the Beginning," ABC Science Online, interview with Phillip Adams, http://aca.mq.edu.au/PaulDavies/pdavies.html, quoted in Copan and Craig, *Creation Out of Nothing*, 244.

[84]Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers*, 15.

[85]Copan and Craig, *Creation Out of Nothing*, 147.

Intelligent Design

During the last half of the twentieth century, a variety of scientific disciplines discovered remarkable instances of apparent design in the universe. The findings of fields such as biochemistry, cosmology, and biological information (the structure of DNA) have produced a growing acknowledgment that the world comes from an intelligent agent.[86] Such findings led to the rise of the Intelligent Design (ID) movement about twenty years ago. William Dembski, a leading thinker in the movement, defines ID as three things: "A scientific research program that investigates the effects of intelligent causes; an intellectual movement that challenges Darwinism and its naturalistic legacy; and a way of understanding divine action."[87] Presently, ID is strongly challenging the stranglehold of philosophical naturalism, aiming to earn a spot (albeit a smaller one) in public school curriculum about human origins.

Perhaps the most amazing discoveries concern "the anthropic principle." In other words, the universe is finely tuned to accommodate life on earth. For example, for life to exist, the four fundamental forces, the strong nuclear, weak nuclear, electromagnetic, and gravitational, all must be precisely balanced. The expansion rate of the universe, both in terms of velocity and isotropy, requires near perfect balance. The earth's distance from the sun, its rotation period, and its ozone and carbon dioxide levels are optimally calibrated for life to exist. The discovery of DNA unlocked the astounding complexity of the basic building blocks of life. Many more examples could be canvassed. As humanity develops greater technology to observe the laws and structure of the macroscopic and microscopic world, the ID movement gains greater certitude.

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[86]Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 184.

[87]William A. Dembski, *Intelligent Design: The Bridge between Science & Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 13.

The absurd responses of several prominent scientists reveal both the strength of the anthropic principle. Francis Crick, co-discoverer of DNA and hardly a theist, stated, "An honest man, armed with all the knowledge available to us now, could only state that in some sense, the origin of life appears at the moment be almost a miracle, so many are the conditions which would have to have been satisfied to get it going."[88] Another grudging recognition comes from renowned astronomer Fred Hoyle: "A commonsense interpretation of the facts suggests that a super intellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature. The numbers one calculates from the facts seem to me so overwhelming as to put this conclusion almost beyond question."[89]

The findings of science in a wide array of fields points to the handiwork of an agent with mental ability and causative power beyond comprehension. More than that, these findings are unveiling the truth that the universe is remarkably fine-tuned to support life on this planet, especially human beings. Of course, biblical revelation has maintained such a view throughout the ages (Gen 1; Ps 103, 139; Matt 5:45).

The Fall of Humanity

According to the Christian worldview, everything was created good without a trace of evil. Indeed, at the end of the creation event, God declares it "very good" (Gen 1:31). Yet as Scripture unfolds, one finds a radical change in creation as evil and wickedness abound. All of humanity engages in sinful activity, whether it be in thought,

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[88]Francis Crick, *Life Itself* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981), 88. Despite this acknowledgement, Crick postulates that aliens may have seeded the primeval earth with life.

[89]Fred Hoyle, "The Universe: Past and Present Reflections," *Annual Review of Astronomy and Astrophysics* 20 (1982): 16, quoted in Kenneth D. Boa and Roger M. Bowman, Jr., *20 Compelling Evidences that God Exists: Discover Why Believing in God Makes So Much Sense* (Tulsa, OK: RiverOak, 2002), 78.

deed, and action. Proverbs 20:9 states, "Who can say, 'I have made my heart pure? I am clean from my sin?" Psalm 14:3 proclaims, "They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one." Most poignantly, Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" In the New Testament, Romans 3:23 states, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

The burning question remains, "Why is every person sinful?" Even if one doubts the creation account's explanation of humanity's initial goodness, one must still explain humanity's ability to recognize evil that presupposes a standard of good with which to contrast. Christian theologians point to the Genesis narrative and the transgression of Adam and Eve. While the mode of imputation remains disputed, historic Christianity affirms the inherent sinfulness of humanity tracing back to Adam. This is referred to as original sin which John Calvin defined as humanity's "hereditary depravity and corruption of our nature, diffused into all parts of the soul, which first makes us liable to God's wrath, then also brings forth in us those works which Scripture calls 'works of the flesh.'"[90] The Bible provides an answer for that question with the doctrine of original sin, or what is sometimes known as the fall of humanity.

The historical and canonical occurrence of the fall underscores its significance. The fall of humanity is juxtaposed with the pure and good creation event to highlight the completely alien nature of sin to God's plan. Its disasterous effects set the stage for humanity's ongoing rebellion against God. Henri Blocher writes of the fall narrative: "Its place in the canon is significant. It is obvious that the Eden story is no peripheral anecdote or marginal addition; it belongs decisively to the structure of Genesis and to that

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[90]John Calvin *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2.1.8, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, Library of Christian Classics, vol. 20 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 251.

of the Torah. It has a major aetiological intention, with the following chapters showing the results of the inaugural tragedy."[91]

Of course, the notion of a literal fall elicits stern challenges resistance as many scholars refute the historical nature of the Genesis account, relegating it merely to primeval myth. However, several arguments can be marshaled in response. First, textual evidence warrants the essential historicity of the fall account. In the context of the early chapters of Genesis, the writer certainly gives the appearance of depicting history. For example, the narrative marker "these are the generations of . . ." is used for Adam just as with the rest of the patriarchs of Genesis. Moreover, Adam's genealogy is traced down to Noah. Genesis scholar Gordon Wenham affirms, "It is thus fair to describe these chapters as an account of man's fall."[92]

Second, the Genesis account strongly diverges from other creation stories regarding the portrayal of human sinfulness. Other cosmologies portray humanity in highly optimistic strokes as people are progressing morally and spiritually. In contrast, Wenham argues that the biblical narrative stands in sharp contrast in terms of its strong portrayal of human sinfulness: "The fact of sin and its consequences are present in many narratives in Genesis, when nothing is made of it in parallel oriental stories."[93] If anything, the humanity's spiritual condition is devolving not evolving. Wenham concludes,

> In any enquiry into the biblical basis of the doctrine of original sin, a sensitive interpretation of the stories of Genesis 1-11 is essential. Yet they are stories, not statements of systematic theology, and it would be wrong to look for confirmation of every detail of a doctrine in them. Nevertheless a close reading of these chapters

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[91]Henri Blocher, *Original Sin: Illuminating the Riddle*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 32.

[92]Gordon J. Wenham, "Original Sin in Genesis 1-11," *The Churchman* (1990): 318.

[93]Wenham, "Original Sin in Genesis 1-11," 324.

does suggest that the author of Genesis would have been in general sympathy with the interpretation of St. Paul and Augustine.[94]

Moving past the account of the fall, the Old Testament portrays humanity as repeatedly rebelling against God, even among those of the chosen people. Early in the story of humanity, one finds a chilling and comprehensive description of humanity's depravity in Genesis 6:5: "The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Wenham claims that this verse is "one of the most devastating assessments of man's moral plight in the whole of Scripture."[95]

Not much changes as the rest of the Old Testament unfolds. Despite unique and miraculous experiences with the Lord, Israel continually rebels against him. Perhaps no person recognized the innate wickedness better than David, a man who experienced the sweet providence and blessing of God yet pursued horrendous evil. Consequently, David confessed, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps 51:5).

Turning to the New Testament, the apostle Paul offers the *locus classicus* expression of humanity's fall and depravity. In Romans 5, Paul compares Adam with Christ, affirming that all of humanity sinned with Adam: "Just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned . . . . As one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners" (5:12, 18-19). Granting that Paul's aim is not to articulate a well-developed theory of original sin, it cannot be denied that he engraves the contours that later theologians like Augustine develop—human sin and death comes from Adam.

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[94]Ibid., 320.

[95]Ibid., 326.

Despite the predominant emphasis upon the fall of humanity, the doctrine has

fallen into disrepute in modern times. The primary reason, it seems, stems from the

Enlightenment's vehement rejection of the doctrine and consequent assertion of the

inherent goodness of humanity. Ted Peters correctly states, "For much of the last two

centuries . . . theologians have largely put the concept of original sin on the back

burner."[96] Oddly enough, some of the very same opponents of orthodox Christianity like

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, and Karl Marx propounded their own

explanations for humanity's fallenness.[97]

Not surprisingly, apologists have been more embarrassed of original sin rather

than defending it, despite its uniqueness among worldviews and its integral place in the

Christian worldview.[98] Of all the religions in the world, only Christianity espouses a

position like the inherent depravity of humanity. In his analysis of Christianity and other

world religions, Winifried Corduan expounds,

> What sets Christianity apart conceptually from everything discussed so far is the
> doctrine of original sin. In the context of the discussion above, this doctrine makes
> Christianity distinct from both Eastern patterns and other Western patterns. In
> contrast to the Western religions (Islam, Judaism, Zoroastrianism), original sin rules
> out any idea of human neutrality because human beings are perceived as being
> tainted by sin from the moment of their birth (indeed, their very conception).[99]

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[96]Ted F. Peters, "On the Gay Gene: Back to Original Sin Again?," *Dialog* 33.1
(1994): 31.

[97]Bernard Ramm, *Offense to Reason: A Theology of Sin* (San Francisco:
Harper & Row, 1985), 10-37. In his second chapter, Ramm canvasses the many
proposals to explain humanity's fallen condition. A recent work points to the theories of
the fall by three famous philosophers Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, and Ludwig
Wittgenstein: Stephen Mulhall, *Philosophical Myths of the Fall* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton
University Press, 2005).

[98]Blaise Pascal is an exception. In fact, according to Gary Gutting, for Pascal,
"The first step in winning over nonbelievers was to get them to realize that Christianity,
with its teaching about our Fall from a heavenly destiny, offers an excellent sense of what
it means to be human." Gary Gutting, *Pragmatic Liberalism and the Critique of
Modernity*, Modern European Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
1999), 129-30.

[99]Winfried Corduan, *A Tapestry of Faiths: The Common Threads between*

Such neglect is unfortunate in light of the doctrine's ability to illuminate human

experience, particularly the universal corruption of human beings.[100] Blaise Pascal wrote,

"Certainly nothing jolts us more rudely than this doctrine, and yet, but for the mystery,

the most incomprehensible of all, we remain incomprehensible to ourselves."[101] In

particular, the doctrine illuminates how people simultaneously act nobly and wretchedly.

Human beings were the pinnacle of creation and innately good, but Adam's trespass

enslaved everyone to sin.

No greater evidence exists than the pages of history and the headlines of the

daily newspaper. The doctrine of original sin is plastered throughout all of human

experience. G. K. Chesterton quipped that the doctrine of original sin is "the only part of

Christian theology which can really be proved."[102] Perhaps the most convincing

evidence comes from the atrocities of the twentieth century. To encounter such things

might be expected of primitive and barbaric peoples. However, the last century, with all

of its intellectual and technological progress, ended as the bloodiest, most brutal one in

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Christianity & World Religions (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 116. In his study of sin, Bernard Ramm, offers this insight: "Christianity has the most well-defined, articulate, and extensive theology of sin . . . . Only Christianity teaches an articulate doctrine of Original Sin. Other religions believe that humanity is born neutral and may be pushed into good or evil; or else good and evil are equal parts of human nature at birth." Ramm, *Offense to Reason*, 58.

[100]This study will not address the issue of the fairness of inherent depravity. In other words, why does all of humanity suffer for the transgression of Adam and Eve? Several lines of reply can briefly be stated. First, people sin inevitably but not necessarily. Second, if each person would have stood in Adam or Eve's place, they likely would have done likewise. Third, the concept of corporate personality, while somewhat foreign to individualistic Western society, was prevalent in ancient times. A little reflection turns up the realization that a person's genetic and sociological make-up is impacted by their forbearers.

[101]Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1958), 124.

[102]G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy: The Classic Account of a Remarkable Christian Experience*, The Wheaton Literary Series (Colorado Springs, CO: Shaw: 2001), 11.

history. Philip Bobbit documents that between the years 1914 and 1990, an estimated 187 million people "were killed or fated to die by human agency."[103] Sadly, some of the most educated and advanced societies were the very ones to perpetrate the worst evils.

Even more indicting is the fact that the vast majority of great wickedness was carried out not by extraordinarily evil people but, by all accounts, "normal" individuals. Fred Emil Katz writes, "Only a tiny proportion of this century's massive killings are attributable to the actions of those people we call criminals, or crazy people, or socially alienated people, or even people we identify as evil people. The vast majority of killings were carried out by plain folk in the population—ordinary people, like you and me."[104] The testimony of history affirms the average person possesses an inherent bent toward evil that leads him or her toward wickedness.

Humanity must come to grips with the universal nature of sin. Moreover, it needs to find an explanation for the depths of human evil, carried out even among financially prosperous and highly educated societies. Sadly, even children display such dispositions and behaviors, albeit in nascent form. What can account for this phenomenon?

The prevalence of evil has caused people outside theological circles to posit some cause akin to original sin. For example, George Steiner writes,

> At the maddening center of despair is the insistent instinct—again I can put it no other way—of a broken contract. Of an appalling and specific cataclysm. In the futile scream of a child, in the mute agony of the tortured animal, sounds the 'background noise' of a horror after creation, after being torn loose from the logic and repose of nothingness. Something—how helpless language can be—has gone hideously wrong. Reality should, could have been, otherwise . . . The impotent

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[103]Philip Bobbit, *The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace, and the Course of History* (New York: Anchor Books, 2002), quoted in Os Guinness, *Unspeakable: Facing Up to Evil in an Age of Genocide and Terror* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2005), 39.

[104]Fred Emil Katz, quoted in Guinness, *Unspeakable*, 90. In addition, Guinness mentions the verdict of two American psychiatrists that no more than 10 percent of the Nazi SS troops would be considered "abnormal" (90).

fury, the guilt which master and surpass my identity carry with them the working hypothesis, the 'working metaphor,' if you will, of 'original sin' . . . . In the presence of the beaten, raped child, of the mule or horse flogged across its eyes, I am possessed as by a midnight clarity, by the intuition of the fall. Only some such happening, irretrievable to reason, can make intelligible, though always near to unbearable, the actualities of our history on this wasted earth.[105]

Clearly, humanity reveals a deep rooted sinful nature. This perennial problem manifests itself in the sheer breadth and depth of human sinfulness on the individual level. Moreover, the conglomeration of humanity erects evil societal institutions in the political, business, and military spheres.[106] Christianity alone reflects humanity's behavior. As Oakes says, "Despite its obvious paradoxicality, it proves to be more illuminating of the human condition than its competitors."[107] More importantly, as will be discussed later, it offers a solution by the actions of the second Adam, Jesus Christ: "The Judeo-Christian tradition offers us a foothold, a context, for understanding original sin as well as a solution for overcoming it."[108]

Psychology

The relationship between Christianity and psychology is a long and running debate. This paper will make no attempt to enter the fray but will offer a few remarks pertaining to the topic at hand—the fall of humanity. For one thing, Christianity and psychology often clash because of conflicting presuppositions about the nature of humanity. For example, a behaviorist psychology will inevitably conflict with the notion of a person as an embodied soul. However, it is unnecessary to assume that Christianity

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[105]George Steiner, *Errata: An Examined Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 187-88.

[106]While departing from historic orthodoxy, liberation theologians rightly point out the oppressive nature of such institutions.

[107]Edward T. Oakes, "Original Sin: A Disputation," *First Things* 87 (1998): 24.

[108]Paul Copan, "Original Sin and Christian Philosophy," *Philosophia Christi* 5.2 (2003): 541.

and psychology *necessarily* clash. The fact that most psychologists practice from a naturalistic worldview does not mean that the discipline is inherently contradictory with Christianity. To the contrary, psychology can and is practiced by many from within a Christian worldview.[109]

In regard to the fall of humanity, psychologists typically reject the biblical portrayal. However, it is fascinating that much psychological work provides indirect support for original sin. One thinks of the psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud who believed that people's behaviors are highly influenced by drives and motives that are narcissistic.[110] Interestingly, notable Christian psychologist Paul Vitz, along with John Gartner, assert, "It is high time that Christian psychologists begin the serious debate of such important issues as the psychological nature of original sin."[111] Psychological research can offer support of the Christian notion of fallen humanity.

Stephen Moroney has explored the issue of the fall on human thinking.[112] In an intriguing piece, Moroney weds a psychological and theological analysis of the noetic effects of sin.[113] His work follows a two fold schema in regard to human thinking: self-serving attributions and self-serving comparisons.

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[109]A few generations ago, Christians were a relatively small proportion of philosophers. However, philosophy has undergone a Christian renaissance. Certainly, it would have been foolish to write off philosophy when so few were Christians. Perhaps the same type of transformation could occur in psychology.

[110]Paul C. Vitz and John Gartner, "Christianity and Psychoanalysis, Part I: Jesus as the Anti-Oedipus," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 12 (1984): 8. They state, "Psychoanalysis has provided a widely influential interpretation of the traditional theology of our fallen nature."

[111]Paul C. Vitz and John Gartner, "The Vicissitudes of Original Sin: A Reply to Bridgman and Carter," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 17 (1989): 9.

[112]Stephen K. Moroney, *The Noetic Effects of Sin: A Historical and Contemporary Exploration of How Sin Affects Our Thinking* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000); idem, "How Sin Affects Scholarship: A New Model," *Christian Scholar's Review* 28 (1999): 432-51.

[113]Stephen K. Moroney, "Thinking More Highly of Ourselves Than We

With the first category, Moroney documents the findings of social

psychologists of the widespread phenomenon of attributing success to personal ability

and effort while attributing failure to the difficulty of the task. In other words, success

derives from internal factors whereas failure derives from external factors. This pattern

of thought is found among children and adults. Moroney lists the following examples:

> Athletes tend to attribute their victories to ability and other internal causes, but not so their failure. Students who do well on an exam attribute their achievement more to ability and effort, but those who do poorly attribute their performance more to the difficulty of the test. Ministers accept more responsibility for positive outcomes, but attribute negative outcomes more to external circumstances. After a divorce both partners typically see themselves as less responsible for the breakup than their ex-spouse.[114]

The results of such studies have altered the way many social psychologists view

humanity: "Instead of a naive scientist entering the environment in search of the truth, we

find rather the unflattering picture of a charlatan trying to make the data come out in a

manner most advantageous to his or her already-held theories."[115]

Conversely, humans do not judge others by the same standard used for

themselves. Instead of external factors serving as the norm, internal ones assume that

role. The implications are obvious: the faults of others are intrinsically blameworthy

while personal errors are extrinsic. This phenomenon is cross-cultural, being found even

in collectivist cultures. Though some research indicates this double standard appears at

less pronounced levels,[116] other studies such as Fletcher and Ward affirm "a surprising

degree of similarity in achievement attributions across cultures."[117]

Ought," in *Care for the Soul: Exploring the Intersection of Psychology and Theology*, ed. Mark R. McMinn and Timothy R. Phillips (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 309-31. The following research is found in Moroney's article.

[114]Ibid., 311.

[115]Susan T. Fiske and Shelley E. Taylor, *Social Cognition* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1984), 88.

[116]Y. Kashima and H. C. Triandis, "The Self-Serving Bias in Attributions as a Coping Strategy: A Cross-Cultural Study," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 17

The other category Moroney explores, self-serving comparisons, sheds equally damning light upon the sinfulness of human beings. When people compare themselves to others, they tend to judge themselves better than average, often much higher. For example, in a major Australian representative survey, it was found that 86% of people believed they were above average in their main job and 78% thought likewise as a parent and as a spouse/parent, respectively. The authors of the study, Heady and Wearing, noted that "differences between men and women, young and old, higher and lower status people, were slight" and that "a sense of relative superiority is the usual state for most people."[118]

In terms of morality, some rather astounding results were discovered through a survey about the Ten Commandments. The survey questioned individuals about their obedience to the commandments as well as the obedience of other Americans. The following results reveal the prevalence of bias (personal obedience/societal obedience): profanity (64 percent/15 percent), respecting parents (95 percent/49 percent), adultery (86 percent/45 percent), stealing (90 percent/54 percent), lying about another person (88 percent/33 percent), envying another's possessions (76 percent/23 percent), and coveting another person's spouse (84 percent/42 percent).[119] The findings disclose the great disparity between people's perception and reality.

(1986): 83-97.

[117]G. J. O. Fletcher and C. Ward, "Attribution Theory and Processes: A Cross Cultural Perspective," in *The Cross-Cultural Challenge to Social Psychology*, ed. Michael Harris Bond (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1988), 235.

[118]B. Headey and A. Wearing, "The Sense of Relative Superiority—Central to Well-Being," *Social Indicators Research* 20 (1988): 497-99. Statistics found on p. 503.

[119]R. Rosenblatt, "The 11th Commandment," *Family Circle*, December 21, 1993, 30.

Other research indicates that people overestimate the uniqueness of particular virtues or abilities. This phenomenon, known as "the false uniqueness effect," is found in a wide spectrum of society, including children.[120] In addition, there is a strong tendency to utilize these biased standards in group comparisons as well. As with self-serving attributions, the trait of self-serving comparisons is a cross-cultural phenomenon.[121] Sadly, but almost humorously, humans tend to regard themselves as "better than average" at not thinking of themselves as "better than average."[122]

The research cited by Moroney reveals some profound insights. In general, human beings tend to regard themselves more highly than is warranted and to regard others less than is warranted. Not surprisingly, the Bible warns against both self-serving attributions (Rom 12:3) and self-serving comparisons (Phil 2:3). The findings of such studies capture the depth of human pride as the inflated percentages not only are a statistical impossibility but border on the absurd. In general, normal, well-adjusted people are prideful and instinctively demean others, even devoutly religious ones as seen in Scripture like the Pharisees (Matt 7:1-5; Luke 16:14-15). The disparity in the view of ourselves and others demand an explanation for the defect that encompasses gender, age, education, and culture. It is here, it seems, that Christian exploration of psychology and theology could yield provocative results.

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[120]G. R. Goethals, D. M. Messick, and S. T. Allison, "The Uniqueness Bias: Studies of Constructive Social Comparison," in *Social Comparison: Contemporary Theory and Research*, ed. Jerry Suls and Thomas Ashby Wills (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1991), 149-76.

[121]Moroney, "Thinking of Ourselves More Highly Than We Ought," 321.

[122]J. Friedrich, "On Seeing Oneself as Less Self-Serving Than Others: The Ultimate Self-Serving Bias?," *Teaching of Psychology* 23 (April 1996): 107.

Genetic Science

One cannot but be awestruck at the breathtaking advances in the study of genetics such as the Human Genome Project. The potential for breakthroughs in medical technology and human health are enormous. Intriguingly, some believe the insights yield support for the ancient doctrine of original sin. Peters wonders, "The issue of inherited disposition to specific behavior is now being placed on the front burner, not by the theologians but by the scientists . . . . Might genetic science be taking us down a recently unmaintained doctrinal road toward a recovery of original sin?"[123]

According to Charles Warren, recent advances in two fields of science shed light on the subject of original sin: molecular genetics and behavior genetics.[124] With molecular genetics, scientists have discovered the potential of biological immortality. Certain human cells, such as germline cells, are naturally immortal in the present condition of people. Moreover, scientists have transformed normal somatic cells into immortal cells by inserting telomerase, a human enzyme present in the body though not activated in all cell types. Thus, cells can switch from mortality to immortality and vice versa. Finally, human binary switch genes control telomerase activation which is necessary for cell immortality under certain conditions. Warren puts these pieces of the puzzle together to reach this conclusion:

> These hard scientific facts, taken together, attest to and demonstrate adequately the human condition for the possibility of human biological immortal life. These findings authenticate that all human cells examined contain the necessary ancillary substances needed for immortality, excepting telomerase. Man has been able to

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[123]Ted F. Peters, "On the Gay Gene: Back to Original Sin Again?," *Dialog* 33.1 (1994): 36, 32.

[124]Charles E. Warren, *Original Sin Explained?: Revelations from Genetic Science* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2002). The following discussion is indebted to Warren's study. Warren also discusses phylogenetics concerning human origins, arguing that it supports a relatively recent origin of humanity. In a recent book, *Who Was Adam? A Creation Model Approach to the Origin of Man* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2005), Fazale Rana and Hugh Ross propose the first human pair was created between 10,000 and 100,000 years ago located in or near the Middle East.

switch normal human somatic cells from a state of mortality to one of immortality and from a state of immortality to mortality. Intrinsic mechanisms exist in humans that could direct the pathway of each and every cell to an immortal one. These same mechanisms are capable of switching cells from immortal states to mortal states. Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that God could have created man with an indefinite life span and subsequently could have initiated the switch from potential immortality to a state of mortality. All the necessary substances and processes for such a possibility have been scientifically demonstrated to be intrinsic to human nature.[125]

Obviously, this discussion contains significance for the matter of whether Adam possessed an initial state of immortality. If this is a possibility, it lends credence to the biblical teaching that sin caused human death. Current genetic science affirms this possibility. The evidence is by no means conclusive but intriguing nonetheless.

Behavioral genetics examines the role of genes upon human behavior. Increasingly, scientists point to the impact of genetics upon certain behaviors. Studies have found that people possess a genetic inclination, though not determinative, to engage in these behaviors. Thus, a person may be predisposed toward alcoholism but not actually become an alcoholic.[126]

Behavioral genetics lends support to the biblical portrayal of the fall. Human beings are predisposed toward certain behaviors but, importantly, these exertions do not override human choice.[127] Warren writes, "The degree of genetic influence measured by all scientific studies is typically less than 50 percent. This means that genetic influence is not determinative . . . . Moreover, many behavioral geneticists attribute to human free

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[125]Warren, *Original Sin Explained?*, 62.

[126]See National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, "Alcohol Alert" [on-line]; accessed 12 April 2006; available from http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/aa60.htm; Internet.

[127]R. David Cole, "Genetic Predestination," *Dialog* 33.1 (1994): 19, states, "The actual expression of genetic information is contingent on outside circumstances. Although the nature of each gene product is fixed by the sequence of bases in its DNA, the extent to which the gene is permitted to put its instructions to use is affected by circumstances. *Genetic determinism is thus compromised by contingencies.*"

will a key environmental role in the final expression of human behavior."[128] Certainly,

the Christian worldview affirms human responsibility. However, the findings of

behavioral genetics suggest that people are strongly inclined toward certain behaviors,

some of which the Bible considers sinful. Thus, when these tendencies are exposed to

tempting influences and environments, the pull to pursue these dispositions is extremely

powerful. Persons possess the ability to resist such desires, but they often fail in this

resistance.

Obviously, genetic science has not correlated genes with the panoply of human

evil and likely never will.[129] It seems wisest to conclude that a multitude of factors

contribute to any behavior. However, recent findings reveal nuances in the sources of

human behavior. It seems possible that human genes create a nexus of dispositions and

desires that hinder the will from complete autonomy. Thus, humans habitually fall into

sins of omission and commission.

Redemption

Concomitant with the human predicament is its hope for a solution. For

biblical revelation, redemption lies at the heart of humanity's remedy. In the Old

Testament, God institutes the sacrificial system as a means of offering atonement for the

people. Because of the power of sin, the system could only yield temporal results (Rom

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[128]Warren, *Original Sin Explained?*, 129.

[129]Philip Hefner, "Determinism, Freedom, and Moral Failure," *Dialog* 33.1
(1994): 27. Hefner expounds, "Researchers and others who are informed and
sophisticated in their understanding of genetics recognize that although virtually
everything about us humans is rooted in our genetic composition, most of our
characteristics are influenced not by a single gene, but by several genes, often in complex
interaction with one another."

8:3-4). It was not a complete remedy for humanity's plight. Humanity needed a permanent solution to its plight.

The ultimate solution is foreshadowed throughout the Old Testament, commencing in the opening chapters of Genesis with its prediction of a coming deliverer (Gen 3:15). Further revelations unveil facts such as his birthplace (Mic 5:2) and amazingly, his divinity (Ps 110:1; Isa 9:6). The messiah will inaugurate a new covenant with Israel (Jer 31) and the Gentiles (Isa 42:6-7). Surprisingly, the messiah purchases the redemption of the people of God through his own death (Isa 52:13-53:12). The great truth of the New Testament is that God became incarnate to offer a perfect, final sacrifice for human sin (John 1:14; Rom 8:3-4). Therefore, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ stand as not only the centerpiece of the redemption element in the biblical story, but it is the centerpiece of the biblical story itself.

The New Testament is christocentric from beginning to end. The Gospels, which survey his three year ministry, devote an significant amount of coverage to the last week of Jesus' life. In fact, the Gospels are sometimes referred to as the account of Jesus' passion with a long introduction. Moving past the Gospels, the rest of the New Testament corpus unpacks the significance of Jesus' resurrection. The books of Acts depicts the birth of the messiah's church while the epistolary corpus discusses the application of Jesus' teachings and deeds for the beliefs and practice of the church. The final book, Revelation, portrays Jesus' glorious return, destruction of his enemies, and establishment of the eternal kingdom.

The resurrection of Jesus ushered in the eschatological new age that will reach its zenith at his return.[130] The resurrection then, is the pinnacle for a truly biblical

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[130]Some Christian thinkers (Craig Blomberg and James Sire mentioned above) categorize the Christian worldview as creation—fall—redemption—consummation or glorification. While the fourth element is a vital part of the Christian worldview, it seems best to incorporate it into "redemption" since Christ's death and resurrection was the decisive turn in salvation history. Consummation is the inevitable conclusion of Christ's

theology unlike the frequent presentations of systematic theology of a particular theme

(i.e., justification, covenant, etc) or the classical tenfold division. The defense of the

Christian worldview, as derived from biblical theology, must place great emphasis upon

the person and work of Jesus, especially his resurrection. Consequently, it is important to

demonstrate that the resurrection, the vindication of Jesus' claims and the turning point of

salvation history, actually occurred. Contra neo-Orthodox theology, redemptive history

is indeed *real* history. The eminent German theologian, Wolfhart Pannenberg, an expert

on the historical resurrection of Jesus, comments, "Only the resurrection of Jesus . . .

renders intelligible the early history of Christian faith up to the confessions of Jesus' true

divinity. If the resurrection of Jesus cannot be considered a historical event, then the

historical aspect of the primitive Christian message and its different forms, both of which

have crystallized into the New Testament, fall hopelessly apart."[131]

In terms of providing evidence for the redemption element of the Christian

worldview, two primary lines seem most effective: the resurrection of Jesus Christ and

the transforming effect of the Christian church on the world.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

William Lane Craig provides a rigorous treatment of Jesus' death and

resurrection.[132] His apologetic approach implements the findings of the majority of New

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redemption. Oscar Cullman's famous D-Day and V-Day analogy is appropriate. For apologetic purposes, it seems wiser to omit discussions of Christ's return and his eternal kingdom in the new creation. Certainly, there are apologetic elements of great value such as the argument for desire that the Christian worldview best satisfies. However, these elements are less tangible and, consequently, less compelling than those associated with creation—fall—redemption.

[131]Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology: Collected Essays*, trans. George H. Kehm (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971; reprint, Minneapolis: Fortress, 1983), 1:8.

[132]Craig has written on both the scholarly and popular levels. For an in-depth examination, see William Lane Craig, *Assessing the New Testament Evidence for the Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity

Testament scholars and historians, even those under the rubric "critical" scholars. Although such an approach curtails the amount of evidence, it greatly enhances the strength of the evidence. Craig's "minimalist" approach attempts to unify various lines of evidence to build a cumulative case for the resurrection of Jesus.

Craig typically focuses on three important elements in Jesus' passion (the events preceding and succeeding his death).[133] First, Craig discusses the empty tomb. In support of the empty tomb, Craig cites the extremely early source material in the hymnic fragment of 1 Corinthians 15, dated within five years of Jesus' death, that implies the empty tomb of Jesus. The gospel of Mark, generally regarded as the earliest gospel, mentions the empty tomb while omitting embellishment characteristic of later, apocryphal legends. In addition, women discovered the empty tomb, an embarrassing fact considering women were not permitted to give legal testimony. Finally, the earliest Jewish polemic presupposes an empty tomb (Matt 28:11-15). Obviously, if the tomb was not empty, the Jewish and Roman authorities would have unveiled Jesus' body, effectively squelching the apostles' preaching. That the tomb was empty is hard to dispute.

The second line of evidence is the resurrection appearances of Jesus to the disciples. Again, the hymnic fragment in 1 Corinthians provides early support for the veracity of multiple resurrection appearances. Also, the appearances found in the New Testament are multiple and independent: Peter, James, Paul, the Twelve, and the 500 brethren. In particular, the mention of the 500 brethren is striking as Paul is effectually presenting them as witnesses for questioning. Lastly, the time frame between the events

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(Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1989). For a more popular treatment, see William Lane Craig *The Son Rises: The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981).

[133]William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, rev. ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1994), 272-98.

and their writings are much shorter than standard legend. Craig writes, "Perhaps the greatest difficulty for those who say that the resurrection accounts are legendary is that the time period between the events and the writing of the gospels was too short to allow legend to substantially accrue."[134]

In response to a skeptic who claims the disciples hallucinated these appearances, Craig responds by pointing to the fact that hallucinations occur to individuals, not groups. Moreover, hallucinations fail to account for the physicality of Jesus' appearances. It is difficult to explain the unfolding of events apart from Jesus' numerous appearances to his disciples.

Finally, Craig posits the origin of the Christian faith. To begin with, first-century Judaism could not conceive of a crucified Messiah because such a death implied the curse of God. Moreover, Jesus' contemporaries believed the resurrection occurred only at the end of time. These notions were powerfully ingrained into the Jewish mindset, as evidenced by the reluctance of the disciples to believe Jesus' resurrection.

However, the church was born and it boldly preached the resurrection of Jesus. The apostolic message incurred strong resistance, even martyrdom for all of the apostles minus John (according to church tradition). It goes without saying that something must have occurred to effect such a radical transformation in the beliefs and behavior of the apostles and early church. In drawing his conclusion, Craig adopts the model of inference to the best explanation:

> This model holds that there may be a number of reasonable explanations for a body of evidence, and that one is to choose from this pool of live options that explanation which is the best, that is, which most successfully meets such criteria as having explanatory power, explanatory scope, and not being ad hoc. My claim is that the hypothesis 'God raised Jesus from the dead' is the best explanation of the evidence discussed.[135]

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[134]Ibid., 284.

[135]William Lane Craig, *Will the Real Jesus Stand Up? A Debate Between William Lane Craig and John Dominic Crossan*, ed. Paul Copan (Grand Rapids: Baker,

The centerpiece of redemptive history, indeed world history, stands on firm historical ground.

The Transforming Effect of the Church

Though the death and resurrection clearly stands as the centerpiece of the Christian worldview, it is integrally related to the sending of the Holy Spirit to apply to the church the benefits of his saving work (Acts 2). Theologians rightly discuss the significance of this connection, but apologists rarely broach the subject of the church.[136] This neglect is unbiblical and detrimental in contending for the Christian worldview, in particular the transformation it provides to individuals and to the world. Seeing that apologetics stands as the defense of the Christian worldview as embodied and proclaimed by the church, it seems imperative to include a discussion of the church. William Dennison concurs, "One's apologetic must always occur within the context of the death and resurrection of Christ and Christ's establishment of His church."[137] Moreover, the discussion of the church offers much apologetic potential.

According to the New Testament, the church consists of those who have trusted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Each disciple of Christ undergoes regeneration whereby the Spirit of God "quickens" or "reorients" them to God and to humanity in a new way. Scripture sharply demarcates between believers and unbelievers such as the following: old man/new man, flesh/Spirit, and dead in sins/alive in Christ. According to

1998), 160.

[136]In recent days, some thinkers argue that the church itself is an apologetic; see Robert E. Webber, *Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002), 94-106. In respond to postmodernism and in rejection of foundationalism, these apologists seek to embody Christianity's truth claims and not to contend for them. While their emphasis on Christian fruitfulness is certainly laudable, it is only half of the equation. Action can never be divorced from its underlying truthfulness.

[137]Dennison, *Paul's Two-Age Construction and Apologetics*, 103.

Jesus, a believer will be born again, indicating a radical change in the person's life (John 3:3). The apostle Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." The dichotomy between believers and unbelievers will be reflected in their spiritual fruit such as love, joy, peace, etc (Gal 5:22-23) and good works toward others (Matt 5:14-16; Eph 2:10).

What evidence supports this transformation of persons in the body of Christ? A traditionally neglected apologetic tool in modern times is the remarkable benefits Christianity confers on society. Interestingly, the exemplary lives of Christians was a standard tool of the early church's apologists. In his work *Hope Among the Fragments*, Ephraim Radner writes about the argument of these apologists: "Christians, they asserted, are demonstrably better, holier, more righteous, and more loving people than non-Christians."[138]

In modern times, such an approach is seldom used, perhaps because secular historians have shrewdly excised this influence.[139] However, in the past generation, a growing number of scholars have pointed to the remarkable influence of Christianity, particularly in Western society.[140] In particular, some point to the significance of this "cultural" apologetic. In the foreword to Alvin Schmidt's *Under the Influence*, Paul Maier writes,

> For years, Christian apologetics—defending the faith—has intrigued me, and I have
> used historical and archaeological tools to demonstrate how admirably the *sacred*

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[138]Ephraim Radner, *Hope among the Fragments: The Broken Church and Its Engagement with Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2004), 166.

[139]See Paul Vitz's *Censorship: Evidence of Bias in Our Children's Textbooks* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Book, 1986), for his analysis of the systematic elimination of religious references in American history books.

[140]See D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe, *What If Jesus Had Never Been Born? The Positive Impact of Christianity in History*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001); Jonathan Hill, *What Has Christianity Ever Done for Us?: How It Shaped the Modern World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005).

evidence of Scripture correlates with purely *secular* evidence from the ancient world. Yet Professor Schmidt's brilliant study has convinced me that the faith can also be splendidly defended on another front: its record of being the most powerful agent in transforming society for the better across two thousand years since Jesus lived on the earth.[141]

In his historical tracing of the impact of Christianity on Western society, Schmidt examines such areas as human life, sexual morality, equality of women, hospitals and health care, education, the abolition of slavery, and the arts and literature. In all cases, Christianity was a strong impetus in these areas of human progress. Science, which is frequently pitted against Christianity, arose specifically in Christian Europe with the influence of many believing scientists. Many science historians recognize the pivotal role of Christianity in this phenomenon. Rodney Stark argues forcefully that "theological assumptions unique to Christianity explain why science was born only in Christian Europe"[142]:

> In contrast with the dominant religious and philosophical doctrines in the non-Christian world, Christians developed science because they *believed* it *could* be done, and *should* be done . . . . The critical point in all of this is methodological. Centuries of meditation will produce no empirical knowledge, let alone science. But to the extent that religion inspires efforts to comprehend God's handiwork, knowledge will be forthcoming, and science arises as the 'handmaiden' of theology.[143]

Moreover, other worldviews fail to create the possibility of engaging in science. As Stark writes, "Most non-Christian religions do not posit a creation at all: the universe is eternal and, while it may pursue cycles, it is without beginning or purpose, and, most important of all, having never been created, it has no Creator. Consequently, the universe is

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[141]Paul L. Maier, "Foreword," in Alvin J. Schmidt, *Under the Influence: How Christianity Transformed Civilization* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 9.

[142]Rodney Stark, *For the Glory of God: How Monotheism Led to Reformations, Science, Witch-Hunts, and the End of Slavery* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 3. Also see Stanley Jaki, *Savior of Science* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), and Nancy R. Pearcey and Charles B. Thaxton, *The Soul of Science: Christian Faith and Natural Philosophy*, Turning Point Christian Worldview Series (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1994).

[143]Stark, *For the Glory of God*, 147, 49.

thought to be a supreme mystery, inconsistent, unpredictable, and arbitrary."[144] The

Christian worldview provides the conceptual foundations from which to engage in

scientific endeavors.

This type of cultural apologetics will go a long way in offsetting many of the

myths permeating Western society of the baneful influence of Christianity.[145] These

myths predispose many people to reject Christianity out of hand. Such an approach will

need to address the occasions when terrible deeds have been done in the name of

Christianity such as the Inquisition and the Crusades.

However, most instances of evil done in behalf of Christ have been perpetrated

either by individuals/groups whose lives and beliefs do not match the teachings of Christ.

They are either heretics or grossly mistaken. While this does not explain every case of

Christian injustice, nor satisfy every objection, the events of history give remarkable

testimony to the transforming effect of Christianity upon the world.

The Christian worldview must stress the redemption Christ provides, both in

terms of salvation he purchased for his people and the transformation it yields in the

world. The watching world will always weigh the claims of believers with their lives

because it is difficult "to separate the person from the thesis or argument or doctrine

uttered by the person."[146] As William Lane Craig states, "The ultimate apologetic is:

your life."[147]

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[144]Ibid., 148. Stark surveys the failure of scientific efforts in ancient China, Greece, and Islam, 150-57.

[145]For example, see Philip J. Sampson's *6 Modern Myths about Christianity and Western Civilization* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001).

[146]Alasdair McIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry: Encyclopedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 201.

[147]Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 302.

Worldview Analysis

This study posits the CFR matrix as the bedrock foundation from which worldview formulation and analysis should derive. It follows the essential, decisive events of redemptive history, reflecting the essential framework of Scripture. However, in the task of apologetics—the defense of the Christian worldview—it marshals evidence to support its claims and critique opposing worldviews. To develop this methodology a bit further, this study will implement the insights from Robert Audi's modest foundationalism and Imre Lakatos' research programs to develop greater conceptual clarity about this approach.

Modest Foundationalism

Audi offers an articulate, sophisticated version of foundationalism known as modest foundationalism (MF) that avoids the pitfalls of classic foundationalism (CF).[148] In addition, Audi appropriates insights from coherentism, typically regarded as foundationalism's chief rival as a theory of justification. For this paper, MF has several important features that distinguishes it from other theories of justification and contribute to this chapter's paradigm.[149]

Audi proposes four components to his MF:

> For any person, S, and any time, *t*, (1) the structure of S's body of justified beliefs is, at *t*, foundational in the sense that any indirectly justified beliefs S has to depend for their justification on directly (hence foundationally) justified beliefs of S's; (2) the justification of S's foundational beliefs is at least typically defeasible; (3) the inferential transmission of justification need not be deductive; and (4) non-foundationally justified beliefs need not derive *all* their justification from foundational ones, but only enough so that they would remain justified if (other

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[148]Audi refers to this version of foundationalism as "fallibilist" though others refer to it as "moderate." This paper will use the designation of "modest" as commensurate with Audi's theory.

[149]The following analysis is indebted to Louis P. Pojman, *What Can We Know: An Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1995), 112-14.

things being equal) any other justification they have (say, from coherence) were eliminated.[150]

The first component of Audi's theory does not differ from CF in that foundational beliefs provide justification for structural ones. Like CF, the relationship between the beliefs found in the foundation and the superstructure is asymmetrical. This component is inherent to foundationalism and distinguishes it from coherentism.

The second element, though, differs with CF. According to Audi, it is possible for foundational beliefs to be unjustified or false or both.[151] Here, the contrast with classical foundationalism becomes readily apparent as CF emphasizes the indubitable nature of basic beliefs. MF holds that "basic beliefs need not be infallible, nor need they result in a system that is completely true."[152] Basic beliefs are presumed innocent until proven guilty though not presumed infallible.

Third, beliefs found in the superstructure may be inductively justified by foundational ones. Again, this stands in sharp relief with CF that only allows deductive inferences from basic to non-basic beliefs. However, just as basic beliefs are defeasible, so too are non-basic ones. Because of induction's fallibilism, superstructural beliefs can be false even when foundational beliefs are true. Pojman states, "By giving up deductive certainty for the wider expanse of induction-induced beliefs, epistemic certainty is sacrificed for a belief system based on probabilities."[153]

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[150]Robert Audi, "Fallibilist Foundationalism and Holistic Coherentism," in *The Theory of Knowledge: Classical & Contemporary Readings*, ed. Louis P. Pojman, 2nd ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1999), 271.

[151]Robert Audi, "Contemporary Foundationalism," in *The Theory of Knowledge: Classical & Contemporary Readings*, ed. Louis P. Pojman, 2nd ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1999), 209.

[152]Pojman, *What Can We Know*, 112.

[153]Ibid., 113.

Fourth, coherence plays a role in the justification process. For one thing, negative coherence can render a belief, basic or non-basic, as unjustified. Again, here MF differs with CF in allowing the defeasibility of a basic belief. Since MF does not require indefeasibility, there is no conflict with this crucial role of coherentism.

In addition, coherence can impart positive justification when a belief meshes with the entire system of beliefs. Audi discusses the "independence principle" that stresses that "the larger the number of independent mutually coherent factors I believe to support the truth of a proposition, the better my justification for believing it."[154] In such instances, coherence reinforces the belief's justification, leaving it overdetermined. MF rightly takes into account that belief structures or worldviews are holistic. The content of each belief, even a foundational one, cannot be separated from its larger framework. The belief is ultimately justified by a foundational belief but coherence provides additional support. For MF, both negative and positive coherence will typically be present.[155]

Despite coherentism's increased role in Audi's theory, he strictly denies it any foundational justificational prowess. Coherentism can only indirectly justify because it denies non-inferential grounding in reason or experience. Ultimately, the infinite regress arguments entail an insuperable barrier to coherentism bequeathing non-inferential justifcation.[156]

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[154]Audi, "Fallibilist Foundationalism and Holistic Coherence," 272.

[155]Ibid., 279.

[156]Audi draws a carefully nuanced distinction between "consequential" necessary condition for justification and a "constitutive" necessary condition. Coherentism may fulfill the former as "a result of the justification itself or what it is based on" while the latter either "expressed part of what it is for a belief to be justified or constitutes a basic ground for it" To clarify, Audi offers this illustration: "The relation of coherence to the properties producing it might be analogous to that of heat to friction: a necessary product of them, but not part of what constitutes them" (Audi, "Fallibilist Foundationalism and Holistic Coherence," 279).

Without an indubitable foundation, the question arises over the reasons for choosing MF as a theory of justification. Inevitably, the answer relies on abduction—MF best explains the way people think. Pojman comments, "I am forced to conclude that modest foundationalism provides the best explanation of the meaning of justification."[157]

Research Programs

Prior to the release of Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*,[158] it was generally assumed that scientific theories were the products of gradual accumulated knowledge. Scientists generally shared the same neutral vantage point and believed that theories develop in a linear fashion. Kuhn's work, filled with historical examples, rigorously disputed such a notion.

Kuhn posited that theory change proceeds along the following lines. The accepted theory will offer scientists working in this field a paradigm in which to engage in "normal" science. Inevitably, anomalies will arise with the standard theory. On some occasions, the anomalies will be corrected and the theory will retain its preeminence. On other occasions, the anomalies will mount, eventually leading to a discarding of the standard theory for a new one. The change is swift and decisive. Prominent examples include such revolutions as the change from geocentrism to heliocentrism and the change from Newtonian physics to quantum physics.

In addition, Kuhn advocated the incommensurability of paradigms. In other words, paradigms operate by and within their own standards of rationality and testing. Such a scenario equates to the lack of intersubjective criteria and discussion between paradigms. Therefore, there exists no means of objectively adjudicating rival theories.

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[157]Pojman, *What Can We Know*, 114.

[158]Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

Many philosophers of science reacted strongly to Kuhn's depiction of theory change, claiming Kuhn's scenario depicted scientific inquiry as subjective and irrational. Out of the plethora of responses to Kuhn, Imre Lakatos offered perhaps the most significant and influential rejoinder with his notion of a "research program."[159] Heavily influenced by Karl Popper, Lakatos affirmed a form of verificationism. In contrast to Popper, though, Lakatos rejected the idea that scientists should give up a theory if faced with falsifying evidence in place of a new one. Lakatos sought to construct an account of how science rationally progressed from one research program to the next, thus remaining true to falsificationism while at the same time recognizing the recalcitrant nature of scientific theories in the face of anomalies.

According to Lakatos, each research program possesses a "hard core" of fundamental beliefs. Lakatos deems the hard core beliefs "negative heuristic," meaning that they are never exposed to the falsification process. Such beliefs are treated as certain, not as a result of empirical testing but by the methodological decision of its proponents. The hard core acts as a control to future investigation and gives rise to the research program.

If the core beliefs are impenetrable, it would appear to leave a Kuhnian predicament of incommensurability. Lakatos avoids such a scenario by positing the existence of a "protective belt" of auxiliary hypotheses that undergo the process of falsification. Thus, the protective belt serves as the "positive" heuristic. The theories contained in the protective belt received the actual testing, not the hard core. He states, "It is this protective belt of auxiliary hypotheses which is adjusted, or even completely replaced, to defend the thus-hardened core."[160]

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[159]Imre Lakatos, "Falsification and the Methodology of Research Programmes," in *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, ed. Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

[160]Ibid., 48.

Moreover, it is here where anomalies can lead to changes though anomalies are never exhausted. Lakatos explains, "The positive heuristic consists of a partially articulated set of suggestions or hints on how to change, develop the 'refutable variants' of the research programme, how to modify, sophisticate, the 'refutable' protective belt."[161] Interestingly, improvements in the positive heuristic can stimulate the research program out of a degenerative phase. In particular, it is the positive verifications that propel the research program forward, even in the face of inevitable refutations.

For Lakatos, the classical example of a scientific research program is Newton's gravitational theory. When Newton produced it, the theory faced enormous anomalies and the theories that supported them. However, in time, the Newtonians converted "one counterinstance after another into corroborating instances, primarily by overthrowing the original observational theories in the light of which this 'contrary evidence' was established. In the process they themselves produced new counter-examples which they again resolved."[162]

Though in Lakatos' scheme the hard core remains somewhat impenetrable to testing, the research program is not infallible but can degenerate to its ultimate demise. He writes, "We maintain that if and when the programme ceases to anticipate novel facts, its hard core might have to be abandoned: that is, our hard core . . . may crumble under certain conditions. In this sense . . . such a possibility must be allowed for."[163]

With Lakatos' model, the important issue is not the starting point (hard core) that stands beyond testing. Rather, the decisive matter is the results of testing of auxiliary hypotheses in the protective belt. How does the protective belt actually produce positive

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[161]Ibid., 50.

[162]Ibid., 48.

[163]Ibid., 49.

results? Philip Hefner answers, "Whether or not the auxiliaries are appropriate depends on whether they contribute to the programme's success in producing growth in knowledge."[164] Of course, competing research programs can both contribute to growth in knowledge. Is there a further means to distinguish research programs? The superior research program will explain the dramatic and unexpected interpretations of scientific findings.

Interestingly, Lakatos alludes to research programs encompassing not just a scientific theory but science in general.[165] He says, "Even science as a whole can be regarded as a huge research programme with Popper's supreme heuristic value: 'devise conjectures which have more empirical content than their predecessors.' Such methodological rules may be formulated . . . as metaphysical rules."[166]

Moreover, Lakatos believes that his understanding of research programs applies beyond the scientific realm. Lakatos comments,

> Newton's theory of gravitation, Einstein's relativity theory, quantum mechanics, Marxism, Freudianism, are all research programmes, each with a characteristic hard core stubbornly defended, each with its more flexible protective belt and each with its elaborate problem-solving machinery. Each of them, at any stage of its development, has unsolved problems and undigested anomalies. All theories are born refuted and die refuted.[167]

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[164]Philip Hefner, "Theology's Truth and Scientific Formulation," in *Paradigms and Progress in Theology*, ed. J. Mouton, A. G. von Arde, and W. S. Vorster (n.p.: Human Sciences Research Council, 1988), 17.

[165]Michael Rea employs the concept of research programs in a similar fashion. He states, "Lakatos seems to have, in addition to his more narrow notion of a scientific research program, a somewhat broader notion according to which some research programs may be nothing more than sets of problem-solving strategies. This broader notion is not far off from the notion I am to characterize." Michael Rea, *World without Design: The Ontological Consequences of Naturalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 4.

[166]Lakatos, "Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes," 47.

[167]Ibid., 4-5.

Proposal

Synthesizing some of the elements from the work of Audi and Lakatos, the following proposal emerges. First, the CFR matrix stands as the ultimate foundation of the Christian worldview. Since it faithfully resembles redemptive history, it provides the presupposition or controlling belief of Christian apologetics. Bavinck correctly assesses the proper attitude of the apologist: "In the defense of Christian truth, the apologists do not start from a base of doubt or neutrality but from a position of firm belief and unshakable conviction."[168] In this light, the CFR corresponds nicely to Audi's basic beliefs or Lakatos' hard core. The CFR is taken as a given from which to construct the worldview. It is assumed as impenetrable to provide a starting point to formulate the Christian worldview and to analyze opposing positions. In addition, the CFR matrix does not need evidential support since it stands as the final authority.[169]

Second, the superstructure of the CFR matrix is the evidence that derives from and validates the foundation. For Audi and Lakatos, this superstructure correlates to their notions of nonbasic beliefs and the protective belt of auxiliary hypotheses, respectively. The CFR matrix does not need the superstructure to support it but demonstrates one is rationally justified to believe it. Superstructural evidence would overdetermine the foundational beliefs not justify them. However, for the purposes of worldview analysis, the superstructure is required to support one's position and engage other worldviews.

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[168]Herman Bavinck, *Prologmena*, vol. 1, *Reformed Dogmatics*, trans. John Bolt, ed. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 514.

[169]In terms of theories of justification, this proposal adapts elements from externalism and internalism. It is externalist in that it recognizes an objective source of truth (Scripture) that a person should recognize if it were not for sin. It is internalist in that argumentation and debate requires access to one's beliefs. Pojman, *What Can We Know*, 138, points out, "Making inferences from basic beliefs is a conscious process, as is giving reasons for our beliefs, and both presuppose accessibility to the grounds of our beliefs."

For the unbeliever, evidence alone will not produce conversion and adoption of the Christian worldview. However, the Holy Spirit utilizes evidence to bring about the salvation of those whom he desires. Scripture affirms the implementation of evidence in apologetic encounters (Luke 1:1-4; John 10:38) not to mention the bolstering of faith in believers (Luke 7:18-23). The more compelling the evidence, the more potential it possesses as a tool for the Holy Spirit. In more recent days, Cornelius Van Til rightly connects the relationship between conversion and argumentation: "Our arguments taken by themselves effect nothing, while the Holy Spirit may very well convict without the use of our argument as he may convict without the use of our preaching. Yet because God is himself a completely rational God and has created us in his image, there is every reason to believe that he will make argumentation effective."[170]

In worldview analysis, one must assume the defeasibility of one's foundational beliefs. Both Audi and Lakatos acknowledge this fact. As noted above, Audi's position asserts that "basic beliefs need not be infallible, nor need they result in a system that is completely true."[171] For example, incoherence can invalidate a basic belief. For Lakatos, a research program can degenerate to the point where the hard core must be abandoned: "We maintain that if and when the programme ceases to anticipate novel facts, its hard core might have to be abandoned: that is, our hard core . . . may crumble under certain conditions. In this sense . . . such a possibility must be allowed for."[172]

This proposal might elicit the ire of presuppositionalists who assert the ultimate indefeasibility of the Bible. If the Bible is fallible, it cannot serve as an ultimate

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[170]Cornelius Van Til, *A Survey of Christian Epistemology* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1969), quoted in Bahnsen, *Van Til*, 474.

[171]Pojman, *What Can We Know*, 112.

[172]Lakatos, "Falsification and Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes," 49.

foundation. However, this critique merits several responses. First, a person cannot possess absolute certainty of Scripture without the testimony of the Holy Spirit who seals its truthfulness. Calvin correctly wrote, "The word itself is not quite certain for us unless it can be confirmed by the testimony of the Spirit . . . . For by a kind of mutual bond the Lord has joined together the certainty of his Word and of his Spirit."[173] Human limitations and the abiding presence of sin make doubt and suppression of truth a constant possibility. Therefore, human infallibility, even based on biblical revelation, is categorically impossible.

By regarding the Christian worldview as defeasible for argument's sake, the apologist is not claiming it is actually defeasible. Alan Sell states,

> They [Christians] do not regard their faith as a hypothesis which may at any moment require revision or even rejection in the light of fresh evidence. An exception to this general rule would be a believer's consciously standing back and reflecting upon his or her worldview in relation to others. On the other hand, from the point of view of those to whom they are seeking to commend the faith, their exposition will appear as a hypothesis which they are being invited to consider as a way of accounting for things and life as they are.[174]

Likewise, Vanhoozer, noting the application of Lakatos' work to worldviews, writes, "The theologian may indeed allow the hard core of his research program to be tested. This does not mean that the theologian gives up or doubts faith. Rather, for the sake of discussion, the theologian treats his methodological decision to take the Bible as norm as a fallible one."[175]

Similarly, adherents of presuppositionalist apologetics employ a conditional argument themselves in using the transcendental argument. Part of this strategy involves

[173]John Calvin *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.9.3, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, Library of Christian Classics, vol. 20 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 95.

[174]Sell, *Confessing and Commending the Faith*, 361.

[175]Vanhoozer, "Christ and Concept," 138.

each interlocutor presupposing the other's worldview for the sake of argument and seeing which worldview makes reality and meaning intelligible.[176] By allowing a conditional argument, the presuppositionalist is opening the transcendental argument to the possibility of defeat. If this were not the case, there would be no need for engaging in this strategy. In other words, there is no need to adopt a "for argument's sake" approach if a simple knock out argument exists. Why make the apologetic task more difficult and vulnerable than need be?

Second, the apostle Paul holds forth the resurrection of Jesus, the centerpiece of redemptive history and the Christian worldview, as defeasible:

> If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.[177]

Here, Paul teaches that the historical event of Christ's resurrection guarantees the believer's future resurrection. However, if his resurrection were disproven, it would cause the Christian worldview to crumble. Certainly, Paul in no way doubts the objective reality of Jesus' resurrection, but since it occurred in space-time reality, it must be open to validation. The very possibility props open the door to the defeasibility of the Christian worldview in principle.[178] Schaeffer says of Christianity, "It is prepared to face

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[176]This strategy is more rhetorically effective as it creates an atmosphere of humility and respect rather than overt dogmatism.

[177]First Corinthians 15:12-19. Emphasis mine.

[178]Another potential "defeater" for the Christian worldview would be the debunking of an absolute beginning of the universe. In other words, if the universe could be proven to be eternal, it would seriously compromise the Christian worldview.

the consequences of being proved false and say with Paul: if you find the body of Christ, the discussion is finished; let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die."[179]

Along these lines, it is helpful to return to the idea of drama. By casting the Christian worldview as a story, the apologist can incorporate the biblical plot-line and more effectively stir the interlocutor's mind, emotions, and will. Goldworthy states,

> Biblical theology is the best corrective for false worldviews, just as it is the best corrective for destructive heresy. By teaching and using biblical theology in all our Bible teaching we point people to the objective and historical reality of God's progressive and purposeful revelation. Through this revelation, God speaks a transcendent message to people in every age, and shapes their minds, hearts and lives so that they can know and serve him, and speak his truth to others.[180]

Ultimately, the aim is twofold. For one thing, the person will understand and believe the superiority of the Christian worldview, that it is a better explanation than the person's worldview in terms of one's pressing existential issues—human origins, predicament, and resolution. Whatever the worldview challenger, Christianity offers a better explanation, or, if you will, tells a better story.[181]

This position stands in contrast to some prominent believers that reject the idea of the superiority of the Christian worldview. Stanley Hauerwas is perhaps the leading proponent of such a vantage point. In his influential book *Community of Character*, he writes, "The crucial interaction of story and community for the formation of truthful lives is an indication that there exists no 'story of stories' from which the many stories of our existence can be analyzed and evaluated."[182] Such a position claims an anti-absolutist

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[179]Schaeffer, *God Who Is There*, 45.

[180]Graeme Goldsworthy, "Preaching and Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 111.

[181]Curtis Chang, *Engaging Unbelief: A Captivating Strategy from Augustine & Aquinas* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000). Chang offers the interesting thesis that Augustine and Aquinas practiced this strategy of taking an opponent's story and retelling it along the lines of the Christian metanarrative.

[182]Stanley Hauerwas, *Community of Character:Toward a Constructive*

position, but upon closer inspection, it makes truth claims as does the absolutist.

Positions like Hauerwas are biblically unfaithful and logically contradictory.

In addition, the person will assume his or her role in the story, understanding

that each role in the drama is vital. Horton states, "Instead of the text being the world

that we are to inhabit, we suggest that the world is a stage on which we are to act out the

part assigned to us. As in the narrative analogy, one can be absorbed into the play and

can be rescripted as a participant in the victory of the hero instead of a villain."[183]

Vanhoozer echoes this sentiment:

> The point of view of narrative is not merely to assert 'this happened, and then this happened.' Narratives make another kind of claim altogether: 'look at the world like this.' Narratives do more than chronicle; they *configure*. Configuration is the act of grouping people and events together in a meaningful whole and is, as such, an act of the narrative imagination, a power of synoptic vision . . . . By inculcating a worldview, narrative is far more than a way of transmitting information; it is rather a process of formation, a training in seeing as.[184]

Stories possess an intrinsic ability, if told well, to draw a person into the

narrative. Once absorbed into the story, resistances are lowered and receptivity is

heightened. For the Christian apologist, the ultimate goal is the salvation of one's

neighbor.

Buddhism

When the CFR matrix is applied to Buddhism, crippling problems arise in all

three elements. In addition, Christianity offers a coherent worldview that corresponds

with abundant evidence from a variety of sources as noted above. With origins,

Buddhism places little explicit emphasis upon metaphysical questions such as God and

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Christian Social Ethic (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 96.

[183]Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology*, 242.

[184]Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 282, 284.

the origin of the world, instead focusing on practical living.[185] However, Buddhism's agnosticism still remains a position—pantheism—and its plan of salvation depends upon a proper understanding of external reality, namely that reality is illusory.[186] Buddhism's cosmology is that God and the universe are one.[187] Moreover, its pantheistic underpinnings equate to an eternal universe that squarely contradicts modern cosmology in its insistence upon an absolute beginning point. In addition, it does not appear plausible to affirm an impersonal agent of a world that is, by all appearances, very *personal*. Paul Moser and Paul Copan contend, "It is difficult to see how such an entity – which has no causal or productive powers – could generate, sustain, or develop the universe. Abstractions do nothing, from a causal standpoint."[188] While Buddhism may reject the created order as illusion, their beliefs do not correspond to their practices. As is often pointed out, Buddhists look both ways before crossing the road. In this regard, Buddhism's view of creation and external reality is completely unlivable.

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[185]Edward Conze, *Buddhism: Its Essence and Development*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), 39, states, "Buddhist tradition does not exactly deny the existence of a creator, but it is not really interested to know who created the Universe. The purpose of Buddhist doctrine is to release beings from suffering, and speculations concerning the origin of the Universe are held to be immaterial at best. They are not merely a waste of time but they may also postpone deliverance from suffering by expending ill-well in oneself and in others."

[186]Netland, *Dissonant Voices*, 63, states, "The key to eliminating desire and craving, and thus release from the chains of *samsara*, lies in accepting and appropriating the Buddha's analysis of reality."

[187]Naugle, *Worldview*, 277, notes the similarity with naturalism: "Either by replacing God with nature or by trying to identify him with it, naturalists and pantheists respectively make an idol of the creation in either a totally nonreligious or religious way. In either case the idolatrous heart conceives of the universe differently in spiritual and intellectual terms. In generating these new worldviews, the hearts of unbelievers find a way to deflect the truth about God and his creation in their unrighteousness."

[188]Paul Copan and Paul K. Moser, "Introduction," in *The Rationality of Theism*, ed. Paul Copan and Paul K. Moser (London: Routledge, 2003), 9.

In terms of the human predicament, people are trapped in an endless cycle of death and rebirth and the suffering experienced within this cycle. At the root of suffering is people's tendency to make distinctions. Of course, Buddhists assert that ultimately it is mistaken to distinguish good and evil. This belief is problematic for at least two reasons. First, without a clear demarcation of morality, it confuses and militates against the pursuit of ethics. Second, like its rejection of external reality, such a conception cuts against the grain of human thinking. To witness child abuse causes a spontaneous reaction of wrong within the human heart. Buddhism cannot explain the universality of this inherent notion of right and wrong. To hide behind the notion of different levels of reality, as discussed in the previous chapter, hardly eliminates the problem.

Buddhism affirms that enlightenment is the hope of humanity as people learn the way of the Buddha. The Buddhist solution to the human predicament is self-referentially absurd on several levels. As discussed in chapter four at length, the notion of karma, coupled with the denial of personal identity, is contradictory. In addition, the goal of nirvana is erroneous. If distinctions in external reality are illusory, then nirvana is not a place for which to strive. Present reality *is* nirvana. If present reality is nirvana, then humanity is not in a predicament after all. Buddhism appears hopelessly trapped in absurdities.

Islam

In terms of worldview analysis, the Christian apologist wisely zooms in on the fall and redemption seeing that Islam largely adopts the Christian conception of creation (Surah 10:3, 32:4).[189] In regard to the fall, the Koran has a number of passages that

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[189]There exists the possibility of apologetic engagement over the nature of universals and particulars. This is sometimes referred to as the problem of the one and the many, a problem frequently discussed in the history of philosophy. The doctrine of the Trinity teaches that the persons of the Godhead are fully one and fully equal. Thus, there is equal ultimacy in unity and particularity which is reflected in the created order. In Islam's Unitarian conception, unity is primary, leaving an imbalance to the problem of

resemble the biblical account of the creation and fall of humanity (Surah 2:30-39; 7:19-

25). However, Islam categorically rejects any notion of original sin as people "have no

innate attraction to evil."[190] Rather, humankind is born in a state of natural purity (Surah

30:30). Adam's sin was only a one-time event for which he repented, causing no lasting

effects on human nature or the created order. Kateregga and Shenk claim, "All people

are born as true Muslims, innocent, pure, and free . . . . There is no single act which has

warped the human will."[191] Thus, on the issue of innate sinfulness, Islam and Christian

stand in stark contrast. According to Kateregga and Shenk:

> The Christian witness that the rebellion by our first parents has tragically distorted
> man, and that sinfulness pervades us individually and collectively, is very much
> contrary to Islamic witness. Islam teaches that the first phase of life on earth did not
> begin in sin and rebellion against Allah. Although Adam disobeyed Allah, he
> repented and was forgiven and even given guidance for mankind. Man is not born a
> sinner and the doctrine of the sinfulness of man has no basis in Islam.[192]

Ironically, though, the Koran acknowledges the universality of human

sinfulness. In Surah 16:61, the Koran states, "If God were to punish Men for their

wrong-doing, He would not leave, on the [earth], A single living creature." What causes

such universal evil? Human beings are weak (Surah 4:28) as well as forgetful: "We had

already made a covenant with Adam which he forgot. We found that he had no firm

resolve" (Surah 20:115).

Such a weak notion of sinfulness hardly corresponds to the breadth and depth

of human depravity. Christian apologist Abdul Saleeb wonders, "If people are born in a

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the one and the many. The Trinity offers a better though not indubitable solution. In a
similar light, William Lane Craig asserts that the Trinity creates the possibility of self-
giving love in contrast to the strictly Unitarian deity of Islam.

[190]Martin Forward, "Islam," in *Human Nature and Destiny*, ed. Jean Holm and
John Bowles, Themes in Religious Studies Series (New York: Pinter, 1994).

[191]Badru D. Kateregga and David W. Shenk, *Islam and Christianity: A Muslim
and a Christian in Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 17-18.

[192]Ibid., 101.

total state of innocence as Muslims claim, then why is there an almost universal recognition that nobody is perfect and everybody sins? Or why isn't there at least a significant percentage of the world's population that would stay sinless as they grow, since 100 percent were born sinless to begin with?"[193] Saleeb's last question seems especially pertinent. It seems improbable to think that not one person, if not small portions, would avoid sin in light of its negative effects, especially some of the 124,000 messengers that Allah sent throughout time.[194]

While the Islamic notion of total innocence is perhaps more appealing, it does not square with the hardened truths of reality. In fact, some Muslims have recognized the tension in their doctrine throughout the ages. Michael Nazir-Ali points to a famous tradition that attributes to Muhammad the saying, "No child is born but the devil hath touched it, except Mary and her son Jesus."[195] The Shi'ite branch of Islam developed a concept of evil as innate, which is traceable to the patriarch Joseph's saying, "Not that I am free from sin – man's soul is prone to evil, except the one to whom my Rabb has shown mercy" (Surah 12:53). Abdolkarim Soroush, the most prominent Iranian Muslim intellectual, states,

> Our definitions of humanity need to be soberly and somberly examined in view of the amount of greed, cruelty, wickedness, and ingratitude that humans have caused—all of which they have done willingly and in accordance to their nature, not because they have been coerced or perverted . . . . It is true that we do not relish seeing human beings as tyrannical, unappreciative, unjust, and foolish and that we hope they will not be so. Yet we must recognize these defects as part of human

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[193]Saleeb, "Islam," 361.

[194]The Koran does not specify the number of prophets (Surah 40:78), but the number comes from Muslim tradition. Norman L. Geisler and Abdul Saleeb, *Answering Islam: The Crescent in Light of the Cross*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002), 55.

[195]Michael Nazir-Ali, *Frontiers in Muslim-Christian Encounter* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1987), 165.

nature. Iniquity must be recognized as a natural and permanent part of human nature and not as an erasable or incidental facet of it.[196]

The doctrine of original sin possesses much apologetic value for engagement with Muslims.[197] The Shi'ites must account for the origin of the evil influence within people without a historical fall. More importantly, Muslims in general must account for the universal depth and breadth of human sinfulness committed by innately pure people. On a personal level, the Christian apologist can offer a stirring challenge to his or her Muslim friend to resist sin completely in the following week—no greed, pride, lust, covetousness, anger, etc. If the Muslim balks at the challenge, remind him or her that with libertarian free will, obedience should not be a problem.

In addition, the "redemption" element of the CFR template contains important material for worldview analysis as discussed in chapter four. Islam denies the death, and consequently, the resurrection of Jesus Christ.[198] However, as pointed out above, the death of Jesus is universally accepted by New Testament historians of all theological stripes. Craig equates this denial of Jesus' death as the theological equivalent of the flat earth theory. The death and resurrection of Jesus remains one of the biggest apologetic stumbling blocks to Muslim evangelism simply because of the significance to both sides. However, Christians enter the dialogue on much sturdier historical footing.

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[196]Abdolkarim Soroush, *Reason, Freedom and Democracy in Islam: Essential Writings of Abdolkarim Soroush* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 191-92.

[197]Saleeb notes that Muslims who actually convert to Christianity that one of the main reasons is Jesus' teaching on the Sermon on the Mount because it shows the sinfulness of the human heart.

[198]Muslims generally reject Jesus' death and resurrection though some scholars allow this as a legitimate interpretation of Surah 5:117. For a list of Muslim commentators, see J. Dudley Woodberry, "Biblical Faith and Islam," in *Biblical Faith and Other Religions*, ed. David W. Baker (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004), 154-55.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to develop an evangelical model of abductive worldview analysis. To aid in this task, the discipline of biblical theology has been implemented because of its emphasis upon redemptive history as the contents of the Christian worldview. In particular, it was argued that the CFR matrix serves as the most biblically faithful and apologetically effective model of worldview analysis because it highlights the decisive turning points of salvation history, the compelling existential issues facing humanity, and the narrative nature of Scripture. An outline of the CFR matrix was offered and applied to the religious worldviews of Buddhism and Islam. It is the assertion of this chapter that the CFR matrix, while imperfect, is the best model of abductive worldview analysis.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Introduction

This dissertation has explored the vital issue of evangelicalism and worldview analysis. Evangelicals have appropriated the concept of worldviews as much as any particular segment or group in Western society. Worldviews play an important role in creating an integrated outlook and can yield tremendous benefits in thought and life. In addition, as has been argued in this study, worldview analysis is essential for the apologetic task.

Among evangelicals, transcendental and abductive methodologies are the most prominent. Both approaches boast brilliant proponents and laudatory strengths. However, this study concluded that transcendental analysis suffered from several crippling weaknesses that prevent it from adequately engaging in worldview analysis. In particular, it is unable to bridge the gap from ontological to conceptual necessity and to overcome the possibility of hypothetical worldview competitors. Also, significant portions of the transcendental starting point, the entire biblical canon, fail to give self-attestation. The upshot is the need to incorporate external validation which effectively nullifies the specific claim of this particular methodology. Transcendental analysis seems better suited for usage in scenarios where an opponent can be reduced to absurdity or for a proof of God's existence based on a common phenomenon of human experience.

Abductive worldview analysis stands as the superior option for worldview analysis. It allows the apologist to tap into a wide variety of evidential support and alleviates the burden of definitively refuting the opponent, recognizing that conversion to another worldview comes as a result of an accumulation of factors, intellectual,

emotional, social, and spiritual. To engage in abductive worldview analysis, one must implement criteria. While the identification and usage of criteria is not resolved, there seems to be good reason to utilize at least some criteria that appear part of human rationality itself such as the law of noncontradiction, explanatory power, and pragmatism.

Abductive worldview analysis best operates within a proper framework that contains relevant background information for establishing common ground. It was argued that the framework should follow the contours that Scripture lays down itself—the fundamental plot line of redemptive history. The best articulation of this plot line is creation-fall-redemption (CFR). In addition, the CFR matrix has cosmic significance, touching upon the core existential issues that humanity has wrestled with throughout the ages, namely, human origins, predicament, and remedy. Consequently, this approach offers the best opportunity of establishing contact with the background beliefs of unbelievers in hopes of demonstrating to them that the Christian worldview offers the best explanation to these pressing matters, evidentially and existentially.

Practical Application

One of the great challenges in pastoral ministry is the equipping of believers for evangelism, a task that all too few believers perform despite the clear exhortations in Scripture. There are numerous reasons for this obstacle such as apathy and unregenerate membership, but a primary one is a lack of preparation.[1] Many evangelicals simply do not feel ready to share their faith because they cannot handle the objections of unbelievers. Obviously, it is a natural human tendency for people to avoid activities that prove difficult and unsuccessful. Likewise, greater skill and preparation typically enhances participation.

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[1]Most evangelism training resources fail to provide any apologetic training, one exception being D. James Kennedy's *Evangelism Explosion* materials. Perhaps it might be wise to integrate both apologetics and evangelism training.

Although people do not need to be apologetic dynamos to share their faith, it is important for evangelical leaders to equip believers to enhance evangelistic preparedness. The usage of the CFR matrix offers exciting possibilities for several reasons. First, it presents biblical categories that every believer will find familiar. Most every Christian will possess a rudimentary knowledge of these three elements. If believers understood that such a schema was the basic foundation for worldview apologetics, it might increase their confidence in the knowledge they already possess as well as whet their appetite for further training.[2]

Second, the CFR template is easy to remember, not overwhelming individuals with a twelve-step outline that few will ever master, and it provides a structure for growth. Quite often, the hardest part of developing a skill is learning the basic framework to gain a foothold. Having this foundation will give a rubric to organize the vast amounts of information and evidence available to Christian apologetics. Without a structure, one may get lost in a sea of information, grow disheartened, and never pursue this knowledge. The CFR matrix gives a quick, familiar scaffold on which to build.

With these foundation blocks in place, the believer can deepen his or her understanding. Church leaders can recommend resources and provide training opportunities to equip members. If believers have a framework that enables them to defend their faith at a basic level as well as to pursue in further development, the sky is the limit for apologetic preparation.

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[2]Otherwise, people might have the impression that one must master all types of scientific, archaeological, historiographic, and textual manuscript evidence or that one must take courses in logic and philosophy to defend the faith. The knowledge of the Scriptures is still the best apologetic preparation.

Future Research

In the midst of the research for this project, it became apparent that several matters deserve further research beyond the scope of this dissertation. For one thing, evangelicals have not devoted the necessary attention to rigorous analysis of the worldviews of major religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. The material often presented is descriptive rather than prescriptive. In light of the vast portions of humanity that adhere to these world religions (a little less than half the world's population), evangelicals need to redress this weakness to execute more fully the Great Commission.[3]

In addition, evangelicals have generally neglected the notion of the fall in their apologetics. The omission is striking in light of the evangelical affirmation of the whole counsel of God, the importance of the fall in the Christian worldview, and its uniqueness in world religions. Perhaps this omission is due to the perceived challenge the doctrine of original sin presents such the historicity of the original pair, the question of animal death and suffering, and the alleged unfairness of one sin negatively impacting all of posterity. These challenges are stiff, but if Christianity is to contend in the battle over worldviews, it must bolster and defend such an essential, unique (albeit complex) element of its worldview.

In this light, evangelicals can better integrate the discipline of psychology with a Christian worldview. Psychology has many fields (social, behavioral, and abnormal) that can illuminate the human condition, particularly its fallenness. Evangelicals should not eschew psychology as a discipline but operate from biblical presuppositions. Moreover, genetic science is yielding cutting-edge breakthroughs. One area is the effect of genetic predispositions upon human behavior, revealing the possible inclination

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[3]For an excellent example of such analysis, though of a new religious movement, not a world religion, see Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser, and Paul Owen, eds., *The New Mormon Challenge: Responding to the Latest Defenses of a Fast-Growing Challenge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002).

toward sinful behaviors.

Finally, evangelicals should reflect more upon the relation between apologetics and the doctrines of creation and general revelation. Every apologetic system struggles with delineating precisely the common ground with unbelievers. One of the difficulties, it seems, is understanding what every human being possesses as a result of divine design and what is conditioned by external factors. The results of such study would have a bearing upon criteria for adjudicating worldviews as well as finding points of contact.

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ABSTRACT

EVANGELICAL WORLDVIEW ANALYSIS:
A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT AND PROPOSAL

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This thesis assesses two prominent evangelical models of worldview analysis and, in light of the findings, offers a constructive proposal. Chapter 1 describes evangelicalism's implementation of the worldview concept. It argues that apologetics must be carried out on the worldview level. Hence, there is a compelling need for rigorous worldview analysis of opposing positions.

Chapters 2 and 3 delineate the elements of transcendental and abductive worldview analysis, respectively. Both chapters provide a brief historical sketch of the distinct methodologies. In addition, each methodology is explored in terms of its strategy, engagement with other worldviews, and strengths and weaknesses.

This study concludes that transcendental analysis suffers from several crippling weaknesses. It is unable to bridge the gap from ontological to conceptual necessity and to overcome the possibility of hypothetical worldview competitors. Also, significant portions of the transcendental starting point, the biblical canon, fail to give self-attestation, thus requiring external validation. Transcendental analysis seems better suited for usage in scenarios where an opponent can be reduced to absurdity or for a proof of God's existence based on a common phenomenon of human experience. Overall, abductive analysis stands as the superior option. However, it was noted that it

best operates within a framework that contains relevant background information for establishing common ground. This is the aim of the last chapter.

Chapter 4 articulates a constructive proposal for evangelical abductive analysis. It argues that the proper framework for abductive analysis should follow the contours that Scripture lays down itself—the fundamental plot line of redemptive history. The best articulation of this plot line is the creation-fall-redemption matrix (CFR). This schema maintains cosmic significance, touching upon the core existential issues of humanity--human origins, predicament, and remedy. Thus, it offers the best opportunity of establishing contact with the background beliefs in hopes of demonstrating that the Christian worldview offers the best explanation to these pressing matters.

Chapter 5 summarizes the essential points of the study and suggests areas for future research.

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