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FROM ORR TO ZACHARIAS AND BEYOND:  
AN APPROACH TOWARD CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS FROM  
THE PURVIEW OF WORLDVIEW TRUTH-TESTING

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by  
Alan Joseph Pihringer  
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**APPROVAL SHEET**

FROM ORR TO ZACHARIAS AND BEYOND:  
AN APPROACH TOWARD CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS FROM  
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Alan Joseph Pihringer

Read and Approved by:

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James Parker III (Chair)

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Mark T. Coppenger

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Theodore J. Cabal

Date\_\_\_\_\_

To my lovely bride, Trisha Pihringer, whose constant sacrifice, support, love, and encouragement have made this possible. God has used you to make me a better man, husband, father, pastor, and theologian.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

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## PREFACE

My journey in this life seems like a whirlwind of uniqueness. Knowing full well that there is no such thing as coincidence, I marvel at the providential hand of Almighty God. I, like Paul, feel like one “untimely born,” and am amazed not only at the grace extended to me by God through Jesus Christ but at the direction by which He has guided me to get to this point in my life. Born again in my mid-twenties through His living and active Word, I have always sensed a call not only to preach and teach that Word but also to defend that Word and the God who inspired it. In the back of my mind I had always known that apologetics would have and hold my interest, but like most things in my life, it took me time to get over my stubbornness and just do it. Nevertheless, here I am, and I would have it no other way.

I would not be here, though, were it not for the help and support of so many special people that God has placed in my path, for whom I give many thanks. As per the dedication, Trisha Leigh Pihringer has been my earthly source of undying love and support. She is a godly woman first and foremost. That God placed her in my life with her unwavering faith and unending sacrifice is no small wonderment to me. God has used and will continue to use her to keep me going. She has given me two wonderful children, Kyle and Kenzie, who provide me with constant joy and laughter, and who also have encouraged and supported their dad in his academic pursuits. I am blessed beyond measure to have this family.

Richard and Rita Powell, my in-laws, are an inspiration to me. They are sacrificial givers who not only live out an example of servanthood but demonstrate what a godly marriage and agape love truly are. They have sacrificed much time and many resources to make my studies possible and have taken good care of my family. Words



cannot do justice to speak of the love and admiration I have for them.

During this journey, I have been blessed to have pastored two wonderful churches who have helped me on my way. When I first began this academic pursuit, the fine folks at Boulevard Baptist Church in Southaven, Mississippi, got me started, and then the family at Harvest Baptist Church in Harvest, Alabama, has seen it through to completion. Both of these congregations have loved on my family and me and given spiritual and emotional support. I am privileged to have been their earthly shepherd.

I am thankful to the faculty and staff of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for the programs and resources that have made this possible. I give a special thank you to my doctoral chair Dr. James Parker, and to Dr. Mark Coppenger, Dr. Ted Cabal, Dr. Kenneth Magnuson, and Dr. Douglas Blount for their seminars and colloquia that expanded my knowledge, that taught me how to think and write, and that guided me as I tried to gather my thoughts to learn and grow.

Thank you to the faculty of Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, whom God used to challenge and grow me in my pursuit of my masters degree, especially Dr. John Mahony and the late Dr. Ken Easley. For fear of leaving anyone out, I say thank you to all who have made any portion of this pursuit possible. Finally, to my parents, who have been gone from this earth for some time now—thank you for loving me and caring for me and for all you instilled in me. I will always remember you.

Soli Deo Gloria!

Al Pihringer

Harvest, Alabama

May 2019

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Christian apologetics (very simply, the defense of the doctrines and beliefs of the Christian religion) has given strength to the weary Christian, challenged the strongest critic, and fed intellectual nourishment to the curious seeker since the very inception of the faith. Disputations arose to the claims and teachings given by Jesus from the early days of his earthly ministry and have not demonstrated any signs of diminishing in the near two-thousand years since. That being the case, apologetic approaches in various forms developed over Christianity's long history to meet the contentions and arguments of the day that disputed the veracity and legitimacy of belief in the Christian God and the body of faith that developed, as well as challenge the principles of opposing philosophies and religions.

With the dawning of the twenty-first century new challenges, attacks, and barriers to the faith (and to the apologetic task itself) constantly and consistently arise, alongside some of the same contentions from millennia ago. There is, of course, the usual religious and philosophical challenges to the Christian faith, denying the tenets of stated belief or the entire system itself. Hinduism and Islam, among other religions and philosophies, still claim to be the genuine way of peace and hope, while naturalistic atheists seek to minimize (if not entirely extinguish) any semblance of Christian influence, declaring the world has moved on from such myths and pronouncing that religion has been the cause of most of the world's ills.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The New Atheists have excelled at inflaming this belief through their rhetoric. For example, Christopher Hitchens warns his readers, "People of faith are in their different ways planning your and my destruction, and the destruction of all the hard-won

In the past few centuries, newer attacks have attempted to undermine the very foundations of what both religious and secular thinkers have generally accepted about truth and reality (which would then undercut the very purpose of apologetics and any claims of knowing and demonstrating the truth). For instance, the entire atmosphere within academic and cultural groups has become caustic toward any claim of exclusive truth, much less the Christian claim. As Ravi Zacharias opines, “We are living in a time when . . . philosophically, you can believe anything, so long as you do not claim it to be true. Morally, you can practice anything, so long as you do not claim that it is a ‘better’ way. Religiously, you can hold to anything, so long as you do not bring Jesus Christ into it.”<sup>2</sup> The contemporary representatives of such truth-skeptics, the postmodernists, denounce the claim of there even being one truth applicable to everyone since all people are free to create truth for themselves.<sup>3</sup> In addition, pluralists deem it arrogant to claim that there is only one way to God and one way to truth.<sup>4</sup> Thus, any defense of an

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human attainments that I have touched upon. *Religion poisons everything.*” Christopher Hitchens, *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (New York: Twelve, 2007), 13. Emphasis original. His fellow “Horseman of the New Atheism,” Sam Harris, also chimes in, “Religion is to be credited as much for wars of conquest as for feast days and brotherly love. . . . The proportion of abuses for which religion could be found directly responsible is likely to remain undiminished.” Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004), 25.

<sup>2</sup>Ravi K. Zacharias, *Jesus among Other Gods: The Absolute Claims of the Christian Message* (Nashville: Word Publishers, 2000), vii.

<sup>3</sup>While the concept of postmodernism carries a very broad connotation, Brendan Sweetman’s definition is an apt summary: “[Postmodernism is a] movement whose central theme is the critique of objective rationality and identity, and the working out of the implications of this critique for the central questions in philosophy, literature, and culture.” Brendan Sweetman, “Lyotard, Postmodernism, and Religion,” *Philosophia Christi* 7, no. 1 (2005): 139–40.

<sup>4</sup>For example, in a debate between Christopher Hitchens and Rabbi David J. Wolpe, Hitchens proclaimed: “By what right, rabbi, do you say that you know God better than [nonbelievers] do, that your God is better than theirs, that you have an access that I can’t claim to have, to knowing not just that there is a God, but that you know his mind. You put it modestly, but it is a fantastically arrogant claim that you make—an incredibly immodest claim.” Sewell Chan, “Hitchens Debates Rabbi Wolpe on God,” *New York Times*, November 3, 2008, accessed April 3, 2019,

exclusive faith and an exclusive claim to truth already meets barriers to its use, much less to the message that it seeks to protect and convey.

Piggybacking on the philosophies of postmodernism and pluralism come challenges to the viability of the apologetic task within Christendom itself. There is a growing contingent on the fringes of Christian evangelicalism that views the apologetic endeavor as tainted by Enlightenment thinking which places man's reason as the absolute authority. These "pseudo-evangelicals" claim that in attempting to establish rational foundations for Christian belief the apologist uses concepts and words that are a far cry from what genuine Christianity conveyed before the Enlightenment, even undercutting the gospel it aspires to protect.<sup>5</sup> So, instead of putting forth "a set of propositional assertions that can be epistemically justified," in their eyes the defense of the faith is bound up within the life of the individual, where the life lived becomes the apologetic.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, they desire a move from rationality, reasoning, and argumentation to an embodiment—a move from the propositional to a more personal revelation.<sup>7</sup>

Such "post-conservatives" claim that the Christian apologetic methods of the past several centuries base themselves on a flawed foundationalist model that cannot live up to its contentions. They maintain that Christianity can stand on its own without any form of rational defense, so there is no need to give arguments or provide evidence that

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<https://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/11/03/hitchens-vs-rabbi-on-god/comment-page-6/>.

<sup>5</sup>Myron Bradley Penner, *The End of Apologetics: Christian Witness in a Postmodern Context* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 16, Kindle.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 42.

<sup>7</sup>Steven B. Sherman, *Revitalizing Theological Epistemology: Holistic Evangelical Approaches to the Knowledge of God*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series, 83 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2008), 6. In no way do I deny that a life lived in consistency with one's proclaimed faith is essential. What I do deny, however, is that this somehow impairs an intellectual defense of the faith through evidence and arguments.

Christianity is true and other beliefs are not.<sup>8</sup> They even declare that truth itself is no longer a virtue. Instead, for them, “what matters about truth is that it builds me up, is true for me, and is the kind of thing that connects to my deepest concerns as a self,” so, as an alternative to defending the truth, the true apologetic task entails that “when I witness to a truth that edifies me, I recommend it to someone else as potentially true or edifying for them as well.”<sup>9</sup> All these attacks on apologetics come from self-proclaimed Christian theologians who assert that they adhere to an orthodox doctrinal faith which they claim is worthy of academic discussion, only to then undermine the truthfulness of their asserted beliefs.<sup>10</sup>

From both “friend” and foe alike, the twenty-first century has not been kind to the Christian faith or the apologetic task. Still, one cannot overstate the importance of apologetics since it makes way for the gospel message: God will forever condemn those who do not personally receive the one true faith that holds that every man and woman is a sinner separated from God and Jesus Christ is God the Son who died on the cross and rose again to save said sinners. If the Christian holds to the veracity of this assertion, then it is imperative to demonstrate faith-claims in a way that will encourage the non-believer to take serious consideration of Christian contentions and, at the same time, demonstrate the fallaciousness of opposing beliefs such that they question those principles to which they wrongly hold. With the gravity of this undertaking there can be no doubt that how one approaches apologetics is of vital importance, for if the Christian claims are not true in the realm of reality, then there remains no basis for hope.

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<sup>8</sup>Sherman, *Revitalizing Theological Epistemology*, 135-36.

<sup>9</sup>Penner, *The End of Apologetics*, 111.

<sup>10</sup>One hopes the reader has not missed the irony that these authors are attempting to make a reasoned, rational argument for their view that Christian apologetics ought not to use reasoned, rational arguments to commend the faith.

Based on this eternal significance, the apologetic endeavor exists not only to demonstrate truth (or falsity) to the highest of probabilities, but it also serves to open a door for an invitation personally to accept eternity-changing Christian beliefs. As Peter J. Grant reminds Christians, “Apologetics as the handmaiden of evangelism must lead to a clear presentation of the gospel. After all, the only cure for blindness is not information about the *possibility* of seeing but instead sight itself.”<sup>11</sup> Thus, apologetic arguments, evidence, and methods are not the end themselves but are the means to the end—although, an essential means indeed. Ravi Zacharias places apologetics in its proper domain when he states, “Apologetics is not the gospel. It clears out the dirt along the way.”<sup>12</sup> However, this view of the place of apologetics begs the question, how does one most effectively clear the dirt? Has an apologetic method or procedure arisen for contemporary disputes using a purview and a system that effectively demonstrate the truthfulness of Christian claims to a high probability, proves the falseness of contradictory claims, opens the door for a gospel presentation, and even overcomes barriers to using apologetics? Throughout history, Christian apologetic methods arose to meet the varied issues and contentions of the day, and the modern era is no different. To claim an apologetic approach that meets contemporary challenges necessitates a brief survey of how diverse approaches arose in the past in response to disputations of their day, demonstrating that such a method has emerged for the present.

### **Progression of Christian Apologetic Approaches**

When studying the use of apologetics through the history of Christianity, one

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<sup>11</sup>Peter J. Grant, “The Priority of Apologetics in the Church,” in *Is Your Church Ready? Motivating Leaders to Live an Apologetic Life*, ed. Ravi Zacharias and Norman Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 65. Emphasis original.

<sup>12</sup>Ravi Zacharias, “Your Worldview in Action, Part 1,” Let My People Think (MP3 podcast), June 17, 2017, accessed December 1, 2017, <http://rzimmedia.rzim.org/LMPT/LMP20170617.mp3>.

notices that each era has had an approach that reflected the religious, philosophic, political, and academic atmosphere of the times. When particular challenges surfaced, specific apologetic techniques rose to meet the challenge. It would then be no wonder that such an approach arose that is more effective than others in managing the modern contentions against the faith. In surveying the history of apologetics, one notices that varied approaches have come and gone, but they met their opposition with effectiveness and enthusiasm, which gives hope for a contemporary approach to do the same. It is useful to consider how apologists who have come before confronted the issues of their times to inform the present on how better to face the issues of the modern day. The methods and systems of past apologetics often evolved themselves with the times and new challenges that arose. As William Edgar and K. Scott Oliphint state,

While the intellectual and social milieus of past authors were different from ours, deep down most of the basic challenges to the faith have been the same. Access to both historical and contemporary texts gives us fresh insight into how our fathers in the faith responded to the questions facing them. We thus can learn from their strengths and weaknesses. Reading them can also better inform us about how to be “in the world but not of it.” The great apologists, in varying degrees and with various postures, found themselves using the language of the day without wanting to succumb to the basic systems behind that language.<sup>13</sup>

The modern task is similar in that apologists seek an approach that meets the questions of the day using the language of the day without capitulating to the spirit of the day. Thus, gleaning insight from the past will inform the practice of the present.

The founders of the faith practiced apologetics to defend the new way against the resistance of those holding to a form of godliness and religion but denying its power (2 Tim 3:5). Jesus utilized many of the tools often associated with mounting a defense against detractors. As Douglas Groothuis and Sean McDowell demonstrate from the Gospel accounts, Jesus defended his teachings and claims using logical argumentative

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<sup>13</sup>William Edgar and K. Scott Oliphint, eds., *Christian Apologetics Past and Present: A Primary Source Reader*, vol. 1, *To 1500* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2009), 6.

techniques such as *reductio ad absurdum* and *a fortiori* arguments, as well as by making appeals to observable and verifiable evidence such as eyewitness testimony and miracles.<sup>14</sup> The apostle Paul also used reasoned arguments and proofs demonstrating the veracity of the Christian faith. As Ravi Zacharias notes in a survey of the Scriptures, Acts 9:22 describes Paul as “confounding” and “proving.”<sup>15</sup> Acts 17:17 describes Paul as “reasoning” every day with those whom he would meet in the synagogue or the marketplace or the street. Acts 19:8 describes Paul as “reasoning” and “persuading,” and in Acts 19:9 Paul was “reasoning daily” with the Jews. In Philippians 1:7 Paul describes his ministry as one of “defense and confirmation of the gospel.”<sup>16</sup> Therefore, from this small survey, one can contend that the apologetic endeavor is biblical and even a foundational part of Christian ministry.

After the founding of the faith, there was a bitter antagonism to the teachings of the fledgling church stemming from the Jews, the pagans, and the false teachers. The early apologists came with reasoned defenses to meet the hostility directly, as well as to open doors to the presentation of the gospel. Rational and empirical evidences lent support to the message of Christ that Scripture would subsequently record since, as John Warwick Montgomery postulates, “The Bible, unlike the Qur’an and the ‘holy books’ of other religions, does not expect its readers to accept its revelational character simply

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<sup>14</sup>See Douglas Groothuis, “Jesus: Philosopher and Apologist,” *Christian Research Journal* 25, no. 2 (2002), accessed September 22, 2018, <http://www.equip.org/article/jesus-philosopher-and-apologist/>. See also Sean McDowell, “Was Jesus an Apologist?,” *Sean McDowell Blog*, September 26, 2017, accessed September 22, 2018, <https://seanmcdowell.org/blog/was-jesus-an-apologist>.

<sup>15</sup>Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations and references are from the English Standard Version.

<sup>16</sup>Ravi Zacharias, “Why Jesus?” (video), vol. 1.1, RZIM Academy Core Course, accessed February 5, 2018, [https://courses.rzimacademy.org/lms/index.php?r=player&course\\_id=1536&coming\\_from=lp&id\\_plan=121#training](https://courses.rzimacademy.org/lms/index.php?r=player&course_id=1536&coming_from=lp&id_plan=121#training).



because the text claims to be true.”<sup>17</sup> These apologies of the apostles and biblical authors came in several forms.

First, the biblical authors frequently noted that the content of their writing emanated from eyewitness testimony (either their own or someone with whom they had discourse); therefore, the events that they record are historically accurate and verifiably true. The author Luke in Luke 1:1-4 wrote that he undertook to compile an accurate narrative of the life of Christ based on eyewitness testimony so that the intended readers would be certain of Christian teachings. The apostle John in 1 John 1:1-3 described the teachings in his epistle as based on what he and the other apostles saw with their own eyes and touched with their own hands. The apostle Peter confirmed in 2 Peter 1:16 that he and the other apostles were not pandering some myth, but their teachings were historically accurate, and therefore true because of their basis on the eyewitness accounts of countless people. Even the apostle Paul, as mentioned earlier, argued and reasoned with others that they could know the veracity of his claims, especially that of the resurrection of Christ, due to there being hundreds of eyewitnesses (1 Cor 15:4-8).

Second, the biblical authors established the truthfulness of Christian faith-claims by revealing the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy—how the scriptural texts foretold and prefigured the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ—continuing God’s plan for redemptive history. So, in putting forth their interpretation of the ancient texts, the biblical authors gave their arguments with “the growing insistence that every detail unfolds ‘as it was written.’”<sup>18</sup> The gospel of Matthew alone indicates thirteen times that certain events in Jesus’ life occur in fulfillment of certain words and prophecies

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<sup>17</sup>John Warwick Montgomery, “A Short History of Apologetics,” in *Christian Apologetics: An Anthology of Primary Sources*, ed. Khaldoun A. Sweis and Chad V. Meister (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 21, Kindle.

<sup>18</sup>Avery Cardinal Dulles, *A History of Apologetics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), 6.

given by the Old Testament prophets, but Matthew is not alone. Harry L. Poe notes that the “idea of the fulfillment of [Old Testament] Scripture [by Christ] appears in every book of the New Testament except James.”<sup>19</sup> To dismiss this particular line of evidence due to one’s presuppositions (that no such thing is possible) places upon that person the burden to put forward alternative explanations, for that the biblical authors wrote these prophecies before the life of Jesus is undeniable, and that he fulfills them is quite evident. Thus, the apostles and early church leaders sought to exhibit the credibility of the message and answer objections that they met during their ministries so there would be no barriers to a pure gospel message.

At the turn of the century, “apologetics became the most characteristic form of Christian writing.”<sup>20</sup> However, the reasoned defense went further than merely establishing credibility. Christianity became a religion non grata and had several fronts upon which to defend the faith—persecution without (stemming from such misconceived charges as atheism and immorality and cannibalism), heresy within, and worldview conflict around. Apologetic methodology focused on refuting charges, rebutting falsities, gaining civil tolerance with governmental authorities, and winning new converts to the faith.<sup>21</sup> The apologists again pointed to the many Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in Christ as well as the evidence of miracles in his ministry (with the resurrection being the greatest of the miracles).<sup>22</sup> They also aggressively defended the faith to the civil authorities (often writing to the Emperor himself) to gain tolerance. In their writings they demonstrated that Christianity had an exalted view of God (and was a more fulfilled form

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<sup>19</sup>Harry L. Poe, *The Gospel and Its Meaning* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 83.

<sup>20</sup>Dulles, *A History of Apologetics*, 27.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 28

<sup>22</sup>Montgomery, “A Short History of Apologetics,” 22.

of philosophy) and argued that Christians were not guilty of the misconstrued charges leveled against them. They wanted authorities to know that there was nothing in Christianity that was criminal or detrimental to the State—if anything, Christians ought to have made some of the best citizens within the Empire.<sup>23</sup>

The apologies of the time were not merely defensive but went on the offensive against pagan beliefs, Gnosticism, and rising heresies within the ranks of Christianity itself. Apologists (like Tertullian) argued that pagans were the real atheists since they worshipped objects that were not divine, and their religion did not lead to a good life that is loyal to the civil authorities (unlike Christianity).<sup>24</sup> Apologists would then battle Gnosticism and heresies (such as Arianism) by giving a thorough, systematized account of true, biblical, orthodox Christianity. Toward the end of this period (transitioning into the next), apologists (such as Augustine and Boethius) integrated philosophic knowledge with traditional Christian teachings to establish Christianity within a larger metaphysical system.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Dulles, *A History of Apologetics*, 36.

<sup>24</sup>Edgar and Oliphint, *Christian Apologetics Past and Present*, 1:117. For example, Tertullian argued that pagan gods did not exist and even in their stories they are presented as no more than glorified men:

We do not worship your gods, because we know that there are no such beings. This, therefore, is what you should do: you should call on us to demonstrate their non-existence, and thereby prove that they have no claim to adoration; for only if your gods were truly so, would there be any obligation to render divine homage to them. And punishment even were due to Christians, if it were made plain that those to whom they refused all worship were indeed divine. But you say, They are gods. We protest and appeal from yourselves to your knowledge; let that judge us; let that condemn us, if it can deny that all these gods of yours were but men. If even it venture to deny that, it will be confuted by its own books of antiquities, from which it has got its information about them, bearing witness to this day, as they plainly do, both of the cities in which they were born, and the countries in which they have left traces of their exploits, as well as where also they are proved to have been buried.

Tertullian, "The Apology," trans. S. Thelwall, in vol. 3 of *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Buffalo, NY: The Christian Literature Company, 1885), 26.

<sup>25</sup>Edgar and Oliphint, *Christian Apologetics Past and Present*, 1:205.

While persecution and problems for Christians intensified toward the end of the third century, the political landscape of the empire changed during the fourth century which brought with it a change in the status of Christianity in the public realm. With the Edict of Toleration by Galerius and then the Edict of Milan by Constantine and Licinius, Christianity gained a status of legitimacy and received toleration which it did not previously enjoy. Not only did this alleviate much of the pressure Christianity had suffered, but it would then alter the way the apologists practiced their task over the next several centuries.<sup>26</sup> Apologists would still do battle against the beliefs of non-Christians (such as the invading barbarians, the unconverted Jews, and the growing power of Islam) while at the same time ingratiating the true doctrine of the one true faith to them for the sake of their conversions.<sup>27</sup> The new openness with which they could practice and live the Christian faith freed apologists and theologians to seek a deeper understanding of the faith handed down to them through the centuries. This freedom led to the establishment of schools and universities to further propagate the Christian faith.

With the liberty to pursue scholarship and academics, discussions ensued regarding the relationship between faith and reason within religious life and work which directly affected the apologetic task. Theologians such as Anselm and Augustine believed that reason would bring greater understanding to the faith that one already held— however, reason had limitations in what it could do for those who did not have faith.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Edgar and Oliphint, *Christian Apologetics Past and Present*, 1:312.

<sup>27</sup>Dulles, *A History of Apologetics*, 91. For example, John Chrysostom wrote a discourse to prove to pagans that Christ is God by referring to Christ's historicity, Christ's fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, the fulfillment of Christ's prophecies about the destruction of the Jewish temple, and the miraculous growth of the church even in the midst of persecution. John Chrysostom, "Demonstration against the Pagans that Christ is God," in *Saint John Chrysostom: Apologist*, trans. Margaret A. Schatkin and Paul W. Harkins, *Fathers of the Church: A New Translation 73* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1985), 153–262.

<sup>28</sup>Anselm demonstrates the delicate balance of faith and reason: "I do not endeavor, O Lord, to penetrate thy sublimity, for in no wise do I compare my

Others, such as Abelard, maintained that “human reason, making use of objectively accessible evidence, could achieve some kind of inchoative faith, paving the way for the supernatural act of faith elicited under the influence of grace and charity.”<sup>29</sup> This high view of the rational did not necessarily mean that apologists granted reason and philosophy primary status for their purposes. Reason could ingratiate the faith, but faith was in no way a slave to reason. Philosophy was the handmaiden of theology and apologetics, not its lord.

The most influential apologist of this period was Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas embraced the philosophy of Aristotle and deemed Christian revelation as having corrected and completed Aristotle’s teachings which the Christian faith brought to greater fulfillment.<sup>30</sup> Aquinas “took over Aristotle’s traditional proofs for God’s existence, and argued that they can establish a foundation of Reason upon which Faith can operate. This stress on the Aristotelian proofs would have a tremendous influence on all subsequent Christian apologetics.”<sup>31</sup> Although utilizing Aristotle, Aquinas knew the limitations of reason in ingratiating Christianity to others. Dulles describes the principle behind Aquinas’ apologetic, “The human mind in its effort to discover the divine ground of all things has limited competence. It can establish the existence of the one personal God and

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understanding with that; but I long to understand in some degree thy truth, which my heart believes and loves. For I do not seek to understand that I may believe, but I believe in order to understand. For this also I believe,—that unless I believed, I should not understand.” Anselm, *Proslogium, The Major Works of Anselm of Canterbury*, trans. Sidney Norton Deane (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1939), 6-7. Anselm may have based his saying on Augustine: “For understanding is the reward of faith. Therefore do not seek to understand in order to believe, but believe that thou mayest understand.” Augustine, “Lectures or Tractates on the Gospel According to St. John,” in *St. Augustine*, trans. John Gibb and James Innes, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 7 (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1888), 184.

<sup>29</sup>Dulles, *A History of Apologetics*, 107.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>31</sup>Montgomery, “A Short History of Apologetics,” 23.

many other important religious truths, but there is a higher sphere of truths that remain impenetrable to man unless God is pleased to make them known by revelation.”<sup>32</sup> Thus, Aquinas created various arguments that would lead to the conclusion that there was a God (his renowned arguments known as his Five Ways).<sup>33</sup> However, other truths (such as the Trinity or substitutionary atonement) were only comprehensible through the special revelation of Scripture.

The cultural manner of the Renaissance followed these middle ages with a humanism that returned to, and critically examined, the basic sources for education, society, and the church.<sup>34</sup> It was in this atmosphere that the Reformers returned to the original source of authority for the church, the Scriptures, and what they rightly deemed as the original gospel message. Although there was still the aspect of apologetics that reached out and defended the faith against pagan, Jewish, and Islamic beliefs, the apologetics of the era were not so much concerned with doing battle with contrary thoughts outside the faith as much as they were with cleaning up the theology of the medieval church.<sup>35</sup> The defense of the faith became the defense of the nature and authority of the church (Reformed or Roman Catholic): Scripture or the combination of tradition and church. “On the Protestant side, it was necessary to defend the Reformed religion against its detractors, especially those who thought it was a departure from the true church. . . . Similarly, the Roman Catholic polemicists defended the papacy and the

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<sup>32</sup>Dulles, *A History of Apologetics*, 115.

<sup>33</sup>Aquinas’ Five Ways include the argument from motion, the argument from causality, the argument from contingency, the argument from perfection, and the argument from purpose. See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne LTD, 1921), 1 Q 2 a.3.

<sup>34</sup>William Edgar and K. Scott Oliphint, eds., *Christian Apologetics Past and Present: A Primary Source Reader*, vol. 2, *From 1500* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2011), 13.

<sup>35</sup>Montgomery, “A Short History of Apologetics,” 23.

role of tradition against the Protestant approach.”<sup>36</sup>

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with the rise of Enlightenment thinking, attacks on Christian claims took on a new force as appeals to the philosophies and sciences of the times sought to label the faith as either mere superstition, or at a minimum to strip it of any of its supernatural elements. Secular scholarship grew as academics attempted to assert the independent authority of reason. As the natural sciences found their place, humanity’s emphasis on the use of innate reason in pursuing the truth led to significant discoveries, but also led mankind to liberate themselves from God’s sovereign claim over His creation. The Enlightenment was a period of great thinking, but it was also a time of great straying. Certain philosophers, leaders, and theologians who believed in a God, such as Lord Herbert of Cherbury, disbelieved that He could do anything supernatural in the world. Since the world appeared to work according to natural laws, this new deism believed that God created the world, wound the world up, and let it go without any interference on his part. Also, during this period, a skepticism (like that of David Hume) arose and attempted to deconstruct Christianity to the point of trivializing its claims.<sup>37</sup> Then came the new evolutionary “science” of Charles Darwin which seemingly freed man from his theological moorings. Complete reliance on reason and science and nature undermined any reliance on positive historical revelation.

In response, “Christian apologetics, seeking to answer in kind, concentrated

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<sup>36</sup>Edgar and Oliphint, *Christian Apologetics Past and Present*, 2:17.

<sup>37</sup>Hume saw little evidence for Christianity: “Our evidence, then, for the truth of the *Christian* religion is less than the evidence for the truth of our senses,” he then flattered himself that he “discovered an argument . . . which, if just, will, with the wise and learned, be an everlasting check to all kinds of superstitious delusion, and consequently, will be useful as long as the world endures. For so long, I presume, will the accounts of miracles and prodigies be found in all history, sacred and profane.” David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding and Selections from a Treatise of Human Nature* (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1921), 114-15. Emphasis original.

increasingly on scientific historical evidences and relied rather less upon lofty metaphysical considerations.”<sup>38</sup> Some, such as Joseph Butler, would reason that divine revelation (Scripture) did not in any way contradict natural theology.<sup>39</sup> Others, such as William Paley with his teleological argument, created rational argumentations that sought to undermine the naturalistic assumptions behind much Enlightenment thinking.<sup>40</sup> Unfortunately, some like Friedrich Schleiermacher attempted to ingratiate the faith to science by compromising Christian beliefs to fit the science of the day and instead tried a defense of the faith via personal experiences of God.<sup>41</sup> The rise of this form of Christian liberalism brought with it a biblical criticism that sought to undermine the divine

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<sup>38</sup>Dulles, *A History of Apologetics*, 146.

<sup>39</sup>Butler argued that the Deists’ natural religion was burdened with the same hindrances that they claimed for revealed religion—probability as opposed to certainty—but for current human circumstances this is acceptable. He writes,

Probable evidence, in its very nature, affords but an imperfect kind of information; and is to be considered as relative only to beings of limited capacities. For nothing which is the possible object of knowledge, whether past, present, or future, can be probable to an infinite Intelligence; since it cannot but be discerned absolutely as it is in itself, certainly true, or certainly false. But to us, probability is the very guide of life.

Joseph Butler, *The Analogy of Religion: Natural and Revealed to the Constitution and Course of Nature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897), 5.

<sup>40</sup>See William Paley, *Natural Theology*, vol. 1 of *The Works of William Paley* (London: Longman and Company, 1838), 1-25.

<sup>41</sup>Schleiermacher writes,

Let me say then at once, that the only remaining way for a truly individual religion to arise is to select some one of the great relations of mankind in the world to the Highest Being, and, in a definite way, make it the centre and refer to it all the others. In respect of the idea of religion, this may appear a merely arbitrary proceeding, but, in respect of the peculiarity of the adherents, being the natural expression of their character, it is the purest necessity. Hereby a distinctive spirit and a common character enter the whole at the same time, and the ambiguous and vague reach firm ground. By every formation of this kind one of the endless number of different views and different arrangements of the single elements, which are all possible and all require to be exhibited, is fully realized. Single elements are all seen on the one side that is turned towards this central point, which makes all the feelings have a common tone and a livelier closer interaction.

Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, trans. John Oman (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Company, 1893), 222-23.



authority of the Bible. Apologists, such as B. B. Warfield, gave reasoned defenses of the faith in general and more specifically to the theological stance of Scriptural inerrancy.<sup>42</sup> He and others of the Old Princeton guard provided a place for argumentation and evidence as a means of undergirding the truths of inspiration, inerrancy, and other orthodox doctrines. On the other hand, others like Abraham Kuyper believed that the antithesis that existed between believer and unbeliever made it such that one could not merely reason one's way to faith, for there is no point of agreement between the two.<sup>43</sup>

With the dawn of the modern age at the end of the nineteenth century on into the twentieth century (and one could argue into the twenty-first century), apologists placed much emphasis on proper methodology.<sup>44</sup> There were those who still held that reasoned arguments and evidence could sway the beliefs of critics, while others contended that Christians were unable to communicate rationally with unbelievers due to the noetic effects of sin, while still others embraced taking a leap of faith which lead to having a personal experience with Christ. Cornelius Van Til would take Kuyper's apologetic as a foundation to form his transcendental presuppositionalism which relied on presupposing the Christian faith to make sense of the world, not argument or evidence.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>While arguing for inspiration specifically and Christianity in general through evidences and arguments, Warfield places everything in their proper perspective: Inspiration is not the most fundamental of Christian doctrines, nor even the first thing we prove about the Scriptures. It is the last and crowning fact as to the Scriptures. These we first prove authentic, historically credible, generally trustworthy, before we prove them inspired. And the proof of their authenticity, credibility, general trustworthiness would give us a firm basis for Christianity prior to any knowledge on our part of their inspiration, and apart indeed from the existence of inspiration.

Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *Revelation and Inspiration*, vol. 1 of *The Works of Benjamin B Warfield* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1932), 210.

<sup>43</sup>See Abraham Kuyper, *Calvinism: Six Lectures Delivered in the Theological Seminary at Princeton* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1899), 29-33.

<sup>44</sup>Dulles, *A History of Apologetics*, 353.

<sup>45</sup>See Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1955), specifically chapter 6 sections 1

Other Reformed philosophers, like Alvin Plantinga, would also eschew the need for reasoned argumentation to believe. Plantinga came to apologetics from an epistemological standpoint, arguing that a person did not need empirical evidence or deductive arguments to have warrant to believe in a God; instead, belief in God was properly basic (although this did not mean that such belief is groundless).<sup>46</sup> From a more fideistic standpoint, theologians like Søren Kierkegaard and Karl Barth vehemently opposed apologetics since faith alone is superior to arrive at the truth.<sup>47</sup> Often critics would disparage presuppositionalists or reformed epistemologists for being fideists. To clarify the distinction, Plantinga defines fideism as the ““exclusive or basic reliance upon faith alone, accompanied by a consequent disparagement of reason and utilized especially in the pursuit of philosophical or religious truth.’ Therefore, a fideist urges reliance on faith rather than reason, in matters philosophical and religious; and he may go on to disparage and denigrate reason.”<sup>48</sup> In contrast, a Reformed epistemologist need not

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<sup>46</sup>Alvin Plantinga, “Is Belief in God Properly Basic?” *Nous* 15, no. 1 (March 1981): 47-48.

<sup>47</sup>As Barth explains,

By trying to resist and conquer other religions, we put ourselves on the same level. They, too, appeal to this or that immanent truth in them. They, too, can triumph in the power of the religious self-consciousness, and sometimes they have been astonishingly successful over wide areas. Christianity can take part in this fight. There is no doubt that it does not lack the necessary equipment, and can give a good account of itself alongside the other religions. But do not forget that if it does this it has renounced its birthright. It has renounced the unique power which it has as the religion of revelation. This power dwells only in weakness. And it does not really operate, nor does the power with which Christianity hopes to work, the power of religious self-consciousness which is the gift of grace in the midst of weakness, unless Christianity has first humbled instead of exalting itself.

Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, trans. G. T. Thomson and Harold Knight, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 1, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (London: T & T Clark International, 1956), 332-33.

<sup>48</sup>Alvin Plantinga, “Reason and Belief in God,” in *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God*, ed. Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 87.

commit to a conflict between faith and reason to explain the proper basicity of belief, just that there are some central truths to the faith that one may hold to without being based on other reasons or truths.<sup>49</sup> The discussion about methodology continues without an overall consensus, and thus brings this work to its proper consideration of a way of handling modern contentions against the faith.<sup>50</sup>

This survey recognizes the manner in which apologetic approaches faced the different nuances with new times and new challenges, and acknowledges that there is much contemporary discussion regarding proper methodology. This then leads to the question about using an approach toward apologetics for modern times that defends the truthfulness of Christianity, demonstrates the falsity of competing religions and philosophies, demurs the cultural beliefs of postmodernism and relativism, and defeats the challenges to the apologetic task itself. I find that a more productive discussion first regards the proper domain or purview wherein to analyze the truth claims of contradictory systems of thought. Then, after determining this domain, discover tests that, when applied, determine one system of thought having a higher probability of truthfulness over the others.

### **Thesis**

Over the millennia many approaches toward Christian apologetics have answered contemporary contentions against the faith. The particular issues that have

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<sup>49</sup>Plantinga, “Reason and Belief in God,” 88-91.

<sup>50</sup>For example, Steven B. Cowan edited a book in which adherents debated the pros and cons of five distinct apologetic methodologies: Classical, Evidential, Cumulative-Case, Presuppositional, and Reformed Epistemology. Readers are left to decide for themselves if there is merely one “correct method.” See Steven B. Cowan, ed., *Five Views of Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000). For another summary of these methodologies, also see Kenneth D. Boa and Robert M. Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons: Integrative Approaches to Defending the Christian Faith*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2005).

arisen over the past century again call for an approach that can handle the various religious, philosophical, and cultural concerns. This paper contends that testing the veracity of truth-claims from within the scope of entire worldviews is an effective approach for validating Christianity's truthfulness, revealing other worldview's falseness, and neutralizing arguments against the apologetic task itself. This dissertation systematizes, describes, and defends this worldview truth-testing approach, demonstrating its ability to test the veracity of all possible worldviews as it weighs the answers the various worldviews give to important life questions.

To understand this approach, which has developed recently over the past two centuries (often termed "worldview apologetics"), one must apprehend the purview of worldview. For example, Ravi Zacharias states that a "worldview may be defined as the philosophical glasses that a person wears to look at this world of ideas, experiences, and purposes. The worldview functions as an interpretive conceptual scheme to explain why we 'see' the world as we do and act as we do. Every individual has a worldview, either by design or default."<sup>51</sup> Since the various worldviews conflict in some way, not all worldviews can be true.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, the apologetic task is to give sound reasons and argumentations that show which systems of belief are true or false, and why they are so. The tests for truth within worldview apologetics base themselves on three epistemological theories of truth working together (where the three may be weak individually, together they buttress the truth-testing task): the coherence theory (that the varied claims of the worldview cohere together and follow the known laws of logic); the correspondence theory (where one examines asserted statements to determine their correspondence with reality); and the pragmatic theory (where worldview beliefs are true

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<sup>51</sup>Ravi Zacharias, *The Real Face of Atheism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 114.

<sup>52</sup>Zacharias, *Jesus among Other Gods*, 4.

if they are useful in life).<sup>53</sup> These theories undergird three tests for truth that scrutinize each worldview and its claims. This approach tests worldviews for logical consistency, empirical adequacy, and experiential relevance, and to undergird any weaknesses within these tests Zacharias (per Norm Geisler) also considers adding (in some cases) analysis through the unaffirmability test and the undeniability test.<sup>54</sup> This apologetic approach tests for worldview-truthfulness within the context of answering four basic questions of life: origin, meaning, morality, and destiny. As Zacharias explains,

The issue is whether the answers to the four basic questions of life pertaining to origin, meaning, morality, and destiny within the context of each of these worldviews meet the tests of truth. Are they logically consistent, are they empirically adequate, and are they experientially relevant? Do they meet the tests of unaffirmability and undeniability? The answers to life's four questions must in each instance correspond to reality, and the sum of the answers must cohere as a system. It is absolutely imperative to understand that when an antagonist of the Christian faith poses a question of the Christian, he or she must, in turn, be willing first to justify the question within the context of his or her own presuppositions. Second, he or she must also answer the question on the basis of those presuppositions. In other words, the questioner is also obliged to answer the same question. An attitude that says, "You can't answer my question, and therefore I can believe whatever I want to believe," is intellectual hypocrisy. Let me therefore reiterate that *truth by definition, will always be exclusive*.<sup>55</sup>

From a different angle—one in which a person seeks a worldview to embrace—Zacharias summarizes the same task in this manner: "the goal may be best described as subjecting the intimations of reality to adequate truth-tests so that one may arrive at a worldview that answers the questions of our origin, condition, salvation, and destiny."<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Ravi Zacharias, "The 3.4.5 Grid" (video), vol. 3.1, RZIM Academy Core Course, accessed February 17, 2018, [https://courses.rzimacademy.org/lms/index.php?r=player&course\\_id=1538&coming\\_from=lp&id\\_plan=121#training](https://courses.rzimacademy.org/lms/index.php?r=player&course_id=1538&coming_from=lp&id_plan=121#training). While Zacharias mentions only correspondence and coherence theories of truth, the pragmatic theory does seem to influence the third truth-test that he and others advocate.

<sup>54</sup>Ravi K. Zacharias, *Can Man Live without God?* (Dallas: Word Publishers, 1994), 123-25. See also David K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 327.

<sup>55</sup>Zacharias, *Can Man Live without God?* 126. Emphasis original.

<sup>56</sup>Zacharias, *The Real Face of Atheism*, 114.

Some (such as presuppositionalists, fideists, or postmodernists) may argue that such an apologetic relies too heavily on rationality and gives human reasoning too much autonomy. However, Zacharias notes that

the faith that the Bible speaks of is not antithetical to reason. It is not just a will to believe, everything to the contrary notwithstanding. It is not a predisposition to force every piece of information to fit into the mold of one's desires. Faith in the biblical sense is substantive, based on the knowledge that the One in whom that faith is placed has proven that He is worthy of that trust. . . . Faith for the Christian is the response of trust based on who Jesus Christ claimed to be, and it results in a life that brings both mind and heart in a commitment of love to Him.<sup>57</sup>

Moreover, as noted above, the apostle Paul himself reasoned and debated with others. Therefore, the use of argument and persuasion about truth is not an unbiblical concept. Nevertheless, Zacharias and other apologists who use philosophical argumentations and empirical evidence will readily admit that the Bible is the ultimate authority, not rational arguments, nor even apologetic methodologies. The use of an apology leads to a hearing of the claims of Scripture, and then ultimately the transformation of a life and the change of a heart is the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>58</sup>

Thus, this dissertation considers worldview as the proper field for apologetic engagement. This approach demonstrates that the correspondence, coherence, and pragmatic theories combined are sound considerations for the epistemology of truth when used through a manner of abductive reasoning. This dissertation argues that three tests based on these epistemological theories determine truthfulness within strong probability leading one to find a worldview containing all the components of an unassailable life system. It also contends that four questions of life (origin, meaning, morality, and destiny) are the general categories under which most issues of existence fall and where one may compare worldviews for apologetic purposes. This work also demonstrates that

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<sup>57</sup>Zacharias, *Jesus among Other Gods*, 58.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

this approach can interact with different classes of worldviews (such as atheistic, theistic, and pantheistic). Finally, the dissertation concludes that this approach is both scholarly and practical, and can overcome the barriers to the apologetic task that have arisen in much contemporary thought and scholarship.

This approach has a significant advantage over single-argument apologetic approaches. David Hume’s stopper, which reasons that a sound apologetic argument does not lead to the full-blown Christian conception of God (and, therefore, does not prove enough), has some validity to a point for it would appear to lead to general theism, not necessarily Christianity.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, while a good cumulative case argument for a singular point (e.g., the existence of God) can mitigate such critiques, a cumulative case approach is but one piece of an overall puzzle—that puzzle being an entire worldview.<sup>60</sup> There is no single “smoking gun” argument that leads to a full-fledged Christian theology, but with careful epistemological analysis, an apologist can demonstrate the truthfulness of the system as a whole. From a presuppositional or reformed standpoint, this approach can demonstrate why presupposing Christianity as truthful and other worldview’s as false has proper epistemological grounding. It gives a starting point for discussion and debate which presuppositionalists often deny. It is one thing to assume another worldview is incoherent, but it is another to establish its incoherency reasonably.

The second chapter of this dissertation discusses the history of worldview as a concept in Christian thought, how the Christian apologetic task has taken on worldview as its purview with consideration of recent scholarship regarding worldview analysis and

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<sup>59</sup>James F. Sennett, “Hume’s Stopper and the Natural Theology Project,” in *In Defense of Natural Theology: A Post-Humean Assessment*, ed. James F. Sennett and Douglas Groothuis (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 82.

<sup>60</sup>R. Douglas Geivett, “David Hume and a Cumulative Case Argument,” Sennett and Groothuis, *In Defense of Natural Theology: A Post-Humean Assessment*, 297–99.

recognition of the remarkable contributions of several of its advocates. I include careful consideration of what is meant by worldview within the scope of this apologetic, for as Douglas Wilson warns, “The use of popular words like ‘worldview’ is always dangerous. As words enter into common currency, they can soon cease to be helpful as they become ‘buzzwords’—words that evoke a certain response but still remain nebulous and undefined.”<sup>61</sup>

Chapter 3 considers the use of abductive reasoning—inference to the best explanation—in philosophic discussions generally, and Christian apologetics specifically. It will examine the strengths and weaknesses of this form of logic in the discovery of truth, including a brief consideration of how abductive reasoning fits within the scope of testing worldview truths.

Chapter 4 begins the proper consideration of the philosophic underpinnings for testing the truthfulness of competing worldviews. Certain foundational epistemological theories of truth undergird this apologetic. While much debate has occurred between adherents of the various approaches (pitting one approach against another), what one finds is that together they make a cumulative test for truthfulness that is best able to analyze the truth claims of the various worldviews. While some contemporary apologists such as Ravi Zacharias often dealt with just two of these theories (coherence and correspondence), the third theory of pragmatism also undergirds the basis of these particular tests. Thus, the coherence theory would cause one to test the logical consistency of a worldview claim, the correspondence theory would cause one to test the empirical adequacy of a worldview claim, and finally, the pragmatic theory would cause one to test the livability or experiential relevancy of a worldview claim. Zacharias has

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<sup>61</sup>Douglas Wilson, *The Paideia of God and Other Essays on Education* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 1999), 130-31, quoted in Katherine G. Schultz and James A. Swezey, “A Three-Dimensional Concept of Worldview,” *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 22, no. 3 (2013): 232.



noted that there are rare cases where the pantheistic worldview may seemingly pass these tests and yet still be false. In such cases, he references Norman Geisler as offering additional tests: the undeniability test and the unaffirmability test.<sup>62</sup> This chapter demonstrates how the epistemological theories and the tests that they birth give a strong probability for finding the truth and falsity of worldviews.

Chapter 5 considers the four life questions that give the context within which these tests of truth analyze the various worldviews. How worldviews give their answers within the purview of the origin of life, the meaning of life, morality, and destiny determines if their worldview gives a coherent system that corresponds with reality and is livable. These four questions are very broad, but most of the essential questions about existence in this universe fall within one (or possibly more) of these categories. The chapter will then describe and critique how apologists utilize the tests for truth within the purview of the four basic life questions to analyze the major categories of worldviews. Worldview apologists such as Ravi Zacharias demonstrate how naturalistic humanism, Islam, and Hinduism fail truth standards, while those same tests validate Christian truth claims. Even though those four systems are by no means exhaustive of the plethora of worldviews, it demonstrates how one can use the apologetic to test almost every classification of worldview, be it atheistic, theistic, or pantheistic.

Chapter 6 closes the study of this approach by illustrating how one can practically use the approach in presenting the apologetic. For example, Zacharias teaches that one argues for a proper worldview apologetic through reasoning, but then utilizes the arts to illustrate the truth or falsity of a worldview, which will then hopefully lead to personal discussion between family and friends (explained as people fellowshipping

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<sup>62</sup>Ravi Zacharias, "Establishing a Worldview" (video), Foundations of Apologetics, accessed June 30, 2018, <https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Content/Series/161813?episode=4>.

around the kitchen table during a meal where they discuss the significant issues of life) bringing the worldview analysis home to the heart. Zacharias then suggests some practical considerations when discussing the apologetic with others, including four steps for communication through identification, translation, persuasion, and justification. This chapter answers how this apologetic approach crosses many of the barriers to the task at hand, and then brings the discussion to a close in the hopes that it will spur further conversation and intellectual inquiry.

## CHAPTER 2

### WORLDVIEW AND APOLOGETICS

#### **Introduction**

While many historical apologetic arguments and methods provided useful tools in defense of the faith, often they merely confirmed the high probability of one aspect of belief rather than upheld the Christian faith as an entire system. For example, the various cosmological arguments demonstrated the need for a necessary First Cause, the forms of the teleological argument demonstrated a high probability of a Designer, and the moral arguments demonstrated the existence of a Moral Law Giver. At best, on their own, they led to a general form of theism rather than a singular, sound system that holds together and reflects reality. It is possible that other philosophies or religions are also able to produce strong arguments for certain aspects of their belief systems, so Christianity is not necessarily unique in this. However, solitary arguments for individual beliefs do not demonstrate the truthfulness of the entire system, especially in comparison to other such systems of belief. No doubt one may argue for some aspects of System A, while another may argue for aspects of System B, but that in itself does not demonstrate that System A as a whole is closer to the truth than System B (or any further systems that might exist). Only when one scrutinizes the system in its entirety for veracity can one honestly say that they have strong reasons for holding to the beliefs that they do.

Demonstrating the truthfulness of an entire system rather than merely arguing for individual aspects is where the concept of a belief structure being a worldview fits, and why worldviews are the purview within which to perform the apologetic task. David Noebel explains that the battle for the hearts and minds of humanity happens at the level of worldview—the world’s convictions about politics, ethics, science, and all other areas

of contemporary thought come from worldview. Therefore, having such a life commitment based on truth is of vital importance.<sup>1</sup> J. Mark Bertrand believes that the worldview concept has gained traction in both scholarly debate and popular works for several reasons. First, the notion itself seems self-evident upon reflection. Second, it helps people realize in the ever-raging culture wars that the perspectives of people on the other side of the cultural issues blind them from even considering opposing views—their beliefs being colored by “upbringing, class, ideology, and experience” (i.e., their worldview).<sup>2</sup> Thus, to take away such blindness, and to open eyes to the truths of reality, entails the testing of worldviews and defense of the one worldview that alone encapsulates truth (to a higher degree of probability than others).

However, to defend a worldview and its importance in the apologetic task, one must first understand what the idea of worldview entails. Defining worldview has not been an easy undertaking. Clement Vidal observes that “the term is unfortunately often used without any precise definition behind it.”<sup>3</sup> A. Scott Moreau also notes, “Worldview is one of the most fascinating and frustrating terms used by evangelicals,” and then aptly compares trying to define worldview as like attempting to nail ice cream to a wall.<sup>4</sup> Everyone has a worldview, a way in which they try to make sense of the world, and apologetics seeks to determine what worldview someone has and whether it is true.<sup>5</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup>David Noebel, *The Battle for Truth: Defending the Christian Worldview in the Marketplace of Ideas* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2001), vii.

<sup>2</sup>J. Mark Bertrand, *Rethinking Worldview: Learning to Think, Live, and Speak in This World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 21.

<sup>3</sup>Clement Vidal, “Wat Is Een Wereldbeeld? (What Is a Worldview?),” in *Nieuwheid Denken. De Wetenschappen En Het Creatieve Aspect van de Werkelijkheid*, ed. H. Van Belle and J. Van der Veken (Leuven: Acco, 2008), 1.

<sup>4</sup>A. Scott Moreau, “Paul G. Hiebert’s Legacy of Worldview,” *Trinity Journal* 30, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 223.

<sup>5</sup>William Brown, “Thinking Worldviewishly,” *Cedarville Torch* 26, no. 1

problem is that no single definition incorporates what every scholar, philosopher, theologian, and apologist means when discussing this important concept. Indeed, there are several similarities in definitions, but each definition has its own unique spin. Therefore, to make the statement that worldview is the purview within which the apologetic task occurs necessitates an understanding of where the concept originated and how it fits into academic discussion, how scholars have defined the term, how this work will utilize the term, and how apologists have used the idea in their body of work. This overview and analysis will, in turn, give justification to the claim that apologetics done within the purview of testing the truthfulness of entire worldviews is an effective method.

### **The Birth and Growth of the Worldview Concept**

Although worldviews, as they are, have always existed (in that everyone has had a belief system about reality), reflection on the subject itself is somewhat recent in the history of philosophy, the sciences, and religion. Philosophy birthed the discussion of worldview itself, along with attempts to define the concept. Christian scholarship then borrowed the term and did much to flesh out its realization. Reflection on both its philosophic and religious moorings assists in demonstrating its usefulness in the apologetic task.

#### **Philosophical Roots of Worldview as a Concept**

Most scholars credit Immanuel Kant with being the first to coin the phrase “worldview” (German: *Weltanschauung*) where he utilized it to “accent the power of the perception of the human mind.”<sup>6</sup> In his *Critique of Judgment*, Kant states,

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(Spring 2004): 6.

<sup>6</sup>David K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 58.

If the human mind is nonetheless to be able even to think the given infinite without contradiction, it must have within itself a power that is supersensible, whose idea of a noumenon cannot be intuited but can yet be regarded as the substrate underlying what is mere appearance, namely, our intuition of the world. For only by means of this power and its idea do we, in a pure intellectual estimation of magnitude, comprehend the infinite in the *world of sense* [Weltanschauung] entirely under a concept, even though in a mathematical estimation of magnitude by means of numerical concepts we can never think it in its entirety. Even a power that enables us to think the infinite of supersensible intuition as given (in our intelligible substrate) surpasses any standard of sensibility.<sup>7</sup>

Within the context of his work, Kant spoke of one's sense of perception of the world. As

Ted Cabal explains Kant's use of the term,

The worldview concept came on the philosophical scene through Immanuel Kant's attempt to bolster science in response to Humean skepticism. It is appropriate that Kant coined the term *Weltanschauung*: in him the two mighty concourses of rationalism and empiricism converged and were bridged—and *Weltanschauung* with its optic and cognitive connotations provided a girder for the bridge. . . . In *Weltanschauung* Kant was seeking a comprehensive expression for the event of sight. The worldview is a sensory experience wherein the mind intuits the thing *underlying* the experience, the *Ding as sich*. It is an action whereby the phenomenon (the object as interpreted by the categories of the mind) signifies the noumenon (the inferred but unknowable source of experience). Kant, then, considered the worldview occasion to be more revelatory of the inherent structure of the human mind than of the world thus perceived. *Weltanschauung* in its very first use represented a subjectively conditioned experience.<sup>8</sup>

So, for Kant, a worldview is the view of the world from human sensory perception, from which human reason then arrives at an understanding of the world and where the individual fits within it.<sup>9</sup> Kant may have devised the term (although it never necessarily became an important notion within his philosophy), but it was other philosophers who expanded the concept from his initial usage.

The term gained momentum first in German philosophy, specifically in the

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<sup>7</sup>Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment: Including the First Introduction*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), 111-12. Emphasis mine.

<sup>8</sup>Ted Cabal, "The Worldview Concept as Evangelical Tool" (paper presented at the 48<sup>th</sup> National Conference of the Evangelical Theological Society, Jackson, MS, 1996), 1. Emphasis original.

<sup>9</sup>Michael W. Goheen and Craig G. Bartholomew, *Living at the Crossroads: An Introduction to Christian Worldview* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 11-12.

thought-world of German Idealism and Romanticism.<sup>10</sup> Johann Gottlieb Fichte adopted the term for primarily the same use as Kant, being a form of “the perception of the sensible world,” although for him it was more on the intuitive plane and less on the scientific.<sup>11</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling embraced the term and made changes to the meaning so that it denoted more of a way of apprehending and interpreting the universe.<sup>12</sup> Schelling’s concept of worldview “touched on humanity’s longing to come to terms with the deepest questions of existence and of the nature of the universe,” and his handling of the worldview concept as a “comprehensive and cohesive understanding of the world” was highly influential for the philosophers who followed.<sup>13</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel utilized worldview in seemingly various ways but generally spoke of it as a conceptual framework embedded in both the individual and national consciousness by which one forms a moral outlook on the world giving a practical perspective for moral obligation.<sup>14</sup> Scholars describe Hegel as having added a historical component to the concept, seeing worldview as “the total perception of nature, society and deity that changes according to the evolution of spirit,” thus giving a historical relativity to worldview, but it still has “‘objectivity’ for every epoch, nation and *Volksgeist*.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Albert M. Wolters, “On the Idea of Worldview and Its Relation to Philosophy,” in *Stained Glass: Worldviews and Social Science*, ed. Paul A. Marshall, Sander Griffioen, and Richard J. Mouw (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989), 15. See also Cabal, “The Worldview Concept,” 1.

<sup>11</sup>Naugle, *Worldview*, 60. See also Cabal, “The Worldview Concept,” 1-2.

<sup>12</sup>Naugle, *Worldview*, 60.

<sup>13</sup>Goheen and Bartholomew, *Living at the Crossroads*, 12.

<sup>14</sup>Naugle, *Worldview*, 69-70.

<sup>15</sup>Hjördis Becker, “From Weltanschauung to Livs-Anskuelse: Kierkegaard’s Existential Philosophy,” *Humana.Mente Journal of Philosophical Studies* 18 (2011): 1. Emphasis original.

Wilhelm Dilthey was one of the first to pioneer a systematic treatment of worldview.<sup>16</sup> Some even claim that history could rightly call him the father of the concept of worldview.<sup>17</sup> Michael Ermarth attests that “it was Dilthey who raised the problem of the world-views to a comprehensive theoretical statement. In this area he pioneered and mapped intellectual terrain which was later to be explored by students in many different disciplines. His writings provide full scale treatment of the genesis, articulation, comparison, and development of world-views.”<sup>18</sup> For Dilthey, worldview was an intuition that grew to make sense of the riddle of life—through lived experience (such as expressed through art, religion, or metaphysics) the mind attempts to make sense of existence.<sup>19</sup> From this, a worldview produces a philosophy, and the philosophy gives expression to the worldview.<sup>20</sup> However, this does not necessarily mean that worldviews are “consciously held or explicitly formulated”—they arise from intuition, striving to get beyond mere relativity to conceptual stability, although allowing the freedom to change and reformulate themselves when experience so required it.<sup>21</sup>

Dilthey posited three features common to all worldviews: World picture (Weltbild), evaluation of life (Lebenswürdigung), and the ideals of the conduct of life

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<sup>16</sup>Naugle, *Worldview*, 82.

<sup>17</sup>David Naugle, “Wilhelm Dilthey’s Doctrine of World Views and Its Relationship to Hermeneutics” (seminar paper, University of Texas at Arlington, Spring 1993), 4.

<sup>18</sup>Michael Ermarth, *Wilhelm Dilthey: The Critique of Historical Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 324, as quoted in Naugle, *Worldview*, 82.

<sup>19</sup>Naugle, “Wilhelm Dilthey’s Doctrine of World Views,” 4-5. Naugle, *Worldview*, 83-84. James W. Sire, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), 27.

<sup>20</sup>Wolters, “On the Idea of Worldview,” 16.

<sup>21</sup>Cabal, “The Worldview Concept,” 4. See also Naugle, “Wilhelm Dilthey’s Doctrine of World Views,” 10.



(Lebensführung). These three components “which correspond to the mental capacities of thinking, feeling, and willing, come together in a unified fashion under the dominance of any one of the three and form the structure of a world view.”<sup>22</sup> Ermarth succinctly summarizes Dilthey’s notion of a worldview:

By virtue of the selective yet synthetic nature of consciousness, each individual gradually acquires a particular but comprehensive interpretation of his life in relation to the world, which Dilthey terms "world view." This world view is a combination of reflective, conscious awareness and pre-reflective interests and practical concerns. It relates one's own inner awareness of the world at large. The world view is a meaning-structure which gives coherence to the individual's ongoing experience. It is a synthesis of the basic and recurring "lived relations" and vital coherences which the person finds himself in. It provides consistency, integration, and stability in the face of the constant influx of new experiences. The world view, like the lived experience it synthesizes, is not simply the result of cognitive thinking, but of willing and feeling as well. All the capacities of mind are brought together in a functional coherence—though Dilthey came to hold that one capacity tends to predominate, giving direction to the others.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, worldviews for Dilthey are expressions of what is and what can be—conceptions of reality built from lived experiences. Worldviews would conflict as each expression of reality considered itself the only correct interpretation, but to avoid the clash of worldviews one could “affirm their relativity without denying their validity.”<sup>24</sup>

These early worldview philosophers offered differing views on whether a worldview was something unique to the individual, or if it was something shared by a group or culture. For Kant, there was “one set of determining categories for all rational minds, making a single basic view of the world possible.”<sup>25</sup> However, for other philosophers, different people had different consciousness with various internal and external factors that shaped worldview. Hegel saw worldview as a shared framework

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<sup>22</sup>Naugle, “Wilhelm Dilthey’s Doctrine of World Views,” 9.

<sup>23</sup>Ermarth, *Wilhelm Dilthey*, 119, as quoted in Naugle, “Wilhelm Dilthey’s Doctrine of World Views,” 10.

<sup>24</sup>Naugle, “Wilhelm Dilthey’s Doctrine of World Views,” 11.

<sup>25</sup>Naugle, *Worldview*, 69.

within a nation during a particular period that influences the individual; thus the individuals living at a specific time in a specific society shared this worldview concurrently.<sup>26</sup> There were also noted differences between Kant and Dilthey. Michael Goheen and Craig Bartholomew observe,

Whereas Kant had believed that one worldview could be shared by all people (since all share in the human faculty of reason), Dilthey argued that (since, in his view, human understanding is profoundly conditioned by the individual's particular place and time in history) different worldviews are bound to arise from differing historical circumstances. He believed that all worldviews are but partial expressions of the universe and thus inevitably will clash with each other.<sup>27</sup>

It is not that Dilthey denied that individuals possessed worldviews, but he “primarily used the concept to denote the conceptions of reality that are shared and held communally during major historical epochs.”<sup>28</sup> Dilthey also did not believe that worldviews dealt with mere abstractness. Whereas someone like Wilhelm Windelband “argues that all people implicitly appeal to universal values, thus implying that values have a metaphysical anchoring . . . or a supersensible reality in God,” Dilthey instead “argued that thought is historically relative and is grounded in evolutionary naturalism.”<sup>29</sup>

Entering the twentieth century, not all philosophers saw worldview as a positive concept. Edmund Husserl considered worldview philosophy, along with naturalism and historicism, as a threat to philosophy proper (the foundation of all sciences) due to what he viewed as its lethal epistemic relativism.<sup>30</sup> Still, in railing against worldview philosophy, Husserl granted the academic world his own characterization of the worldview concept. For Husserl, worldview philosophy “gives in

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<sup>26</sup>Naugle, *Worldview*, 71.

<sup>27</sup>Goheen and Bartholomew, *Living at the Crossroads*, 13.

<sup>28</sup>Naugle, “Wilhelm Dilthey’s Doctrine of World Views,” 11.

<sup>29</sup>Cabal, “The Worldview Concept,” 3.

<sup>30</sup>Naugle, *Worldview*, 110.

the great systems the relatively most perfect answer to the riddles of life and the world, namely that achieves in the best way possible the solution and satisfactory clarification of the theoretical, axiological, practical inconsistencies of life, that experience, wisdom, and mere world- and life-view are able to overcome only incompletely.”<sup>31</sup> Husserl did not see worldview as something an individual developed and held. He states,

Worldview in this determinate sense, though one that includes a variety of types and valuational gradations, is—and this need not be further elaborated—no mere achievement of an isolated personality, which would be an abstraction anyway; the personality belongs to a cultural community and an age, and it makes good sense in relation to its most pronounced forms to speak of the culture and worldview not only of a particular individual but also of the age.<sup>32</sup>

For Husserl, worldview needed to step aside to make way for the rigorous science of true philosophy.

Karl Jaspers perceived worldview as a mental frame of reference that has a subjective side (attitudes) emanating from mental patterns formed in experiencing existence, as well as an objective side (world pictures) which is the developed world of objects.<sup>33</sup> It is a “natural (not explicitly chosen) attitude realized in life-experience and typical for a certain reference-set (a time, place, nation, subgroup).”<sup>34</sup> A person forms a mental picture as their attitudes encounter the world, constituting a worldview.<sup>35</sup> Some see this as a nearly postmodern take on the concept of worldview since Jaspers did not seek absolute objective knowledge, nor did he ask “questions about the objective or

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<sup>31</sup>Edmund Husserl, “Philosophy as Rigorous Science,” in *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy II*, ed. Burt Hopkins and Steven Crowell, trans. Marcus Brainard, vol. 2 (London: Routledge, 2002), 285.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Naugle, *Worldview*, 121.

<sup>34</sup>Steven Goldman, “The Psychology of Worldviews: Jaspers/Heidegger,” *Presencing EPIS* 1, no. 1 (2012): 32.

<sup>35</sup>Naugle, *Worldview*, 121.

metaphysical correctness of worldview contents because worldviews have their foundation in ‘the reality of the mind.’”<sup>36</sup> Thus, for Jaspers, worldviews were human psychological formations with no necessary correlation to external reality.

Martin Heidegger strongly contrasted what he saw to be the relativism of the concept of worldview with the more rigorous scientific undertaking of philosophy.<sup>37</sup> In contrasting his conception of philosophy with the ideas of worldview that permeated philosophic thought at the time, Heidegger conceived worldview not just as theoretical knowledge, but as conceptions and interpretations of natural things born from human experience.<sup>38</sup> Still, he opposed worldview both as a method and content since he believed these limited views inhibit an encounter with being: “He seeks a recovery of being, but the depiction of the world in objectivist terms as a picture blocks this perception.”<sup>39</sup> Worldview seemed to get in the way of Heidegger’s purpose of philosophy.

Ludwig Wittgenstein rejected worldview as a residual of Cartesian foundationalism, “for each and every one of them pretends to what is impossible—an intellectual grasp of reality as it really is.”<sup>40</sup> He offered instead a world picture (Weltbild) that is akin to worldview as previously conceived. World pictures form one’s conception of the world and its character as inherited by one’s life-context. They give a narrative that function as a kind of governing mythology that are promulgated rhetorically and accepted by faith.<sup>41</sup> As Sire indicates, world picture and worldview are seemingly synonymous. If

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<sup>36</sup>Cabal, “The Worldview Concept,” 5.

<sup>37</sup>Naugle, *Worldview*, 128.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 136-37.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>40</sup>Sire, *Naming the Elephant*, 29.

<sup>41</sup>Naugle, *Worldview*, 158-61

one was to give voice to Wittgenstein's cryptic and obscure ideas: "A worldview is a way of thinking about reality that rejects the notion that one can have 'knowledge' of objective reality (that is, know any 'truth' about any nonlinguistic reality) and thus limits knowable reality to the language one finds useful in getting what one wants."<sup>42</sup>

Although the philosophers discussed above are by no means the sole progenitors of the philosophical birth and growth of the concept of worldview, they are representative of the critical times and thoughts of its development. Philosophy gave birth to the recognition of worldview and gave its scholarly usage much of its form, yet one could say it outgrew its original intention. Although connected, it is right to consider worldview as different from philosophy. Philosophies themselves are worldviews, so one could say that worldviews give explanation and expression to a philosophy. However, worldviews give expression to much more than philosophical systems, but also other forms of systematic thought. Tawa Anderson, W. Michael Clark, and David Naugle recognize that other German thinkers such as Ranke (history), Wagner (music), and von Humboldt (physics) applied the worldview concept to their disciplines as well.<sup>43</sup> Not long after, Christian theology adopted and embraced the idea of worldview and used it for its unique purposes, expanding its definition and reach. This, in a sense, opened the door and blazed the trail for its use in apologetics.

### **The Christian Expansion of the Worldview Concept**

Christian thinkers and academics were some of the first to appropriate the concept of worldview and expand its use within their system of thought. Although based

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<sup>42</sup>Sire, *Naming the Elephant*, 30.

<sup>43</sup>Tawa J. Anderson, W. Michael Clark, and David K. Naugle, *An Introduction to Christian Worldview: Pursuing God's Perspective in a Pluralistic World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017), 9.

on what had come before within philosophic thinking, Christian scholars and theologians brought their own nuance to the concept which would then compare systems of thought for truthfulness. Although this work expands on the apologetic value, it is imperative to consider the Christian use and definition of the worldview concept to acquire an understanding on how worldview is the purview within which truth-testing can transpire.

One might consider Søren Kierkegaard as a progenitor to the Christian procurement of worldview thinking. Like previous philosophers, he noted a difference between philosophy and worldview, “arguing that whereas philosophy is an objective system of thought (held, as it were, at arm’s length), worldview is a set of beliefs held so closely by an individual that it is appropriate to speak of living within or owning one’s worldview.”<sup>44</sup> Kierkegaard coined a closely related term: life-view. For Kierkegaard,

A life-view . . . is more than an aggregate, a sum-total of propositions affirmed in their abstract impartiality; it is more than experience, which as such is always atomistic, for it (a life-view) is the transubstantiation of experience, it is hard-won certainty in itself, unshakable by any experience, whether it has merely oriented itself in all the circumstances of the world (a merely human standpoint, Stoicism, for example), which thereby holds back from being touched by any deeper experience—or whether in its direction toward heaven (the religious) it has found in that the central focus, both for its heavenly and earthly existence, has gained the true Christian assurance.<sup>45</sup>

Life-view played a crucial role in his existential thought. As Vincent McCarthy explains,

Life-view emphasizes the duty and importance of the individual to understand himself both his “premises” and his “conclusions,” his conditionality and his freedom. Each man must answer for himself about the meaning of life, and thus he cannot take his cue from the spirit of the age which will all too readily answer on his behalf. In addition, life-view, as philosophy of life, challenges established, academic philosophy which proceeds exclusively from thought. The new philosophy which Kierkegaard suggests by his emphasis on life-view and his definition of it is no longer detached thought but reflection upon the meaning of experience and then its articulation in a coherent view. Life-view is not to be the sole aspect of new philosophizing, but will instead properly take its place at the center of the search for

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<sup>44</sup>Goheen and Bartholomew, *Living at the Crossroads*, 12.

<sup>45</sup>Søren Kierkegaard, “Af En Endu Levendes Papirer,” 1838, as translated by Albert M. Wolters, “‘Weltanschauung’ in the History of Ideas: Preliminary Notes,” n.d., 6-8, as quoted in Cabal, “The Worldview Concept,” 6.

wisdom, which philosophy once claimed to be.<sup>46</sup>

Although seemingly synonymous, some see the distinction as important. For example, Hjørdis Becker thinks the distinctiveness of life-view is that it “translates the *epistemological* concept of German Idealism into an *existential* concept with *ethical* dimensions.”<sup>47</sup>

Scholarship has chiefly credited James Orr and Abraham Kuyper with appropriating worldview thought for Christian consideration, reaching “for the concept of worldview in response to the post-Enlightenment culture that was coming to dominate the West.”<sup>48</sup> For Orr,

The word “Weltanschauung,” [is] sometimes interchanged with another compound of the same signification, “Weltansicht.” Both words mean literally “view of the world,” but whereas the phrase in English is limited by associations which connect it predominately with physical nature, in German the word is not thus limited, but has almost the force of a technical term, denoting the widest view which the mind can take of things in the effort to grasp them together as a whole from the standpoint of some particular philosophy or theology. To speak, therefore, of a “Christian view of the world” implies that Christianity also has its highest point of view, and its view of life connected therewith, and that this, when developed, constitutes an ordered whole.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Vincent A. McCarthy, *The Phenomenology of Moods in Kierkegaard* (Boston: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978), 136-37, as quoted in Naugle, *Worldview*, 74.

<sup>47</sup>Becker, “From Weltanschauung to Livs-Anskuelse,” 2. Emphasis original.

<sup>48</sup>Goheen and Bartholomew, *Living at the Crossroads*, 14. Although Orr and Kuyper are generally given credit for the Christian embrace of the worldview concept, Eilert Herms believes the trend first emerged among liberal theologians: “In the history of the problem of worldview within Protestant theology, the positions of Schleiermacher and Ritschl actually constitute the base point and a turning point. Schleiermacher was the very first theology [*sic*] who used the concept of worldview in a theoretically concise setting. And Ritschl then elevated the concept to a central instrument of theological theory construction.” Eilert Herms, “‘Weltanschauung’ bei Friedrich Schleiermacher und Albrecht Ritschl,” in *Theorie Fur Die Praxis* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1982), 123, quoted in and translated by Clifford Blake Anderson, “Jesus and the ‘Christian Worldview’: A Comparative Analysis of Abraham Kuyper and Karl Barth,” *Cultural Encounters* 2, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 67.

<sup>49</sup>James Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World: As Centring in the Incarnation*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1907), 3. As Oliphint explains, Orr’s interest in world view was a result of his expertise in German theology and philosophy. The more he read of the German literature, the more he encountered the word *Weltanschauung* and related concepts. What struck him, as a pastor and

Although he recognized that the use of the term and concept of worldview had just become common in the prior two or three decades of his writing this work, he also recognized that worldview is as old as thought itself:

The thing itself [i.e., worldview] is as old as the dawn of reflection, and is found in a cruder or more advanced form in every religion and philosophy with any pretensions to a historical character. The simplest form in which we meet with it is in the rude, tentative efforts at a general explanation of things in the cosmogonies and theogonies of most ancient religions, the mythological character of which need not blind us to the rational motive which operates in them. With the growth of philosophy, a new type of world-view is developed—that which attempts to explain the universe as a system by the help of some general principle or principles (water, air, number, etc.), accompanied by the use of terms which imply the conception of an All or Whole of things.<sup>50</sup>

Orr went on to explain that he saw two causes that lead to the formation of worldviews. The first is speculative or theoretical in that the mind attempts to bring unity to the fragmented facts and information with which it interacts, endeavoring to form a general law or positive theory which gives answers to the great questions of life. The second cause is a practical motive wherein someone desires to determine his or her place in the world and by what principles they ought to conduct themselves.<sup>51</sup> Then if someone is to hold onto a worldview, it must cohere with the universe, for the universe is one and has one set of laws that holds it together. So, if one embraces Christianity, although not a scientific system, one can reconcile it with evident and established results in science, and although not a philosophy per se, its conclusions are in harmony with sound reason.

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apologist, was just how neatly Christianity fit into the concerns of those who were attempting to develop a conceptual worldview. Because Christianity, as truth, is a coherent system of truth, it (and Orr will argue, it alone) can address the concerns that are a part of world view thinking. Orr was convinced that nothing less than the comprehensive truth of Christianity could answer the attacks and critiques that were prevalent in his day.

K. Scott Oliphint, “The Reformed World View,” in *A Christian Worldview: Essays from a Reformed Perspective*, ed. C. N. Willborn (Taylors, SC: Presbyterian Press, 2008), 6. Emphasis original.

<sup>50</sup>Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World*, 5.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, 6-7.



Christianity, along with other worldviews, gives account for and gives interpretations to the facts, binding them together to give voice to an ultimate principle.<sup>52</sup>

Although Abraham Kuyper was familiar with the concept of worldview early in his career, any hint of the concept in his work was “loose and undefined, and occurred in a way that was more incidental than purposeful.”<sup>53</sup> Peter Heslam notes three elements in Kuyper’s early thoughts that contributed to his embrace of the worldview concept: the need for unity and coherency in thought, the need for a single principle, and the need for an alternative system to Paganism and Modernism.<sup>54</sup> It was not until the Stone Lectures at Princeton Seminary that Kuyper would fully incorporate worldview into his body of work.<sup>55</sup> After having interacted with Orr’s work, Kuyper used the lectures to establish Calvinism as a complete belief system that related to the whole of life. Calling it the synonymous “life system,” Kuyper saw the times he lived in as a struggle between competing systems of thought—especially modernism against Calvinism.<sup>56</sup> Kuyper did not spend much time defining what he meant by life system other than implying that it is an insight into the universe which deals with three fundamental relations of all human life: man’s relation to God, man’s relation to man, and man’s relation to the world.<sup>57</sup> He

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<sup>52</sup>Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World*, 8-9.

<sup>53</sup>Peter Heslam, *Creating a Christian Worldview: Abraham Kuyper’s Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 90.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>55</sup>William Edgar and K. Scott Oliphint, eds., *Christian Apologetics Past and Present: A Primary Source Reader*, vol. 2, *From 1500*. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2011), 334.

<sup>56</sup>Abraham Kuyper, *Calvinism: Six Lectures Delivered in the Theological Seminary at Princeton* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1899), 3-4. This work is often commonly referred to as *Lectures on Calvinism*.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, 16. In noting that Christian scholarship has followed Kuyper in focusing on worldview, Richard J. Mouw writes, “This focus on worldview has been our way of following Kuyper’s lead in insisting that our cultural involvements, including our scholarly pursuits, have to be consciously guided by our understanding of our place in the

notes that he borrowed concepts from Orr, mentioning Orr observes that

the German technical term *Weltanschauung* has no precise equivalent in English. [Orr] therefore used the literal translation *view of the world*, notwithstanding this phrase in English is limited by associations, which connect it predominately with *physical* nature. For this reason . . . one explicit phrase: *life and world view* seems to be preferable. My American friends however told me that the shorter phrase: *life system*, on the other side of the ocean, is often used in the same sense. So lecturing before an American public . . . I interchanged alternately both phrases, of *life-system* and *life and world view* in accordance with the special meaning predominating in my argumentation.<sup>58</sup>

For Kuyper, from this standpoint, it was Calvinism that was “an all-embracing life-system, rather than a narrowly defined set of doctrines or a particular ecclesiology.”<sup>59</sup>

Calvinism was an alternative life system that was as equally valid as any other (sharing in many of the same fundamental characteristics as other life-systems) and was functional as a culture-shaping force.<sup>60</sup>

James D. Bratt notes that Kuyper readily welcomed the worldview concept into his arsenal for several reasons. First, worldview was a recognition that both groups and individuals “operated out of a cognitive framework that was itself not established by reason or science.” Second, the concept of worldview promised “coherence in a rapidly

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larger scheme of things.” Richard J. Mouw, *Abraham Kuyper: A Short and Personal Introduction* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2011), 90.

<sup>58</sup>Kuyper, *Calvinism*, 3n1. Emphasis original. No matter the term that Kuyper used, “Kuyper maintained that Christians must have a comprehensive view of all of life from a Scriptural perspective, which is the basis for their choices and informs all their actions. It deals with the most fundamental issues of life: *Where did we come from? Why are we here? Where are we going? How do we get there?* . . . A biblical worldview is necessarily antithetical to all competing views in every domain of life.” James Edward McGoldrick, “Claiming Every Inch: The Worldview of Abraham Kuyper,” in *A Christian Worldview: Essays from a Reformed Perspective*, ed. C. N. Willborn (Taylors, SC: Presbyterian Press, 2008), 32. Emphasis original.

<sup>59</sup>Heslam, *Creating a Christian Worldview*, 88. As Wolters further explains, for Kuyper Calvinism was “a complete worldview with implications for all of life, implications which must be worked out and applied in such areas as politics, art, and scholarship.” Wolters, “On the Idea of Worldview,” 20.

<sup>60</sup>Wolters, “On the Idea of Worldview,” 20.

expanding universe of knowledge, rendering an ordered whole out of what otherwise would remain a jumble of data.” Third, since worldviews embrace the whole world it “thus established a mandate for critical Christian comprehensiveness.” Finally, the concept of worldview was highly democratic in that “it assumed a pluralistic situation, was designed for popular reception, and sought to inspire action.”<sup>61</sup> In his lectures, then, Kuyper argues that worldview affects how humans interact with the gambit of human endeavors, including the crucial subjects of religion, politics, science, and art.<sup>62</sup>

Kuyper’s thought had a significant influence on fellow Dutch Herman Dooyeweerd. In his early works, Dooyeweerd agreed that worldviews undergird one’s life and thought. Later in life he argued that spiritual and religious factors played a more significant role in shaping someone’s beliefs and interpretations of the world than did the abstract concept of worldview.<sup>63</sup> For Dooyeweerd, religion is the deepest part of the heart from which someone interprets reality, while philosophy and worldview are more cognitive. Although philosophy and worldview have some commonalities, worldview is one’s engagement in life, while philosophy is theoretical and detached from life.<sup>64</sup> Dooyeweerd gives an extensive explanation of the difference between worldview and philosophy:

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<sup>61</sup>James D. Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper: Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), 207-8.

<sup>62</sup>In his theological work on art, David A. Covington rightly notes (in what one could consider a very worldview-ish statement) that “a person does not live in a sequence of separate compartments,” but he later wrote that “Abraham Kuyper invokes Calvin in arguing for art as an independent cultural category, free of everything, even of Christian doctrine.” That would appear to go against Kuyper’s whole point that the Calvinistic worldview speaks into every aspect of a Christian’s life—not living in separate compartments. David A. Covington, *A Redemptive Theology of Art: Restoring Godly Aesthetics to Doctrine and Culture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 41, 102.

<sup>63</sup>Naugle, *Worldview*, 25-26.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, 29.

The concept “life- and world-view” is raised above the level of vague representations burdened either with resentment or with exaggerated veneration only if it is understood in the sense that is necessarily inherent in it *as a view of totality*. . . . It is not, as such, of a theoretical character. Its view of totality is not the *theoretical*, but rather the *pretheoretical*. It does not conceive reality in its abstracted modal aspects of meaning, but rather in typical structures of individuality which are not analyzed in a theoretical way. It is not restricted to a special category of “philosophic thinkers,” but applies to everybody, the simplest included. . . . Therefore philosophy and a life- and world-view are *in the root* absolutely united with each other, even though they may not be identified. Philosophy cannot take the place of a life- and world-view, nor the reverse, for the *task* of each of the two is different. They must rather understand each other mutually from their common religious root. Yet, to be sure, philosophy has to give a theoretical account of a life- and world-view.<sup>65</sup>

Although different, the two concepts work together in that philosophy can theoretically analyze worldview and its values, describing and clarifying what precisely a worldview attempts to convey.<sup>66</sup> Still, it is a worldview that gives direction for one’s existence as it gives voice to that which rises within the heart and unifies that which is disjointed in thought and life.

By the end of the twentieth century the use of worldview within Christian scholarship had strong roots and became a norm in dealing with various areas of academia (be it theology, apologetics, or missions). Therefore, scholarship turned toward analyzing the idea of worldview itself. Several scholars examined the concept and gave form to what religion and philosophy meant by the term “worldview.” Since the term or its equivalents came into such common usage, it was necessary to define through words what such an abstract concept entailed.

Arthur Holmes observes that to find the distinctiveness of thought and characteristics, one must study both the unifying perspectives of an entire tradition and the variables shaping particular formulations of a worldview. Worldviews begin at the

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<sup>65</sup>Herman Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, trans. David H. Freeman and William S. Young, vol. 1 of *The Necessary Presuppositions of Philosophy* (Jordan Station, ON: Paideia Press, 1984), 127-28. Emphasis original.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, 133.

pre-philosophical level, “without either systematic planning or theoretical intentions with the beliefs and attitudes and values on which people act.”<sup>67</sup> There are unanalyzed, underlying beliefs that, upon reflection, shape and develop the view one takes. This pre-philosophical level “unifies and guides thought and action and defines the highest good” into a singular unifying perspective.<sup>68</sup> A worldview entails how this unifying perspective guides and interprets different areas of reality, be it theology, philosophy, science, economic, political, social, among others. Holmes emphasizes that just because a worldview embodies beliefs and values (and sometimes stories) does not mean that it is purely subjective (such as in pluralism and relativism). The charge of subjectivism is a false charge since one may objectively demonstrate (through proofs, evidence, and arguments) the truthfulness of many beliefs and values. Therefore, worldviews themselves are demonstrable as true or false (although this does not deny that there is much in a worldview that is pre-philosophical and thereby beyond proof).<sup>69</sup>

Ronald Nash describes a worldview as a “conceptual scheme by which we consciously or unconsciously place or fit everything we believe and by which we interpret and judge reality.”<sup>70</sup> Worldview contains the answers a person has for the primary question in life and is the pattern by which they arrange their beliefs.<sup>71</sup> Nash believes that a well-rounded worldview holds beliefs in five significant areas: God,

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<sup>67</sup>Arthur F. Holmes, *Contours of a World View* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 1983), 31-32.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, 45-49.

<sup>70</sup>Ronald H. Nash, *Worldviews in Conflict: Choosing Christianity in a World of Ideas* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 16.

<sup>71</sup>Ronald H. Nash, *Life's Ultimate Questions: An Introduction to Philosophy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), 13.

metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and anthropology.<sup>72</sup> He importantly notes that just because a group of people adheres to the same worldview does not mean that they will agree on the interpretation and judgment of every single issue of life. Where there is a disagreement between two adherents to a worldview, it behooves them to demonstrate how their view is more consistent with the basic tenets of their worldview as opposed to any other view.<sup>73</sup> He also emphasizes the importance of presuppositions—assumed beliefs that one holds without the support of arguments or evidence. He likens them to train tracks that have no switches—they determine the direction and destination of the person who holds to them.<sup>74</sup>

David Naugle, who provides the seminal work on the worldview concept philosophically and religiously, rightfully notes that a theory or definition of worldview itself is a function of the worldview of the one doing the defining.<sup>75</sup> There is no neutral ground from which to work with the idea. However, upon reflecting on how the concept itself has developed over time, Naugle creates his definition:

A worldview, then, is a semiotic system of narrative signs that creates the definitive symbolic universe which is responsible in the main for the shape of a variety of life-determining, human practices. It creates the channels in which the waters of reason flow. It establishes the horizons of an interpreter's point of view by which texts of all types are understood. It is that mental medium by which the world is known. The human heart is its home, and it provides a home for the human heart.<sup>76</sup>

For Naugle, worldviews are systems of signs and symbols (be they words or otherwise) occupying the human heart that sets the course for belief and practice. The answers to the significant questions of life that these signs represent are not only expressed in a

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<sup>72</sup>Nash, *Worldviews in Conflict*, 26; Nash, *Life's Ultimate Questions*, 14-17.

<sup>73</sup>Nash, *Life's Ultimate Questions*, 17.

<sup>74</sup>Nash, *Life's Ultimate Questions*, 20; Nash, *Worldviews in Conflict*, 21-23.

<sup>75</sup>Naugle, *Worldview*, 253.

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, 329-30.

proposition, but also through narrative. As he intimates, stories have the power to establish a context for life.<sup>77</sup> Worldview is a semiotic conceptualization of reality, giving shape and content to human consciousness, through which one interprets the nature of things, answering the most profound questions of life and existence, that one might grasp some semblance of understanding of the human condition.<sup>78</sup>

James Sire also produced a formative work regarding worldview. He first intuits that worldviews have a pre-theoretical or presuppositional dimension that then underlies and influences theoretical thought and practical action.<sup>79</sup> There are assumptions a person holds consciously or unconsciously from which a worldview flows. Sire observes that neither a worldview nor any aspect of it need be at the conscious level. A worldview need not answer every possible question about life that someone may raise—a person may not grasp that they have a worldview or be able to articulate it, yet whatever

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<sup>77</sup>Naugle, *Worldview*, 297.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*, 345.

<sup>79</sup>Sire, *Naming the Elephant*, 109. Craig G. Bartholomew further elaborates by explaining,

A worldview is distinct from philosophy, because a worldview is *pretheoretical*. By pretheoretical we mean that it is not a logical, systematic theory, as is found in traditional philosophy. Beliefs are distinct from opinions or feelings because they make a cognitive claim. They are also committed in the sense that they are not just opinions or hypotheses. The beliefs constituting a worldview are also basic because they deal with matters of ultimate significance, such as what life is all about, what happens at death, the problem of evil, and so on and so forth.

Craig G. Bartholomew, *Contours of the Kuyperian Tradition: A Systematic Introduction* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017), 126. Emphasis original. Anderson, Clark, and Naugle also concur: “Worldviews are pretheoretical in nature; they develop prior to or devoid of conscious reflection and rational deliberation.” Anderson, Clark, and Naugle, *An Introduction to Christian Worldview*, 14. Albert M. Wolters calls it “prescientific,” stating, “A worldview is a matter of the shared everyday experience of humankind, an inescapable component of all human knowing, and as such it is nonscientific, or rather (since scientific knowing is always dependent on the intuitive knowing of our everyday experience) *prescientific*, in nature. It belongs to an order of cognition more basic than that of science or theory.” Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 10. Emphasis original.

is relevant to a person's life situation is lived out from their worldview.<sup>80</sup> He makes the critical note that worldviews do not remain an intellectual category nor are they merely an interpretation of the universe. Instead, they are more of an orientation of the soul or spirit and inextricably tied to lived experience and behavior, guiding one's decisions.<sup>81</sup> Sire also notes that narratives and stories often transmit a worldview, and these sets of stories come together to tell one master story—a metanarrative by which people interpret the world around them.<sup>82</sup> His analysis leads to an all-inclusive definition:

A worldview is a 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 subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being.”<sup>83</sup>

Missiologist anthropologist Paul G. Hiebert looks at worldview from the dimension of the community, defining it as the “fundamental cognitive, affective, and evaluative presuppositions a group of people make about the nature of things, and which they use to order their lives;” it is what “people in a community take as given realities,

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<sup>80</sup>Sire, *Naming the Elephant*, 112.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 117. As Schultz and Swezey comment on Sire's conception of worldview, “Sire's revised definition of worldview and its emphasis on behavior and the heart are critical supports for the need to explore worldview in Christian education in a new way. Sire's main point is that worldview is not strictly about information, beliefs, or knowledge, but must entail ‘heart-orientation’ and behavior as well.” Katherine G. Schultz and James A. Swezey, “A Three-Dimensional Concept of Worldview,” *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 22, no. 3 (2013), 231. They then explain that by heart they mean the religious, intellectual, affective, and volitional center of a person. Ibid., 237. A. Steven Evans agrees as he writes that “life transformation takes place at the heart level. To change the heart is to change worldview. To change worldview is to change culture.” A. Steven Evans, “Matters of the Heart: Orality, Story and Cultural Transformation—The Critical Role of Storytelling in Affecting Worldview,” *Missiology: An International Review* 38, no. 2 (April 2010): 186. Thus heart, as well as mind, is essential in worldview considerations.

<sup>82</sup>Sire, *Naming the Elephant*, 119-20.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 141.



the maps they have of reality that they use for living.”<sup>84</sup> He distinguishes two dimensions: a cognitive dimension that organizes one’s assumptions and ideas about the nature of the universe, and an affective dimension where one experiences, exhibits, values, and acts on emotions.<sup>85</sup> From this foundation Hiebert identifies six worldview functions: (1) worldviews are the plausibility structures that provide answers to life’s ultimate questions, (2) worldviews provide emotional security, (3) worldviews validate cultural norms used to evaluate experiences and choose courses of action, (4) worldviews help integrate culture, (5) worldviews monitor culture change, and (6) worldviews provide psychological reassurance that the world indeed is as the person sees it.<sup>86</sup>

Several other scholars help sharpen our understanding of the worldview concept. Norm Geisler and William Watkins elucidate that a worldview attempts to explain all of reality—all the relationships between things and events in the whole of reality—rather than just one or a few aspects of it.<sup>87</sup> Worldview integrates all the parts into a meaningful whole. William Brown writes that a worldview entails three crucial aspects: an explanation of the world, an interpretation of the world, and an application of this view toward life.<sup>88</sup> J. Mark Bertrand observes that in some sense people choose their

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<sup>84</sup>Paul G. Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), loc. 271-73, Kindle.

<sup>85</sup>Dan Story, *Christianity on the Offense: Responding to the Beliefs and Assumptions of Spiritual Seekers* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1998), 227.

<sup>86</sup>Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews*, loc. 541-65, Kindle.

<sup>87</sup>Norman L. Geisler and William D. Watkins, *Worlds Apart: A Handbook on World Views*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 11.

<sup>88</sup>Brown, “Thinking Worldviewishly,” 6. The practical/applicational aspect of worldview is quite important, for as Kenneth Samples explains, “[W]orldviews shape, influence and generally direct a person’s life, because people behave as they believe, their worldviews guide their thoughts, attitudes, values, interpretations, perspectives, decisions, and actions.” Kenneth Richard Samples, *A World of Difference: Putting Christian Truth-Claims to the Worldview Test* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 21. Lars Haikola emphasizes that a worldview is not only a way to understand the world and

worldview, where one's choices shape subsequent approaches to interpretation, and yet in another sense, a worldview chooses a person, where life circumstances form the range within which someone operates.<sup>89</sup> Mark L. Ward suggests that worldviews include three elements: first, a worldview contains a head-heart system of fundamental beliefs, assumptions, and values; second, a worldview tells a big story about the world; and third, a worldview produces action.<sup>90</sup> Graham Cole distinguishes between two ways of looking at the worldview concept: the existential worldview focuses on real questions about existence, while the encyclopedic worldview attempts to give an account of all that comes before the human consciousness.<sup>91</sup> Arlie J. Hoover notes that all worldviews transcend empirical reality; therefore all worldviews entail some form of faith—still based on evidence, but just not perfect evidence.<sup>92</sup>

As with philosophy, there is some debate within Christian scholarship over whether worldview is unique to the individual, the collective, or both. Brian J. Walsh and J. Richard Middleton observe that while the individual holds a worldview, they are never alone in having a worldview. Worldviews are shared and communal and are the roots of a culture that orient a people in certain beliefs.<sup>93</sup> W. T. Jones notes that worldviews have

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a pattern for interpretations, but it is also a pattern for action. Lars Haikola, "Science, Religion and the Need for a World-View," *HTS Theologese Studies/Theological Studies* 59, no. 3 (2003): 767.

<sup>89</sup>Bertrand, *Rethinking Worldview*, 29-30.

<sup>90</sup>Mark L. Ward, Jr., et al., *Biblical Worldview: Creation, Fall, Redemption* (Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 2016), 6-15.

<sup>91</sup>Graham A. Cole, *Do Christians Have a Worldview?* (Deerfield, IL: The Christ on Campus Initiative—Carl F. H. Henry Center for Theological Understanding, 2007), 4.

<sup>92</sup>Arlie J. Hoover, *Dear Agnos: A Defense of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), 15-16.

<sup>93</sup>Brian J. Walsh and J. Richard Middleton, *The Transforming Vision: Shaping a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 31-33.

both an individual and a group or societal dimension. He writes that it is possible to talk about the worldview of a group

providing that modes of the individual members of that group or society tend to ground around some mode. The central tendencies of the individual members of the group in question will doubtless differ widely, but they nonetheless fall into a distribution that is characteristic of this society during this time-period and that differs from the distribution for this society during some other time-period or for other societies.<sup>94</sup>

N. T. Wright contends that worldviews “form the grid through which humans, both individually and in social groupings, perceive all of reality.”<sup>95</sup> Although individuals hold a grid for perceiving reality unto themselves, a shared worldview is found where groups of individuals have grids containing numerous points of agreement.

While worldviews can reflect the culture where adherents express them, and culture can be a reflection of the prevailing worldview, I am hesitant to equate a shared worldview solely with culture since some people in the same culture may hold very diverse worldviews (even with certain points of commonalities).<sup>96</sup> One American of European ancestry may be a Christian, while their neighbor of a similar heritage is an atheist, and yet they both culturally hold to the same American ideals (be it the notion of freedom or otherwise). They may share a culture, but they do not share a worldview since their answers to some of life’s most significant questions diverge entirely.<sup>97</sup> Then again,

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<sup>94</sup>W. T. Jones, “World Views: Their Nature and Their Function,” *Current Anthropology* 13, no. 1 (February 1972): 86. His definition of worldview is unique, comprehensive, and helpful to the overall discussion: “The world view of any individual is a set of very wide-range vectors in that individual’s belief space (a) that he learned early in life and that are not readily changed and (b) that have a determinate influence on much of his observable behavior, both verbal and nonverbal, but (c) that he seldom or never verbalizes in the referential mode, though (d) they are constantly conveyed by him in the expressive mode and as latent meanings.” *Ibid.*, 83

<sup>95</sup>N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God 1 (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1992), 32.

<sup>96</sup>See Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews*, loc. 276, Kindle.

<sup>97</sup>While a person has one worldview—one belief structure—Harold Netland

people from different cultures may share a worldview, as is the case of an American Christian and an African Christian—their cultures are entirely different, but the way they view the world and answer life’s major questions may be the same. There are worldview aspects to culture, and I believe that a worldview can shape a culture, and diverse worldviews may hold aspects that make sharing a culture possible, but they are not equal. A group holds a worldview when the individuals share beliefs regarding life’s ultimate questions. A group shares a culture when the individuals are a part of society in which they have a shared distribution of knowledge, ideas, concepts, and symbols.<sup>98</sup> Harold Netland notes that one can speak of a worldview as being true or normative for all people throughout all time, one cannot say the same for culture.<sup>99</sup> Although worldview and culture obviously have overlap, they are not synonymous.

Another interesting aspect of worldview found in more recent scholarship is that a worldview tells a story and one can articulate worldview through that story. Goheen and Bartholomew bring this aspect to the fore when they define worldview as “an articulation of the basic beliefs embedded in a shared grand story that are rooted in a faith commitment and that give shape and direction to the whole of our individual and corporate lives.”<sup>100</sup> Anderson, Clark, and Naugle explain that “the philosophical and religious beliefs of human beings are more commonly shared and passed down through

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indicates that someone can participate in several cultures. Netland gives an example: “A Pakistani Muslim immigrant to the United States might at the same time be part of American culture, second-generation Pakistani immigrant culture, Islamic culture, and the culture of doctoral students at the University of Chicago. Each of these cultural contexts is somewhat distinctive, but there is no difficulty in saying that the same person participates in each of them.” Harold A. Netland, *Christianity & Religious Diversity: Clarifying Christian Commitments in a Globalizing Age* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 37.

<sup>98</sup>Kathleen Carley, “A Theory of Group Stability,” *American Sociological Review* 56, no. 3 (1991): 333.

<sup>99</sup>Netland, *Christianity & Religious Diversity*, 38.

<sup>100</sup>Goheen and Bartholomew, *Living at the Crossroads*, 23.

story, not through a set of philosophical propositions. We are storied creatures, responding more readily to narrative than to doctrine.”<sup>101</sup> N. T. Wright notes that story-telling humans find themselves in a story-laden world and create a story through their observations. When a challenge bears upon someone’s story (that is, that the story’s claims about reality might be mistaken), one can find through further narrative alternative ways of speaking honestly about the world with the use of new or modified stories.

“What this means is that one must constantly subject data to testing and verification so he can spiral-in on the truth.”<sup>102</sup> Oral and written literature as stories serves to reinforce worldview assumptions in seven ways. Evans argues,

1. It provides a basis of common origins and identity;
2. It answers questions about human destiny and what may help or alter it;
3. It reinforces basic assumptions of authority, respect, and rights to land or other material possessions;
4. It clearly pictures who are to be included and who are to be excluded, who are the “we” and who are the “they;”
5. It teaches and reinforces moral values;
6. It serves to illustrate ideal and sub-ideal behavior and the rewards and punishments that go along with either;
7. It serves as encouragement in times of difficulty and uncertainty.<sup>103</sup>

However, story and narrative not only form a worldview, they are also capable of transforming—bringing change both to the individual life and the group.<sup>104</sup> Bertrand suggests that stories can both form a personal history for the individual and create a way for communities to view themselves collectively.<sup>105</sup> Jill Carattini asserts,

The world of belief-systems and worldviews is indeed a complicated playground of stories, storytellers, passions, and allegiances. . . . What makes the interplay of story

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<sup>101</sup>Anderson, Clark, and Naugle, *An Introduction to Christian Worldview*, 14.

<sup>102</sup>J. V. Fesko, “N. T. Wright on Prolegomena,” *Themelios* 31, no. 3 (April 2006): 10.

<sup>103</sup>Evans, “Matters of the Heart, 189-90.”

<sup>104</sup>*Ibid.*, 190.

<sup>105</sup>Bertrand, *Rethinking Worldview*, 101.

most complicated is our inability often to name or even perceive these interacting powers in the first place. That which permeates our surroundings, subconsciously molds our understanding, and continuously informs our vision of reality is not always easy to articulate. . . . These deeply rooted ideologies are challenged only when a different ideology or imagination comes knocking, when a different faith-system comes along and upsets the imagination that powerfully orders our world. . . . Whether Christian, atheist, or Hindu, no one can avoid being in the world. We cannot escape the world's formative stories.<sup>106</sup>

Conceiving worldviews as stories does not negate their truthfulness, for stories are the vessel through which one articulates the truth of a worldview. Smaller stories and narratives flesh out the overall story—the metanarrative that embodies a worldview.

### **A Settled Conception of Worldview**

Having thus walked through the history of the development and definition of the concept leaves the groundwork for defining worldview for the field of apologetics. I consider worldview to be a systematized belief structure and heart orientation held by individuals and shared by groups beginning at a presuppositional level which, consciously or unconsciously, leads to a particular interpretation of reality. Although one may not be able to articulate every facet of his or her beliefs completely, a worldview influences a person's attitudes, choices, and behaviors in interaction with the world in all its aspects. The one who holds this systematic belief structure and heart orientation may not have the capability of demonstrating or proving the truth or falsity of this system and still have some epistemic warrant for believing it. However, one may still hold the system itself up to scrutiny; that is, one can test the claims that one's worldview makes about reality. Therefore, an inquirer has the capacity to prove or disprove the system as a whole. The holder of the systematic belief structure does not always articulate his or her worldview through direct, propositional statements, but at times uses stories and narratives to convey held beliefs; nevertheless, the truths expressed in any of these forms,

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<sup>106</sup>Jill Carattini, "The Unstoppable Story," *Just Thinking Magazine*, May 25, 2017, accessed August 31, 2018, <https://rzim.org/just-thinking/the-unstoppable-story-jt-25-3/>.

and the grand metanarrative to which they point, are testable for truthfulness or falseness.

### **Worldview Apologetics**

Since the scholarly inquiry and use of worldview is a somewhat recent development, the defense of Christianity as a worldview and the scrutinization of other philosophies and religions as worldviews is also recent. There has been a slow development of worldview apologetics beginning with James Orr through modern apologists such as Ravi Zacharias, laying the groundwork for the approach discussed in this work that is now used by several apologists. So, to understand apologetics from the purview of worldview requires understanding what has developed to this point.

#### **James Orr**

James Orr, who introduced worldview to the Christian sphere, recognized that worldview was the domain from which apologetics ought to take place. Since the attacks of modernity in his day were not piecemeal but comprehensive, the work of apologetics ought to be in maintaining veracity or falsity at the level of systematized belief structures—the purview of worldview. Orr writes,

I have deliberately chosen [the subject of worldview] for this very reason, that it enables me to deal with Christianity in its entirety or as a system, instead of dealing with particular aspects or doctrines of it. Both methods have their advantages; but 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 which is rapidly becoming the more urgent. . . . It is the Christian view of things in general 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.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>107</sup>Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World*, 3-4. Interestingly enough, even the epitome of modern anti-Christianity, Friedrich Nietzsche, recognized the importance of Christianity as a complete belief structure for its truth claims: “Christianity is a system, a view of things that is conceived as a connected whole. If you break off a major concept from it . . . you break up the whole as well: there are no necessities left to hold onto anymore.” Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. Richard Polt (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 53.

Thus, Orr explains that whole systems of belief (in his day secular, naturalistic modernity most especially) attacked the Christian faith as an entire system. Therefore, it is precisely at this level where the battle of beliefs takes place. As he later explains his methods (specifically for the lectures which spawned this work, but also for his apologetic approach in general):

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 that 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 endeavour 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. I hope thus to make clear at least the true nature of the issues involved in a comparison of the Christian and “modern” views, and I shall be glad if I can in any way contribute to the elucidation of the former.<sup>108</sup>

For Orr, Christianity alone made sense of the world and stood as an entire system.

The reason that defending Christianity as a worldview was so important to Orr is that he “realized that piecemeal responses to the worldviews of modernity were inadequate; what the time needed was a demonstration that Christianity was in itself a comprehensive vision of the whole of life.”<sup>109</sup> Glen Scorgie explains that, for Orr, the “Christian view is tightly interconnected, and the smallest concession in any area would threaten the entire edifice. The whole thing is vulnerable unless alertly defended at every point.”<sup>110</sup> Moreover, for Orr, Christianity was worth defending because ultimately “it was the coherency of the Christian worldview, its harmony with reason and moral experience, that made it worthwhile.”<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup>Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World*, 16.

<sup>109</sup>Bartholomew, *Contours of the Kuyperian Tradition*, 105.

<sup>110</sup>Glen G. Scorgie, *A Call for Continuity: The Theological Contribution of James Orr* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988), 54.

<sup>111</sup>*Ibid.*, 49.



## Abraham Kuyper

Abraham Kuyper joined Orr in this approach toward apologetics (although, as far as establishing a specific method of apologetic, Kuyper took a different fork in the apologetic road). Kuyper notes that there is no doubt that “Christianity is imperiled by great and serious dangers,” and believed that there were two life systems (the worldviews of Christianity and modernism) “wrestling one with another, in mortal combat.”<sup>112</sup> He lamented, though, that the apologetic endeavor did not make any headway in meeting the problem—the old ways and methods of Christian apologetics were no longer effective tools in fighting the battle. As James Edward McGoldrick asserts, “Kuyper contended that traditional defenses of particular doctrines could not avail in this struggle. Only the full-orbed worldview, which Calvinism alone can produce, could be effective. He knew learned modernists presented their views in logical, coherent arguments based on their axiomatic principles, so Christians must do nothing less.”<sup>113</sup> Therefore, Kuyper opines,

If the battle is to be fought with honour and with a 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. And this powerful life-system is not to be invented nor formulated by ourselves, but is to be taken and applied as it presents itself in history. When thus taken, I found and confessed, and I still hold, that this manifestation of the Christian principle is given us in *Calvinism*.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup>Kuyper, *Calvinism*, 3-4. McGoldrick further elaborates, For [Kuyper] the manner in which people regard God, themselves, and the universe stands as the crux of the battle between good and evil, a struggle in which the opposing forces have no common ground. The current term *culture war* would have served Kuyper well. In this engagement it will not do to reply to the enemies’ attacks in a piecemeal manner when two antithetical worldviews are locked in mortal combat. “Principle must be arrayed against principle,” since a clash of life systems is in progress. Only Calvinism has the means to wage this struggle effectively. . . . The Reformed faith alone provides a comprehensive system embracing man’s relation to God, to other men, and to the world. McGoldrick, “Claiming Every Inch,” 37. Emphasis original.

<sup>113</sup>McGoldrick, “Claiming Every Inch,” 39.

<sup>114</sup>Kuyper, *Calvinism*, 4-5. Emphasis original.

Just as the entire life-system of modernity attacked Christianity, in response his apologetic was the defense of Christianity as an all-embracing life-system.

Kuyper's treatment of apologetics and worldview differed from Orr and many who followed him in that he had a clear rejection of the autonomy of reason.<sup>115</sup> While Orr and others attempted to meet their opponents on common epistemological ground, Kuyper saw too much antithesis between the believer and unbeliever. An unbeliever's epistemological foundation itself is a development of their worldview, which is too far removed from the Christian worldview. Thus, he laid the groundwork for what would become presuppositional apologetics.

### **Gordon H. Clark**

Although Gordon H. Clark's contribution to worldview apologetics is not as prolific as Orr or Kuyper, he does bridge the philosophical and theological gap between Orr and Kuyper on the one hand, and, on the other hand, those who would later expand upon this approach in the late twentieth century into the twenty-first century. Better known as a philosopher than an apologist, he nevertheless recognized the scope of apologetics as being a defense of an ordered system. Although he did not necessarily utilize the term "worldview," his description of Christianity as a rational system naturally leads to the concept itself. In a lengthy, yet vitally important quote and contribution to the discussion, Clark explains,

The macrocosmic world with its microcosmic but thoughtful inhabitant will not be a fortuitous aggregation of unrelated elements. Instead of a series of disconnected propositions, truth will be a rational system, a logically ordered series. . . . And each part will derive its significance from the whole. 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 special interest, these specific defenses will be insufficient. In addition to

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<sup>115</sup>Bartholomew, *Contours of the Kuyperian Tradition*, 113.

these details, there is also needed a picture of the whole into which they fit. This comprehensive apologia is seen all the more clearly to be necessary as the contrasting theories are more carefully considered. The naturalistic philosophy that engulfs the modern minds is not a repudiation of one or two items of the Christian faith leaving the remainder untouched; it is not a philosophy that is satisfied to deny miracles while approving or at least not disapproving of Christian moral standards; on the contrary both Christianity and naturalism demand all or nothing: compromise is impossible. At least this will be true if the answer of any one question is integral with the answers of every other. Each system proposes to interpret all the facts; each system subscribes to the principle that this is one world. A *universe* . . . cannot exist half theistic and half atheistic. Politics, science, and epistemology must all be one or the other.<sup>116</sup>

Here Clark notes that one does not find the truth scattered across the cosmos, found at various times in various places. Instead, the truth is an entire system that entails all of existence in every era. Therefore, only a worldview (a comprehensive view of all things) that reflects the truth itself could one actually call “true.” That being the case, contradictory worldviews cannot all be true, and one must reject worldviews that embrace any hint of falsity (even if making many true claims). Therefore, merely defending or attacking particular points of a system of thought is insufficient—certain points may be valid and yet the whole system itself be unsound. As Clark maintained, each worldview claims to interpret the facts correctly (and every single system does not do this and cannot do this), therefore the systems themselves are scrutinized, and the one left standing embraces the entire system of truth.

### **Francis Schaeffer**

Francis Schaeffer’s theology and apologetic method are not easy to condense or summarize. At times he used the term “presupposition” synonymously with and in the place of “worldview,” and yet the way he utilized presupposition in apologetics (in contrast to the way others such as Cornelius Van Til used the concept) has caused considerable confusion in describing and analyzing his work. Scott R. Burson and Jerry

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<sup>116</sup>Gordon H. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1952), 24-25. Emphasis original.

L. Walls note that the question of how to describe Schaeffer's apologetic methodology might be the most disputed and controversial subject about his life and ministry as they give a list of how other scholars describe his apologetic—some call him “presuppositionalist,” others “compassionate presuppositionalist,” still others say he is an “inconsistent presuppositionalist” or a “modified presuppositionalist,” while others call him an “inconsistent empiricist,” and others coined the term “verificationist” to describe him.<sup>117</sup> I contend that his work falls within the realm of worldview apologetics.

In defining his use of the term presupposition/worldview, Schaeffer states,

People have presuppositions, and they will live more consistently on the basis of these presuppositions than even they themselves may realize. By presuppositions we mean the basic way an individual looks at life, his basic world-view, the grid through which he sees the world. Presuppositions rest upon that which a person considers to be the truth of what exists. People's presuppositions lay a grid for all they bring forth into the external world. Their presuppositions also provide the basis for their values and therefore the basis for their decisions.<sup>118</sup>

Although people may not know they have presuppositions, and may not understand that they have received their presuppositions from their family or society, nevertheless it is possible to think upon and analyze those presuppositions to see if they fit the facts or reality.<sup>119</sup> People function based on their presuppositions, and the presuppositions of Western society so radically shifted in Schaeffer's day that the change it caused within culture was palpable. However, the new presuppositions and the culture built upon them were not true. Thus, for Schaeffer, a presupposition (a worldview) “must be subjected to

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<sup>117</sup>Scott R. Burson and Jerry L. 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), 143.

<sup>118</sup>Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: A Christian Worldview*, vol. 5 (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1982), 83. Emphasis original.

<sup>119</sup>Francis A. Schaeffer, *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer*, 1:326.

the process of verification if we are to honestly discern their truth value.”<sup>120</sup> That it is possible to compare and contrast worldviews and test for truthfulness is because (Schaeffer believed) Christians and non-Christians had common ground in that everyone lived in God’s world, and without said common ground conversation and communication would be impossible.<sup>121</sup> That worldviews were testable was of the utmost importance, because the “problem is having, and then acting upon the right world-view—the world-view which gives men and women the truth of what is.”<sup>122</sup>

Schaeffer lamented that apologetics up to his day had never considered defending the faith from the purview of presupposition/worldview. He believed that the old apologetic methodologies were no longer effective in meeting the challenges of the modern day. Schaeffer explains why this is the case: “The use of classical apologetics before this shift took place [in the conception of the way we come to knowledge and truth] was effective only because non-Christians were functioning, on the surface, on the same presuppositions, even if they had an inadequate base for them. In classical apologetics though, presuppositions were rarely analyzed, discussed or taken into account.”<sup>123</sup> The belief that the Western world shares the same worldview is no longer viable. There is a great divide in presuppositions. Therefore, for Schaeffer, one tests presuppositions/worldviews for truthfulness because they cannot all accurately reflect reality since they are all so contradictory.

Burson and Walls describe how and why worldviews are open to testing according to Schaeffer’s thought:

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<sup>120</sup>Burson and Walls, *C. S. Lewis & Francis Schaeffer*, 149.

<sup>121</sup>Francis A. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer*, 1:138.

<sup>122</sup>Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?*, 252.

<sup>123</sup>Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 7.

Christianity, particularly the content of Scripture, should be subject to the same type of empirical inquiry as all other types of phenomena. Scientific, historical and religious claims all play by the same rules. For a theory in any of these disciplines to be viable it must be self-consistent, comprehensive and livable. Schaeffer insisted that religious truth be held to the same standard as scientific truth in light of the modern tendency to relegate religion to the realm of unverifiable. . . . Christianity is grounded in the claim that it is a true, historical, space-time religion and therefore open to verification and falsification.<sup>124</sup>

For a worldview to be a system making a truth claim, one must subject it to a process of verification to discern the truth-value of the system.<sup>125</sup> Schaeffer said that one need not accept the biblical system (or any other system for that matter) blindly—it is verifiable.

Moreover, his description of the method is similar to the abductive logic discussed in the next chapter in that one takes the truths of the world and determines which system gives the best explanation for everything. Alternatively, he pictured it as “like trying to find the right key to fit a particular lock. We try the first key and then the next and the next until finally, if we are fortunate, one of them fits. The same principle applies (so Christians maintain) when we consider the big questions. Here are the phenomena. What key unlocks their meaning? What explanation is correct?”<sup>126</sup> Schaeffer also described his apologetic as “Taking the Roof Off” in that he would lead a non-Christian to consider the consequences of their worldview, then allow the truth of the external world to bear upon their belief system. When the apologist takes the roof off of the unbeliever’s presuppositions, they “must stand naked and wounded before the truth of what is.”<sup>127</sup> Upon reviewing Schaeffer’s work, I believe he built upon the foundation of Orr and Kuyper in recognition of the need to test at the worldview level and laid groundwork for future scholarly study.

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<sup>124</sup>Burson and Walls, *C. S. Lewis & Francis Schaeffer*, 145.

<sup>125</sup>*Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>126</sup>Francis A. Schaeffer and C. Everett Koop, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer*, 5:359.

<sup>127</sup>Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 140.

## Ravi Zacharias

Ravi Zacharias is a modern example of a worldview apologist who defends Christianity and confronts opposing worldviews from the point of whether or not entire systems stand or fall when tested for truth.<sup>128</sup> For Zacharias, worldviews are a set of beliefs that underlie and shape all human thought and action. It is the philosophic glasses that a person wears to look at this world of ideas, experience, and purposes—an interpretive conceptual scheme to explain why a person sees the way that he or she does.<sup>129</sup> The fact that everyone has some conceptual scheme then leads to the question that lies before all people: not whether someone has a worldview or not, but whether the

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<sup>128</sup>Over the past year, there have been several controversies surrounding Ravi Zacharias. One involved a claim of Zacharias's not being truthful about his academic credentials, and the other involved supposed inappropriate emails between himself and a woman who was not his wife. Zacharias and his ministry deny all the allegations placed against him in both issues, and state that due to court agreements between involved parties they are not allowed to talk about particulars of the case. I am in no position either to judge these matters or to verify the truthfulness of any of the claims made by the parties involved. Whatever the case may be, one cannot deny the fact that Ravi Zacharias has impacted Christian apologetics over the past several decades. So, due to this impact, his body of work is worthy of inclusion in this academic study. The current controversies, whether real or not, do not involve his teachings or methods; therefore, they in no way impact the veracity or usefulness of his contributions to the field of Christian apologetics. With that said, my analysis of Zacharias within this paper will solely consider his influence on the present subject upon which the controversies have no bearing.

For more information about these controversies, see Zacharias' own response in Ravi Zacharias, "Ravi Zacharias: Statement on My Federal Lawsuit," *RZIM Global Blog*, December 3, 2017, accessed August 11, 2018, <https://rzim.org/global-blog/ravi-zacharias-statement-on-my-federal-lawsuit/>. Also see third-party reports by various Christian ministries and news agencies: Kate Shellnutt and Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra, "Ravi Zacharias Responds to Sexting Allegations, Credentials Critique," *Christianity Today*, December 3, 2017, accessed July 22, 2018, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2017/december/ravi-zacharias-sexting-extortion-lawsuit-doctorate-bio-rzim.html>; "Ravi Zacharias Faces Criticism for Exaggerated Credentials and Settling a Lawsuit with an Apparent Extortionist," *Ministry Watch*, November 27, 2017, accessed July 22, 2018, <https://www.ministrywatch.com/articles/rzim.php>; and "Ravi Zacharias Responds to Sexting Scandal," *Relevant*, December 4, 2017, accessed July 22, 2018, <https://relevantmagazine.com/slice/ravi-zacharias-responds-to-sexting-scandal/>.

<sup>129</sup>Ravi Zacharias, *The Real Face of Atheism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 114.

worldview they are living by is a good one or not.<sup>130</sup> It is here that the truth-battle takes place, for as he explains, “Our starting points are key, but even they need to be defended.”<sup>131</sup>

In his thesis on Zacharias, Dave Currie likens Zacharias’s approach to Schaeffer’s:

Zacharias and Schaeffer alike approach the apologetic dialogue by worldview analysis. They seek to uncover the underlying contradictions, and reveal the breaking points if the worldview is to be lived out. For Ravi Zacharias this would be getting to what he terms the “first principles.” By doing this he shows the non-Christian premises to be skewed, not to mention the conclusions. It is a form of deconstruction that makes known hidden assumptions in order to disclose the fragile base on which those assumptions are built. . . . For Zacharias it is showing the various areas or realities of life that non-Christian systems mangle. These areas range from truth . . . to ethics, law, history, relationships, and the problem of evil. Both Zacharias and Schaeffer use this methodology to meet the non-Christian on their ground.<sup>132</sup>

Thus, one’s belief structure affects every area of life. If the belief structure is wrong in one area (or contradicts reality in one area), the other beliefs in that structure are then suspect since the system itself is flawed. As Zacharias himself explains, “If even a slight doubt could be raised upon any minutiae of [a belief system], it was exultantly implied that the whole worldview should be deemed false.”<sup>133</sup> So again, the preferred apologetic

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<sup>130</sup>Ravi Zacharias, “Establishing a Worldview” (video), Foundations of Apologetics, accessed June 30, 2018, <https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Content/Series/161813?episode=4>. As he elsewhere explains why people have worldviews: “If reality, then, impinges upon us in a multiplicity of ways, we need a paradigm or worldview that reasonably explains the truth-tested realities of the world, which can then be blended together to give life a composite unity.” Zacharias, *The Real Face of Atheism*, 112.

<sup>131</sup>Ravi Zacharias, “Atheism,” in *Jesus among Secular Gods: The Countercultural Claims of Christ*, ed. Ravi Zacharias and Vince Vitale (New York: FaithWords, 2017), 50.

<sup>132</sup>Dave Currie, “The Apologetic Method of Ravi Zacharias: A Critical Appraisal and Evaluation” (master’s thesis, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1998), 17-18.

<sup>133</sup>Ravi K. Zacharias, *Can Man Live without God?* (Dallas: Word Publishers, 1994), xiii.



method is not a single argument, but the testing of the entire system of belief structures. Zacharias writes, “Serious intellectuals ought to know that no worldview is established [or, for that matter, disproven] on *one knockout argument*.”<sup>134</sup>

For the belief system not to be flawed then the worldview must stand up to the scrutiny of truth-tests. As one scrutinizes worldviews, “the clearer it becomes that while the major worldviews are sometimes superficially similar, they are fundamentally very different and often at odds.”<sup>135</sup> Since all the various worldviews conflict in some form or fashion, not all of them can be true—but the apologist must demonstrate this. For there to be intellectual honesty, and for a worldview to gain intellectual respect, “then it must stand the test of truth, regardless of the mood of the day.”<sup>136</sup> If all worldviews are not true, then many people believe a lie, and the apologist must demonstrate this to them. Zacharias’ apologetic, with the support of several other worldview apologists, is the basis for the truth testing of worldview discussed in the following chapters. However, Zacharias rightfully recognizes that if people with false worldviews do not have a heart open to the falsity of their worldview and the veracity of another, if that is where the evidence so leads, no amount of proof and argumentation will much matter.

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<sup>134</sup>Ravi Zacharias, *The End of Reason: A Response to the New Atheists*, special ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 37. Emphasis mine.

<sup>135</sup>Vince Vitale, “Pluralism,” in *Jesus among Secular Gods: The Countercultural Claims of Christ*, ed. Ravi Zacharias and Vince Vitale (New York: FaithWords, 2017), 95. That worldviews are contradictory and at odds places the proverbial nail in the coffin on any notion of pluralism being intellectually (and in actuality) tenable:

All religions, plainly and simply, cannot be true. Some beliefs are false, and we know them to be false. So it does no good to put a halo on the notion of tolerance as if everything could be equally true. To deem all beliefs equally true is sheer nonsense for the simple reason that to deny that statement would also, then, be true.

But if the denial of that statement is also true, then all religions are not true.

Ravi K. Zacharias, *Jesus among Other Gods: The Absolute Claims of the Christian Message* (Nashville: Word Publishers, 2000), 4.

<sup>136</sup>Zacharias, *Jesus among Other Gods*, ix.

“Truthfulness in the heart . . . precedes truth in the objective realm. *Intent is prior to content.*”<sup>137</sup>

### **Conclusion—Why Worldview for Apologetics?**

Having described the history of the concept of worldview in philosophy and religion, having defined worldview in a manner that encompasses its significant features, and having demonstrated historical and current apologetic movements using worldview, one can understand how worldview is an effective purview from which to perform the apologetic task. The greatest reasoning for coming to apologetics from this perspective is the inescapability and importance of worldview. Although discussion about worldview is somewhat recent in history, this does not mean that worldviews never existed.<sup>138</sup> Since the creation of man, humanity has possessed a systematic belief structure by which they interpreted the reality around them and by which they then made life decisions. Humanity may not have given it much thought, and they may not consciously look at reality through their worldview; nevertheless, it is through their worldview that they interpret what goes on around them and make their choices. It is a person’s worldview that determines their philosophy of life, their religion, or their mission and vision. Whatever drives a person to do what they do, think what they think, believe what they believe, and be what they are, comes through their worldview. Since a person lives out of their belief structure, it only makes sense to test the truthfulness of the entirety of that system, otherwise their life is based on a lie.

Besides, from a Christian apologetic perspective, scholarly attacks on Christianity often (though not exclusively) take the form of attacking it as an overall system of belief rather than nitpicking at single doctrines or ideas. Even if someone

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<sup>137</sup>Zacharias, *Can Man Live without God?*, 98. Emphasis original.

<sup>138</sup>By analogy, just because a fossil lay dormant for thousands of years until found does not mean that the fossil had no existence until its discovery.

brings an attack against a solitary belief belonging to Christianity, it is more fruitful to demonstrate that the entire system is sound rather than try to parry each small argument. Moreover, in the realm of negative apologetics where one deems to demonstrate the falseness of another worldview, it is much more effective to demonstrate that the entire system is unsound and cannot stand up to serious inquiry. To use an old fable as an analogy—if a Dutch dike represents a worldview, and each small attack against single worldview beliefs is like poking a hole in the dike, it is actually much more useful just to take out the entire dike rather than to poke little holes that the opponent can fix by sticking a finger in it (giving counter-arguments to each single critique).

Also, apologetics from the purview of worldview is most effective against the effects of globalization and pluralization. Modern technology and the ease of mobility for humanity exposes people to every conceivable worldview and philosophical idea. When putting faces to the worldview (through personal acquaintance and relationship that they have with friends, neighbors, coworkers, or schoolmates) it grows more difficult to denounce anyone's belief system as wrong—thus the growing hostility toward exclusive truth claims. Worldview apologetics conclusively demonstrates that different worldviews make contradicting claims that cannot all be true (no matter any claim to the contrary) and gives a way of testing the worldviews, so people may objectively see which is true and which is false.

Finally, apologetics from the purview of worldview is effective in combating the effects of postmodernism, including its influence on those who would do away with the apologetic task altogether. Although postmodernism is a difficult concept to define, it is noticeable by its skepticism toward objective truth and metanarratives—a view that has even crept into some circles of Christianity. Worldview apologetics demonstrates that postmodernism itself is a worldview—a systematic belief structure expressed as a metanarrative—that one can test for truthfulness even though it denies the existence of metanarratives. Since its truth claims contradict truth claims made by Christianity, the

testing of said claims is a legitimate endeavor to keep people from error and lead them to the truth.

Having argued for apologetics within the purview of worldviews, I then ask what is the most effective means of testing the truthfulness of these various belief structures? I argue that an abductive use of epistemological tests for truth in the realm of major life questions is successful in demonstrating the truth or falsity of systematic belief systems.

## CHAPTER 3

### ABDUCTIVE REASONING: A LOGIC FOR TRUTH DISCOVERY

#### **Introduction to Abduction in Discovering Truth**

In his dissertation entitled “Evangelical Worldview Analysis: A Critical Assessment and Proposal,” Bryan Billard Sims notes that there are two primary methodologies used by Evangelical Christians to analyze, compare, and contrast worldviews—transcendental analysis and abductive reasoning.<sup>1</sup> He reveals that 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.”<sup>2</sup> Sims finds the transcendental argument wanting as there remains an 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.”<sup>3</sup> He also remarks that the strong claim of transcendentalists about the divine self-attestation of Scripture and the claim that absolute certainty is obtainable are without merit.<sup>4</sup> Sims found too many challenges with the transcendental analysis of worldviews, and so he claims that the abductive analysis of worldviews is the

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<sup>1</sup>Bryan Billard Sims, “Evangelical Worldview Analysis: A Critical Assessment and Proposal” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006), 21.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 25.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, 70.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

stronger option.

Sims describes abductive reasoning, often referred to as inference to the best explanation, as “the pattern of arguing backward from some phenomenon to its cause or explanation.”<sup>5</sup> As noted below, abductive reasoning has experienced a resurgence of application in several other fields with much success. As numerous Christian apologists have begun to appropriate this approach for defending the Christian faith, Sims finds this method the best for worldview analysis for four reasons. First, it is a prevalent mode of reasoning both in ordinary life and in specialized disciplines. Second, it taps into a broad spectrum of evidence and fields. Third, having a wide range of evidence, arguments, and phenomena to choose from removes the burden of producing one singular decisive argument. Finally, abductive reasoning follows the contours of human thinking with regard to worldviews.<sup>6</sup>

I agree with Sims’ assessment, although I find a different set of criteria for abductive reasoning’s use more compelling. This chapter first defines abductive reasoning and contrasts it with other logical argumentations. It then discusses the philosophical roots of abductive reasoning with the purpose of laying a foundation to comprehend its use. Next, this chapter briefly explores how other scholarly fields have used abductive reasoning to demonstrate its adaptability for other such practices like apologetics. Then it considers abduction’s suitability for Christian apologetics and seeks to establish its strengths as a method for the defense of the faith. This chapter surveys various criticisms and explore various defeaters raised against abduction’s conclusions and then answer these criticisms to further strengthen abduction’s application to worldview apologetics. The chapter concludes discussing criteria for abductive

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<sup>5</sup>Sims, “Evangelical Worldview Analysis,” 71.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 97-98.

considerations and determine abduction's place in worldview truth-testing.

### **Abductive Reasoning amongst Other Logics**

When considering logical reasoning, the two most prominent types of arguments are deductive and inductive. Often given in a syllogistic form, deduction demonstrates that a relationship exists between two (or more) premises which draw a conclusion that must certainly be true.<sup>7</sup> Deduction, proceeding from the general to the particular, draws consequences that are necessary if the premises themselves are true.<sup>8</sup> Norman L. Geisler and Ronald M. 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.”<sup>9</sup> So, for example, a deductive argument might state that if all A's are B's, and all B's are C's, then all A's are C's. However, as Sims notes, deduction is tautological in that it never says anything more than what the premises assumed from the beginning, so it does not yield any new information.<sup>10</sup> Yet, deduction is helpful in that it demonstrates that premises one accepts as true often yield conclusions that (logically speaking) must be true (but, possibly, one may not have previously accepted without the deductive process).

Induction, on the other hand, proceeds from the particular to the general, drawing an inference from observed frequencies of an occurrence.<sup>11</sup> The conclusion does

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<sup>7</sup>Atocha Aliseda, “Mathematical Reasoning vs. Abductive Reasoning: A Structural Approach,” *Synthese* 134, no. 1/2 (2003): 25.

<sup>8</sup>Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 435.

<sup>9</sup>Norman L. Geisler and Ronald M. Brooks, *Come, Let Us Reason: An Introduction to Logical Thinking* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990), 189.

<sup>10</sup>Sims, “Evangelical Worldview Analysis,” 74.

<sup>11</sup>Igor Douven, “Abduction,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2011, accessed January 23, 2016, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2011/entries/abduction/>, 4-5. See also Geisler and

not follow directly from the premises, but the premises support the conclusion and render it probable.<sup>12</sup> Unlike deduction, an inductive inference does not lead to a necessary conclusion, but only a probable truth.<sup>13</sup> For example, an inductive argument might note that every time one observes an A it has the quality of B; therefore it is highly probable that the next A one observes will also have the quality of B (although one cannot say this with absolute certainty).

There is another way to come to a warranted logical conclusion without it being “entailed by one’s premises” or “derived from the evidence by inductive extrapolation.”<sup>14</sup> Abductive reasoning (sometimes simply called abduction) infers from the given data and premises to form or choose a hypothesis that best explains the given information.<sup>15</sup> For this reason, abductive reasoning is often termed “inference to the best

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Brooks, *Come, Let Us Reason*, 191.

<sup>12</sup>Michael Cohen, “Induction,” in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, ed. Ted Honderich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 405.

<sup>13</sup>Kenneth Richard Samples, *Without a Doubt: Answering the 20 Toughest Faith Questions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 109.

<sup>14</sup>William J. Wainwright, *Philosophy of Religion* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1988), 166.

<sup>15</sup>K. T. Fann, *Peirce’s Theory of Abduction* (The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), 5. See also Douglas Walton, *Abductive Reasoning* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2005), xii. John R. and Susan G. Josephson describe abductive reasoning as finding the most plausible composite hypothesis made from numerous sub-hypotheses which then can explain all the data. John R. Josephson and Susan G. Josephson, eds., *Abductive Inference: Computation, Philosophy, Technology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 178. C. J. Hookway explains this type of reasoning as accepting “a conclusion on the grounds that it explains the available evidence.” C. J. Hookway, “Abduction,” in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, 1. Lorenzo Magnani defines abduction as “the process of *inferring* certain facts and/or laws and hypotheses that render some sentences plausible, that *explain* or *discover* some (eventually new) phenomenon or observation: it is the process of reasoning in which explanatory hypotheses are formed and evaluated.” Lorenzo Magnani, “Abduction and Chance Discovery in Science,” *International Journal of Knowledge-Based Intelligent Engineering Systems* 11, no. 5 (December 15, 2007): 273. Emphasis original.



explanation.”<sup>16</sup> Many view abduction as related to induction in that they both only lead to merely probable inferences and both are defeasible, meaning further data could refute their conclusions.<sup>17</sup> However, abduction and induction are distinct in that abduction “appears as the path from facts towards ideas and theories, while induction is the path from ideas and theories towards facts in order to obtain a basis for statistical assessment of the ideas’ and theories’ probabilities.”<sup>18</sup> Another way of observing the contrast is that abduction provides the best broad explanatory hypothesis for the data, while induction attempts to predict specific probable outcomes from what one observed in the data.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, the three forms of logic have interacting purposes: “Abduction generates a new hypothesis, deduction draws the consequences and induction examines them within our social reality.”<sup>20</sup> As seen below, abductive reasoning has the ability to consider

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<sup>16</sup>This paper will use the terms “abductive reasoning” and “inference to the best explanation” interchangeably and considers them as being synonymous. Some scholars view them as referring to different and distinct processes of generating hypotheses. For example, Daniel G. Campos views abduction as the process of specifically generating explanatory hypotheses, while inference to the best explanation is a process of both generating and evaluating scientific hypotheses. Daniel G. Campos, “On the Distinction between Peirce’s Abduction and Lipton’s Inference to the Best Explanation,” *Synthese* 180, no. 3 (2011): 419–42. See also William H. B. Mcauliffe, “How Did Abduction Get Confused with Inference to the Best Explanation?,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*. 51, no. 3 (2015): 300–319.

<sup>17</sup>Aliseda, “Mathematical Reasoning vs. Abductive Reasoning,” 25.

<sup>18</sup>Michael Hoffmann, “Problems with Peirce’s Concept of Abduction,” *Foundations of Science* 4, no. 3 (1999): 272. Robert Charles O’Connor describes the difference between abduction and induction this way, “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 was invariably present, but rather by *inventing* a cause considered sufficient to account for that effect.” Robert Charles O’Connor, “Abductive Inference to Theological Realism” (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 1989), 23, quoted in Sims, “Evangelical Worldview Analysis,” 78. Emphasis original.

<sup>19</sup>Kenneth Richard Samples, *A World of Difference: Putting Christian Truth-Claims to the Worldview Test* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 52.

<sup>20</sup>Matus Halas, “In Error We Trust: An Apology of Abductive Inference,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 28, no. 4 (2015): 704. To give an example of how induction and abduction are inverses of deduction, and to demonstrate their differences, Charles Sanders Peirce gives the following illustration:

several deductive and inductive arguments taken together to lead to a concluding hypothesis.

### **Philosophic Roots of Abductive Reasoning**

Philosophers grant that the concept of abductive reasoning has a long history in philosophical thought, some making a comparison with Aristotle's apogee (an indirect argument that proves a point by demonstrating the absurdity of the opposite), others recognizing its reasoning from effects to cause in older works on scientific methodology, while still others see references to this form of reasoning in older works on logic.<sup>21</sup> However, it was pragmatist Charles Sanders Peirce that gave abduction its name (after having evolved from previous monikers such as hypothesis or retrodution, among others) as well as giving substance to its current form and understanding. Scholars consider abduction as a vital part of his pragmatist philosophy because Peirce viewed it as "an intermediary stage between perception and cognition."<sup>22</sup>

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#### DEDUCTION:

*Rule.*--All the beans from this bag are white.

*Case.*--These beans are from this bag.

*Result.*--These beans are white.

#### INDUCTION:

*Case.*--These beans are from this bag.

*Result.*--These beans are white.

*Rule.*--All the beans from this bag are white

#### HYPOTHESIS [ABDUCTION]:

*Rule.*--All the beans from this bag are white.

*Result.*--These beans are white.

*Case.*--These beans are from this bag.

Charles Sanders Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1932), 2:623.

<sup>21</sup>Atocha Aliseda, *Abductive Reasoning: Logical Investigations into Discovery and Explanation* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 2006), 7. See also Walton, *Abductive Reasoning*, 22-23.

<sup>22</sup>Chihab El Khachab, "The Logical Goodness of Abduction in C. S. Peirce's Thought," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 49, no. 2 (2013): 162.

Despite its importance, scholars have encountered difficulties in systematizing Peirce's thoughts on abduction as there is no single definitive work which he wrote on the subject, and his ideas evolved and matured over time. In several places, Peirce indicated that abduction is a logic used to construct a hypothesis, "generating new theoretical discoveries."<sup>23</sup> Peirce specified elsewhere that it is a logic used in selecting one particular hypothesis out of several possibilities, justifying the belief that the one hypothesis is probably true as opposed to the others.<sup>24</sup> Some have also interpreted abduction as a path to determining if a particular hypothesis is worthy of pursuit—if a particular idea is promising or worthwhile.<sup>25</sup> To understand if one or all of these purposes and interpretations of abduction are feasible, one must consider the general form Peirce gave of abductive inference:

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<sup>23</sup>Daniel J McKaughan, "From Ugly Duckling to Swan: C. S. Peirce, Abduction, and the Pursuit of Scientific Theories," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 44, no. 3 (2008): 447.

<sup>24</sup>Fann, *Peirce's Theory of Abduction*, 41. See also Harry G. Frankfurt, "Peirce's Notion of Abduction," *The Journal of Philosophy* 55, no. 14 (1958): 593. It is here, in choosing a particular hypothesis out of many, where I see abduction's most significant use in analyzing and evaluating worldviews.

<sup>25</sup>McKaughan, "From Ugly Duckling to Swan," 452. See also Frankfurt, "Peirce's Notion of Abduction," 595. *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* recognized two varieties of inference emanating from abduction:

In one sense, it is "inference to the best explanation", which is a means of justifying the postulation of unobservable phenomena on the strength of explanations they afford of observable phenomena. In its other variety, abduction is the process of forming *generic* beliefs from known data. Observations incline us to think that tigers are four-legged, a proposition we hold true even upon discovery of a three-legged tiger. Generic sentences differ from general (i.e. universally quantified) sentences by their accommodation of negative instances, that is, of instances which would falsify general sentences.

"Inference," in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, ed. Ted Honderich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 407. Emphasis original. Magnani recognizes two main epistemological meanings to abduction: "1) abduction that only generates 'plausible' hypotheses ('selective' or 'creative') and 2) abduction considered as inference 'to the best explanation', which also evaluates hypotheses." He also maintains that there are two types of theoretical abduction: "'sentential', related to logic and to verbal/symbolic inferences, and 'model-based', related to the exploitation of internalized models of diagrams, pictures, etc." Magnani, "Abduction and Chance Discovery in Science," 273.

The surprising fact, *C*, is observed.  
But if *A* were true, *C* would be a matter of course.  
Hence, there is reason to suspect that *A* is true.<sup>26</sup>

The form seemingly allows for generating, choosing, or evaluating a hypothesis that accurately explains the premises, facts, or data provided.

Peirce described abduction both as a reasoned inference (a perceptive judgment) but also as an appeal to instinct (an insight available to all humanity).<sup>27</sup> Not that these two are necessarily exclusive, for one could say that the formation of a hypothesis involves both logic and psychology.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, abduction is much more than merely an intelligent guess, for there is an underlying structure of causal, albeit informal, reasoning that leads one to a probable, sufficient conclusion.<sup>29</sup>

### **Contemporary Use of Abductive Reasoning in Various Scholarly Fields**

After Peirce laid the groundwork, abductive reasoning quickly became embedded in philosophy, especially epistemology and philosophy of science.<sup>30</sup> However, several other scholarly fields found abduction a useful tool in both theory and practice, with many picking up the mantle as abduction's efficacy gained greater notice.

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<sup>26</sup>Charles Sanders Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1934), 5:189. Josephson and Josephson give abduction the following form, which seems like a more lucid explanation of the reasoning process:

*D* is a collection of data.

*H* explains *D*.

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

Therefore, *H* is probably true.

Josephson and Josephson, *Abductive Inference*, 14. Emphasis original.

<sup>27</sup>Fann, *Peirce's Theory of Abduction*, 167.

<sup>28</sup>Hoffmann, "Problems with Peirce's Concept of Abduction," 282.

<sup>29</sup>Walton, *Abductive Reasoning*, 158-59.

<sup>30</sup>See Jaakko Hintikka, "What Is Abduction? The Fundamental Problem of Contemporary Epistemology," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 34, no. 3 (1998): 503-33.

Considering abduction's adaptability to these fields demonstrates its adaptability for the apologetic endeavor.

### **General and Social Sciences**

Peirce not only considered abduction a logical tool for philosophy but more specifically an instrument for scientific advancement.<sup>31</sup> He viewed abduction as the logical process that occurs before deduction and induction in any scientific argumentation, for abduction forms the hypothesis that deduction and induction later test.<sup>32</sup> As such, some attribute several of the great scientific finds of the past to an abductive process that they would then later verify through inductive and deductive

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<sup>31</sup>Magnani sees abduction as a "fundamental mechanism by which it is possible to account for the introduction of new explanatory hypotheses in science." Magnani, "Abduction and Chance Discovery in Science," 273. Of course, scientists may put forth any hypothesis that appears to deal with the data adequately, but this hypothesis must be verifiable and pass tests of truth to determine veracity. For example, Charles Darwin observed the distribution of species and existence of atrophied organs, and abductively hypothesized natural selection, reasoning:

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. The undulatory theory of light has thus been arrived at; and the belief in the revolution of the earth on its own axis was until lately supported by hardly any direct evidence. It is no valid objection that science as yet throws no light on the far higher problem of the essence or origin of life.

Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Great Books of the Western World, vol. 49 (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1990), 239. Darwin thought that since common events and significant scientific findings came about through abduction, that his use was sound. He may have used the logic correctly, but the hypothesis that he posited has yet to receive verification, it has many problems passing tests of truth of empirical adequacy, and it is unable to answer defeaters placed against it (e.g., lack of fossil evidence or consideration of better alternative hypotheses such as irreducible complexity).

<sup>32</sup>Walton, *Abductive Reasoning*, 8. As described by Cameron Shelley, "Peirce came to view scientific investigations as proceeding in four stages: (1) observation of an anomaly, (2) abduction of hypotheses for the purpose of explaining the anomaly, (3) inductive testing of the hypotheses in experiments, and (4) deductive confirmation that the selected hypothesis does predict the original anomaly." Cameron Shelley, "Visual Abductive Reasoning in Archaeology," *Philosophy of Science* 63, no. 2 (1996): 279.

processes.<sup>33</sup> Paul Thagard notes that “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 . . . [in] tasks that require finding explanations.”<sup>34</sup> Such a diverse use of abduction demonstrates its adaptability to other disciplines (including Christian apologetics).

One can find an example of a practical scientific use of abduction within the medical profession. A medical specialist observes the symptoms that the patient displays as well as listens to clues given by the patient through their “History of Present Illness”—their testimony of what they have experienced, the time frame involved, the relationship between symptoms, and their personal interpretation of what has happened.<sup>35</sup> Then, based on the accumulation of that data, the medical professional creates a hypothesis that gives a causal relation between symptoms and disease.<sup>36</sup> They next confirm the hypothesis through testing. Many medical scholars now recognize the advantages of abduction as a first step in the health care process. As one scholar states, “The holistic approach of abductive reasoning can allow nursing students (and students of other health disciplines) to build hypotheses through maximum data retrieval and to develop causal models that

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<sup>33</sup>For example, some attribute the finding of Neptune to be the eighth planet as a work of abductive reasoning. Considering the evidence of why Uranus deviated from the orbit that astronomers predicted, they concluded that the best hypothesis to explain the data was the influence of another planet. They then confirmed the hypothesis through later testing. Douven, “Abduction,” 7. Some also credit abductive reasoning for Kepler’s discovery of Mars having an elliptical orbit. Aliseda, “Mathematical Reasoning vs. Abductive Reasoning,” 30.

<sup>34</sup>Paul Thagard, Foreword to *Abduction, Reason, and Science: Processes of Discovery and Explanation*, by Lorenzo Magnani (New York: Springer Science+Business Media, 2001), ix.

<sup>35</sup>Ronald Schleifer and Jerry Vannatta, “The Logic of Diagnosis: Peirce, Literary Narrative, and the History of Present Illness.,” *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 31, no. 4 (2006): 364.

<sup>36</sup>Aliseda, *Abductive Reasoning*, 7.

illustrate and explain the underlying structures of the situation.”<sup>37</sup> Science, however, is not the only area of scholarship that has recently plumbed the depths of the advantages of abductive reasoning.

## Law

Legal experts have recognized the broad use and essential effects of abduction in their discipline. Several areas of the legal system employ abductive reasoning first to infer possible explanations for what occurred in a particular case, and then to determine which of those explanations makes the best hypothesis given the evidence.<sup>38</sup> For example, the detectives of a criminal case take into consideration all the evidence and witness interviews that they collect, list the possible explanations that take all of them into account, finally choosing the one hypothesis that gives the most reasonable conclusion in light of all the data.<sup>39</sup>

Abduction plays a vital role in the courtroom as well. Jurors use abduction to not only incorporate witness testimony along with the other data given as evidence but also to evaluate whether to accept or reject the testimony presented.<sup>40</sup> Some scholars

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<sup>37</sup>Norman A. Mirza et al., “A Concept Analysis of Abductive Reasoning,” *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 70, no. 9 (2014): 1990.

<sup>38</sup>As Giovanni Tuzet defines it: “Legal abduction is the inference which goes from an effect, legally relevant, to its cause, providing for the *best explanation* of the known effect.” Giovanni Tuzet, “Legal Abduction,” *Cognitio* 6, no. 2 (2005): 43. Emphasis original.

<sup>39</sup>J. Warner Wallace, *Cold-Case Christianity: A Homicide Detective Investigates the Claims of the Gospels* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2013), sect. 1, chap. 2, no page nos., Logos Bible Software. One may think of the fantastic skills attributed to fictional detective Sherlock Holmes who was a genius at inventing hypotheses. All too often his skills are wrongfully ascribed to great deductive prowess. However, the fictional hero would describe a process of reasoning backward, showing himself a master of abduction rather than deduction. Fann, *Peirce’s Theory of Abduction*, 57.

<sup>40</sup>Jonathan E. Adler, “Testimony, Trust, Knowing,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 91, no. 5 (1994): 275.

believe that jurors use abduction to fill in the gaps with assumed hypotheses, where some essential knowledge is incomplete, to come to the most reasonable conclusion of what the court proceedings presented them.<sup>41</sup> Thus, not only do jurors consider the content and quality of arguments and evidence as presented, but they also can envision other causal possibilities in rendering their verdicts.<sup>42</sup>

### **Use and Strengths in Christian Apologetics**

Considering the broad use of abductive reasoning in other fields of scholarship, it is not a reach to deem it a worthwhile tool in the hands of the Christian apologist. Doctors give their abductively-formed prognosis (their best explanation or hypothesis) based on symptoms and data from medical tests, and police abductively conclude who the culprit is based on collected evidence. Similarly, a Christian apologist puts forth the Christian worldview as the hypothesis that gives the best explanation of the state of the universe based on the data. With an increased acknowledgment of its usefulness, I see abductive logic as having birthed two recognized ways of defending Christianity and disproving opposing worldviews.

### **Cumulative Case Apologetics as an Abductive Methodology**

An effective use of abductive reasoning in the apologetic task is to take given arguments, facts, evidence, and data, and demonstrate how the hypothesis of God (or some specific belief or doctrine within Christianity) best explains those premises. Cumulative case apologetics seeks to demonstrate how Christianity explains the evidence

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<sup>41</sup>A. Ciampolini and P. Torrioni, "Using Abductive Logic Agents for Modeling the Judicial Evaluation of Criminal Evidence," *Applied Artificial Intelligence* 18 (2004): 253-54.

<sup>42</sup>David W. Green and Rachel McCloy, "Reaching a Verdict," *Thinking & Reasoning* 9, no. 4 (2003): 330.



and data that is available.

Basil Mitchell first gave this apologetic approach (although not necessarily new as a method) its current form and name. He noted at the time that there appeared to be two assumptions when it came to philosophical considerations of Christianity. On the one hand, some assume it is not possible to prove Christian theism. On the other hand, neither can critics show Christianity to be false or logically incoherent. For Mitchell, this left only two alternatives: either “there can be no rational case for or against Christianity,” or “the case [for Christianity] must be a cumulative one which is rational, but does not take the form of a strict proof or argument from probability.”<sup>43</sup> There is a logic and reasonableness to this method, for “the basic idea is that a rational or reasonable case can be made out for a position by the patient accumulation of various pieces of evidence.”<sup>44</sup>

The beauty of the method is that it can take evidences that individually do not have the strength to make the explicit claim for a transcendent Being (or some other doctrine), but then join them together to build the case toward a single hypothesis.<sup>45</sup> For Christian apologetics especially, one can contend that the traditional arguments (such as the cosmological argument, the teleological argument, and moral argument) in and of themselves do not succeed as necessary proofs for Christian truths.<sup>46</sup> However, when one places the arguments together as individual premises pointing toward a specific

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<sup>43</sup>Basil Mitchell, *The Justification of Religious Belief* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1973), 39.

<sup>44</sup>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), 19.

<sup>45</sup>Mitchell, *The Justification of Religious Belief*, 40-41.

<sup>46</sup>John S. Feinberg, *Can You Believe It's True? Christian Apologetics in a Modern and Postmodern Era* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 321.

hypothesis, they carry weight in an overall defense.

The cumulative case method fits within the purview of abductive reasoning in that (just as was mentioned with Peirce's treatments of the matter) the Christian apologist is now "urging that traditional theism makes better sense of all the evidence available than does any alternative on offer."<sup>47</sup> In other words, considering the accumulation of various proofs and arguments, the most viable hypothesis is Christian theism. As Paul D. Feinberg summarizes this method, what "Christian apologists are defending is the claim that Christian theism is the best explanation of all available evidence on offer. The opponents are required to present a more convincing cumulative case."<sup>48</sup>

With the abductive reasoning found in cumulative case apologetics, there is a freedom and openness for the defender of the faith. Apologists can use premises or arguments that have various forms, content, and structure (deductive or inductive, empirical or non-empirical, formal or informal, quantifiable or non-quantifiable).<sup>49</sup> From cosmological to biological to historical to logical evidence, an array of data from various fields strengthen Christian conclusions. Several apologists have utilized this method to lead to specific theological hypotheses, three of which I give as examples to demonstrate abduction at work in this form of cumulative case apologetics.<sup>50</sup>

**The existence of God.** One of the central questions in philosophy is whether a transcendent, supernatural Being called God exists. Many theologians in the past have used logical and philosophical arguments, often in deductive form, claiming that their

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<sup>47</sup>Mitchell, *The Justification of Religious Belief*, 40.

<sup>48</sup>Paul D. Feinberg, "Cumulative Case Apologetics," in *Five Views on Apologetics*, ed. Steven B. Cowan (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 152.

<sup>49</sup>Abraham, "Cumulative Case Arguments for Christian Theism," 20.

<sup>50</sup>The following are examples of positive apologetics. However, one may also use abductive reasoning in negative apologetics.

singular case gives near definitive proof for the existence of God (for example, Anselm's ontological argument, William Paley's teleological argument, William Lane Craig's Kalam cosmological argument). Several philosophers in history have identified weaknesses in these solitary arguments, bringing into question the strength of their conclusion. However, if one would take each of the arguments as a single piece of evidence within an overall case, after considering all such premises the logically best explanation to which they together infer is that there is a supernatural God that exists. What one is arguing is that out of all the possible hypotheses that could explain the evidence, the best hypothesis is the Christian God.

An excellent example is Richard Swinburne's work *The Existence of God*.<sup>51</sup> Swinburne lays out numerous individual arguments, each of which he believes is more probable if there is a God than if there is not a God.<sup>52</sup> He outlines the cosmological argument (chap. 7), teleological argument (chap. 8), arguments from consciousness and morality (chap. 9), arguments from providence (chap. 10), arguments from history and miracles (chap. 11), and arguments from religious experience (chap. 13). After discussing the strengths of each argument and the probability for theism given each one, he then considers their totality and concludes, "On our total evidence theism is more probable than not."<sup>53</sup> Thus, given the totality of each argument as an individual premise, Swinburne determines that the hypothesis that gives the best explanation is "that there is

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<sup>51</sup>Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004). Swinburne does not himself use the term abduction, instead describing various forms of inductive argument. Nevertheless, one could argue that the manner in which he came to his conclusion is abductive.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, 278.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 342. Swinburne mentions in footnote 3 on this same page that if "the detailed historical evidence of the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus" are also taken into account, then "the probability that there is a God becomes very much greater than that."

a God who made and sustains man and the universe.”<sup>54</sup>

**Creation.** Not only can accumulated evidence lead to the overall explanation of God’s existence, but various arguments and premises can abductively demonstrate specific Christian doctrines. For example, abductive reasoning can lead to the hypothesis that the universe is a special creation of a supernatural Being. At least one scientist admits that “the same reasoning process that scientists use, day in and day out, to evaluate a hypothesis rationally and logically leads to the expectation that life, at its most fundamental level, stemmed from a Creator’s handiwork.”<sup>55</sup> Thus, if one considers the evidence and arguments of the likelihood that the universe had a beginning (cosmological argument), that the universe reflects design in various ways including fine tuning (teleological argument), that the universe is capable of rational investigation, that there is much to consider by way of the fossil evidence, as well as taking into account the complexity of DNA, one must consider that these together point to “an intelligent designer rather than undirected time and chance.”<sup>56</sup> While several philosophers and

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<sup>54</sup>Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 342. There are several other examples where an accumulation of evidence infers God as the best explanation. For example, Tony Hines believes four basic arguments lead to the hypothesis of God: (1) since the universe exists, something outside the universe must have created it; (2) a sense of right and wrong permeates all cultures, so there must be a moral lawgiver; (3) there is a need for God that spans all cultures regardless of heritage; (4) those who have had experiences of God have had dramatic life transformations. From these, the best explanation is that there is a God. See Tony Hines, “The Universe: © God,” *Conservative Theological Journal* 7, no. 23 (August 2003): 142-43.

<sup>55</sup>Fazale Rana, *The Cell’s Design: How Chemistry Reveals the Creator’s Artistry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008), 277.

<sup>56</sup>Louis Markos, “Debating Design—Letter to Journal,” *First Things* 242 (April 2014): 10. For an example of a more extensive treatment of the subject, see Kenneth Richard Samples, *7 Truths That Changed the World: Discovering Christianity’s Most Dangerous Ideas* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012), 108-17. For a treatment of how the cosmological argument and teleological argument form a cumulative case for the hypothesis that there was a Creator, see William Lane Craig, “Design & the Cosmological Argument,” in *Mere Creation: Science, Faith & Intelligent Design*, ed. William A. Dembski (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 332–59. For a discussion on the use of the teleological argument in abductive reasoning, see Bowman

scientists have abductively concluded that natural evolutionary forces explain the universe and humanity, others admit that, given the cumulative effect of the evidence, an intelligent designer offers a better explanation.

**Christ's resurrection.** Another theological belief often reasoned through abduction is the resurrection of Christ. Gary Habermas recognizes that many secular historians and philosophers will reject certain types of arguments and evidences, so he uses a “minimal facts approach” in which the only data considered in the abductive process is that which is well-evidenced and accepted by most secular scholars.<sup>57</sup> Under this approach, Habermas considers numerous points of fact:

(1) Jesus died by crucifixion and (2) was buried. (3) Jesus' death caused the disciples to despair and lose hope, believing that his life was ended. (4) Although not as widely accepted, many scholars hold that the tomb in which Jesus was buried was discovered to be empty just a few days later. Critical scholars further agree that (5) the disciples had experiences which they believed were literal appearances of the risen Jesus. Because of these experiences, (6) the disciples were transformed from doubters who were afraid to identify themselves with Jesus to bold proclaimers of his death and resurrection. (7) This message was the center of preaching in the early church and (8) was especially proclaimed in Jerusalem, where Jesus died and was buried shortly before. As a result of this preaching, (9) the church was born and grew, (10) with Sunday as the primary day of worship. (11) James, who had been a skeptic, was converted to the faith when he also believed that he saw the resurrected Jesus. (12) A few years later, Paul was converted by an experience which he, likewise, believed to be an appearance of the risen Jesus.<sup>58</sup>

The hypothesis that gives the best explanation of all this evidence is that Jesus Christ bodily rose from the dead.

While the cumulative case approach as commonly described gives support to

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L. Clarke, “The Argument From Design—A Piece of Abductive Reasoning,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 5, no. 2 (1974): 65–78, and Trent Dougherty and Ted Poston, “A User's Guide to Design Arguments,” *Religious Studies* 44, no. 1 (2008): 99–110.

<sup>57</sup>Gary R. Habermas and Michael R. Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publication, 2004), loc. 337-41, Kindle.

<sup>58</sup>Gary R. Habermas, *The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Jesus* (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Company, 1996), 158.

various Christian conclusions and makes Christianity more probable, it does not necessarily uphold Christianity as an entire system of beliefs, nor does it necessarily falsify opposing worldviews as belief structures that go against truth claims. However, what I see Sims proposing, and what I see in the works of others, is that apologists can use abduction as a means of evaluating the truthfulness of an entire worldview system.

### **Abductive Reasoning, Worldview Analysis, and Truth**

Abductive reasoning is the logical means of worldview selection and assessment for apologetics. Walton recognizes both theory generation and evaluation as “two components of abduction that represent two different tasks undertaken during the execution of abductive reasoning.”<sup>59</sup> So, not only does one use abduction to create the hypothesis (choose or create a worldview to make sense of the data of life), one then uses abduction to evaluate or verify the hypothesis given (test the veracity of a worldview). One can consider worldviews to be the hypotheses that people form to explain reality. William Hasker observes that worldviews “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.”<sup>60</sup>

Some evangelicals may take offense to the treatment of the Christian worldview simply as a considered hypothesis since it is no mere religion, but rather is a relationship with the living God. However, one must first consider that those who do not share the Christian worldview do not have that same attitude or reverence toward the faith, so for them, the faith is nothing more than a mere possibility at best. Secondly, a

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<sup>59</sup>Walton, *Abductive Reasoning*, 22.

<sup>60</sup>William Hasker, *Metaphysics: Constructing a World View*, *Contours of Christian Philosophy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 25-26; quoted in Sims, “Evangelical Worldview Analysis,” 80.

worldview (in a sense) is a hypothesis in that it provides a broad-ranging theory of everything, trying to account for the nature and meaning of the universe (the data of arguments and evidence).<sup>61</sup> So, what an abductive worldview analysis does is start with tentative hypotheses from experience and then through a method of verification subject the hypotheses to testing and confirmation (or disconfirmation) by the coherence of their account with the relevant lines of data.<sup>62</sup>

For worldview apologetics, the apologist takes the data and evidence given in the world and demonstrates how and why his or her hypothesis or belief structure best explains that which exists. As Arlie J. Hoover explicates,

A good worldview is established, not by one line of evidence, or by one knock-out argument, but by cumulative evidence by converging lines from several sources of data. A skillful metaphysician builds up his case by showing that his theory explains material from several divergent sources. Like the separate strands of a rope, his converging lines of evidence combine to strengthen the central theory. The view that has the most strands, other things being equal, is the strongest view.<sup>63</sup>

The Christian apologist presents the Christian worldview as the most cogent view given the converging lines of evidence. As Paul Feinberg describes, “Traditional Christian theists are urging that their explanation makes better sense of all the evidence available than does any other alternative worldview on offer, whether that alternative is some other theistic view or atheism. The opponent is contesting that claim.”<sup>64</sup> Then, also abductively, the apologist evaluates his or her worldview and opposing worldviews for truthfulness according to assured criteria of testing. One then rejects any hypothesis/worldview that

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<sup>61</sup>Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 49-50.

<sup>62</sup>Scott R. Burson and Jerry L. 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), 142-43.

<sup>63</sup>Arlie J. Hoover, *Dear Agnos: A Defense of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), 51-52.

<sup>64</sup>Feinberg, “Cumulative Case Apologetics,” 152.

does not hold up to these cumulative tests of truthfulness. As William Wainwright summarizes, “Attempts to show that a worldview is superior to its rivals are inferences to the best explanation, and . . . the criteria for assessing these explanations are, for the most part, those used in assessing any explanatory hypothesis.”<sup>65</sup> I argue in the next chapter that, based on current worldview apologetic trends, the criteria for assessing the explanatory hypotheses (worldviews) are three truth-tests based on a combined effort of the three major epistemological theories of truth.

Alex McLellan’s metaphorical picture gives an astute analogy to this abductive approach where he likens worldview hypothesizing and evaluation to a jigsaw puzzle.<sup>66</sup> The universe is composed of numerous pieces that, when put together, make a whole picture of reality. Unfortunately, unlike a real jigsaw puzzle, there is no box that displays the picture of how the puzzle ought to look. So, a person must begin somewhat blindly in attempting to put the picture together. However, putting the puzzle together is possible because there are corner pieces and edge pieces where one can begin—the basic building blocks of life to which one can then add other pieces. The more pieces that a person fits together, the better hypothesis/worldview they can make of what the whole of the picture is most likely to be (the abductive reasoning process). The hypothesis/worldview that best explains all the pieces and can continue to fit the remaining pieces rightly has the strongest support. However, many hypotheses/worldviews attempt to make sense of the puzzle, and they contradict one another in such a way that they all cannot be true (one person may say the puzzle is a picture of a dog and another a picture of a flower). So,

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<sup>65</sup>William J. Wainwright, “Worldviews, Criteria and Epistemic Circularity,” in *Inter-Religious Models and Criteria*, ed. J. Kellenberger (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993), 87.

<sup>66</sup>Alex McLellan, “A Jigsaw Guide to Making Sense of the World,” *Just Thinking Magazine*, May 30, 2013, accessed September 1, 2018, <https://rzim.org/just-thinking/a-jigsaw-guide-to-making-sense-of-the-world/>. See also Alex McLellan, *A Jigsaw Guide to Making Sense of the World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2012).



there are ways to abductively test if a hypothesis/worldview gives an accurate account of what puzzle pieces have already been placed together, whether it can account for the remaining pieces, and whether it gives the best explanation of the picture that is forming.

Sims offers a three-step procedure for his version of abductive worldview analysis that summarizes how this worldview apologetic approaches the task. First, the Christian apologist and his or her opponent must find common features to human existence in order to dialogue; next both sides put forward their worldview as being the best explanation of the data; finally, the Christian apologist contrasts his or her position with that of the opponent's.<sup>67</sup> Sims concludes that in the "final assessment, abductive analysis alone possesses the conceptual capacity to engage alternative worldviews."<sup>68</sup>

While I agree that abduction has that capacity, what I find in current works of worldview apologetics is that instead of contrasting worldview positions with one another, the apologist abductively evaluates proposed worldviews according to tests of truth based on the most common epistemological theories of truth in philosophy. Does a hypothesis/worldview meet the cumulative criteria of truth?

### **Analysis of Abduction in Apologetics**

Abductive reasoning has many strengths as a tool in Christian apologetics. First, although logically it only leads to a probable explanation for the evidence, it is not mere guesswork, but instead directs itself toward a rationally strong conclusion. Numerous criteria give credence to it as a method, such that when one infers Christian beliefs, they genuinely are logical extensions given the premises. Second, abduction is not bound to one particular form or structure in its argumentation. There is a freedom and a flexibility in considering any relevant piece of evidence (be it deductive, inductive, or

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<sup>67</sup>Sims, "Evangelical Worldview Analysis," 82.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 115.

otherwise). No critical piece of information is excluded simply because it does not fit the mold of a specified argument. Third, abductive reasoning as a method is flexible enough for use in accounting for any primary theological belief in Christianity and the Christian worldview as a whole. Abduction is not bound only to infer that God exists, but also other major tenets of the faith. Whereas an argument such as the cosmological argument leads to the necessary idea of an Uncaused Cause, it can go no further. Abduction, however, can take into consideration the accumulation of all beliefs. However, as much as there are various strengths to the method, one must also consider whether abductive reasoning can hold its ground against various criticisms and defeaters.

### **Replying to Criticisms of Abductive Reasoning**

Not everyone is enamored with abductive reasoning. Several detractors have raised logical and philosophical criticisms against it as a method. I briefly discuss a sample of such criticisms to determine if they are so powerful that they render abduction impotent as a philosophical tool, thereby demonstrating it to be ineffective for Christian apologetics.

#### **Defense against Logical Fallacies**

As a form of logic, abduction opens itself up to fallacies the same way deduction and induction do. Thus, a fallacy can neutralize the reasoning abduction attempts to convey. There are two specific fallacies that critics often accuse it of committing, thereby claiming any conclusion based on such methods are invalid.

**False alternatives fallacy.** Known by several other names (such as false dilemma fallacy and false choice fallacy), this fallacy argues that the hypothesizer considers too few alternative hypotheses. A philosopher may believe that only two or three hypotheses could explain the given premises, out of which one is the best explanation, but there are several more that he has not envisaged which could equally, or

more likely, explain the given evidence.<sup>69</sup> Thus, all the reasoned hypotheses may be wrong because one has not yet conceived the correct hypothesis.

Of course, taken to its extreme, one could feasibly say that the only way to avoid this fallacy is to consider every single possibility, which could go on infinitely and leads to absurdity. Although it is impossible to deal with every single conceivable alternative hypothesis, it is not irrational to expect the one conducting the abductive reasoning to have carefully considered several highly probable explanations. If the criteria considered in the next chapter has guided the process of creating, choosing, or evaluating hypotheses, it is ill-conceived to assume that someone has not considered enough explanations. Critics often charge Christian apologists with this fallacy, accusing them of merely presupposing a theistic hypothesis to the evidence without having considered what the evidence reveals, nor allowing themselves to consider alternative, non-theistic explanations. A Christian apologist must consider why the evidence does not point elsewhere and be able to give reasons why other hypotheses are unfounded and why the theistic hypothesis is the inference to the best explanation. The apologist ought to have considered and then refuted counterexamples, not presuming on one's preconceived notions.<sup>70</sup>

**Post hoc fallacy.** A post hoc fallacy occurs when an argument (according to critics) unjustifiably concludes that one event caused another event just because there is some connection or positive correlation between the two.<sup>71</sup> For example, I notice that

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<sup>69</sup>T. Edward Damer, *Attacking Faulty Reasoning*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1987), 56-57. See also Howard Kahane, *Logic and Contemporary Rhetoric: The Use of Reason in Everyday Life*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1988), 56-58.

<sup>70</sup>Theo A. F. Kuipers, "Naive and Refined Truth Approximation," *Synthese* 93, no. 3 (1992): 299.

<sup>71</sup>Douglas N. Walton, *Informal Logic: A Handbook for Critical Argumentation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 212. See also Kahane, *Logic and*

every time I wear my favorite sports team's baseball cap, then my favorite team wins, but every time I do not wear my favorite team's baseball cap, then my team loses. Therefore, I conclude that my cap wearing determined the outcome of the games. I happened to observe the correlation, and I reason that one causes the other.

Critics claim that abductive reasoning lends itself to this fallacy. They argue that merely because a hypothesis explains the given premises, it does not necessarily mean that there is some causal relationship. The correlation could merely be a strange coincidence. Still, it would seem presumptuous to deny a causal relationship between premises and explanation without due reason, especially if one considers the reasoning process itself met the criteria of evaluation mentioned in chapter 4. In the approach that I describe, if the explanation meets all the criteria of truth-testing, then the critic bears the burden of proof to demonstrate that such a relationship is fallacious. Abductive reasoning, being a defeasible argument, allows for future evidence to call into question the hypothesis, but if the conclusion drawn is genuinely the best explanation, it will stand up to the scrutiny. One might argue that when there is "background information strongly opposed to such a causal connection, or the statistical sample in question is too small or unrepresentative, then we make a mistake in jumping to [a] conclusion that we've found a causal connection."<sup>72</sup> However, if that were the case, the hypothesis ought not to have been considered the best explanation in the first place. The criteria for evaluation should have led to a different conclusion. Therefore, if the abductive process led to a causal connection, it is more than reasonable to hold on to the explanation until further evidence proves otherwise.

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*Contemporary Rhetoric*, 79-81.

<sup>72</sup>Kahane, *Logic and Contemporary Rhetoric*, 81.

## Defense against Bas van Fraassen's Criticisms

Bas van Fraassen, Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at San Francisco State University, raises several objections to abductive reasoning, of which this paper considers two.<sup>73</sup> Van Fraassen at one point argues that one could use abduction in scientific inquiry, but empirical adequacy and truth only connect when the theory considers that which is observable.<sup>74</sup> When one comes to a hypothesis from premises regarding the observable world, only then is the conclusion deemed empirically adequate and valid. If one draws a conclusion from unobservable premises (what he calls theoretical entities), then there is no way to connect with the truth, for anything unobservable is epistemically inaccessible.<sup>75</sup> This critique has a direct impact on Christian apologetics as numerous arguments base themselves on logical rules of inference (theoretical), not observed empirical data. Stathis Psillos adequately answers this objection, noting that it is presumptuous and wrong to assume that the epistemic status of beliefs based on observables is automatically superior to that of “unobservables.”<sup>76</sup> It is biased to suppose that perception has a stronger foundation of justification than logical inferences. One ought not to hold unobservable data to some higher standard than observable data.

Van Fraassen's second criticism, related to the false alternatives fallacy, is often called the “argument from the bad lot.” Van Fraassen argues that someone making

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<sup>73</sup>Although van Fraassen's criticisms deal specifically with abduction within the philosophy of science, his objections could cause issues with the abductive process as a whole, rendering it moot for any field of scholarship. Therefore, his criticisms deserve answers to consider abduction a viable philosophical tool.

<sup>74</sup>Bas C. van Fraassen, *The Scientific Image*, Clarendon Library of Logic and Philosophy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 71-72.

<sup>75</sup>Stathis Psillos, “On Van Fraassen's Critique of Abductive Reasoning,” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 46, no. 182 (1996): 34.

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, 34-35.

the inference from the evidence must take a step beyond merely making a comparative judgment and must genuinely believe that they can find the true conclusion within hypotheses that are already available to them rather than any hypothesis that is not. However, the hypotheses readily available to the hypothesizer may all be rubbish. In order to claim to have the truth, the hypothesizer must assume that he possesses a privilege, a natural predisposition, for being able to determine the right range of hypotheses from which to choose.<sup>77</sup> So, for a Christian apologist to claim truth in his conclusions, he must claim that he possesses knowledge of all relevant hypotheses along with the ability to infer the best explanation from them. However, for van Fraassen, all the known relevant hypotheses might be entirely off. Thus, van Fraassen deems it necessary to exclude the possibility of the bad lot before giving warrant for calling a hypothesis empirically adequate and true.

As Psillos observes, this then leads to “bald scepticism” because “very few beliefs, if any, can be warranted if warrant involves elimination of the possibility that the belief may be false.”<sup>78</sup> With the defeasibility of the abductive process, there always is a possibility that one could draw wrong conclusions, but to immediately assume that the truth lies outside known (or knowable) hypotheses is an error. One must consider that when discovering hypotheses, or choosing the best hypotheses, explanatory processes have played a role in guiding the process, so hypothesizers have taken caution in coming to their conclusions.<sup>79</sup> With a logical process in place, and the possibility of generating a reasonable hypothesis (not merely choosing one out of a predetermined lot), van

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<sup>77</sup>Bas C. van Fraassen, *Laws and Symmetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 142-43.

<sup>78</sup>Psillos, “On Van Fraassen’s Critique of Abductive Reasoning,” 37.

<sup>79</sup>Samir Okasha, “Van Fraassen’s Critique of Inference to the Best Explanation,” *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 31, no. 4 (2000): 695.

Fraassen's argument from the bad lot does not hinder the abductive process. Thus, his criticisms do not prevent abductive reasoning from being a tool of finding satisfactory and true conclusions in scientific, philosophic, or apologetic fields.

### **Defense against Anthony Flew's Leaky Bucket Critique**

One final criticism that attempts to undermine the abductive process specifically within Christian apologetic methodology is the “ten leaky buckets argument.” Maintained by Antony Flew (who at the time was a staunch atheist), this argument states that if any solitary evidence, argument, or premise is weak and fails in itself to point to the truthfulness of a hypothesis, the accumulation of such proofs is unable to do any better in leading to a right conclusion.<sup>80</sup> He writes, “If one leaky bucket will not hold water that is not reason to think that ten can.”<sup>81</sup> From his standpoint, a proof that has problems—has a leak in it and is unable to hold water—will not support an explanation even if it is joined together with nine other leaky buckets (arguments) that also support that explanation. Thus, an apologist may argue that although individual arguments such as the cosmological, teleological, and moral each have problems and do not necessarily point with certainty to the Christian God, together they form individual premises that support a cumulative case for the inference that God is the best explanation.

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<sup>80</sup>Flew would later repudiate his atheism. He credits several arguments and evidences given in science and mathematics that pointed to a creative intelligence as the origin of life. One could say that Flew no longer saw a leak in that bucket. See Antony Flew, *There Is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind* (New York: HarperOne, 2007), 74-78.

<sup>81</sup>Antony Flew, *God & Philosophy* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), 63. Alasdair MacIntyre makes a similar argument when he says, “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 no better than one.” Alasdair MacIntyre, *Difficulties in Christian Belief* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), 63, quoted in Abraham, “Cumulative Case Arguments for Christian Theism,” 18.

Flew argues that since each argument has issues such that it separately cannot carry a burden of proof, cumulatively a group of such arguments fares no better.

Paul Feinberg gives two strong answers to this criticism. First, Flew might have an argument if the proofs claim to substantiate a conclusion with certainty. However, that is not the case with abduction. Abductive reasoning leads to a hypothesis that is more probable than not, given the accumulation of evidence that needs explanation, and seems to point to the Christian worldview as the best explanation. The critic may come up with a different conclusion, but then the burden of proof shifts to the critic to demonstrate how his or her explanation is more plausible than the one given by the Christian apologist.<sup>82</sup> His second answer to the criticism is that the evidence and arguments used by the Christian apologist tend to reinforce one another. Where one premise may be weak, a second premise strengthens it, and thus all the premises together are strong enough to support the conclusion. As Feinberg answers Flew's metaphor, "Unless the holes in all ten buckets line up perfectly so that the water will spill out, one bucket may so reinforce another bucket so that the ten leaky buckets will indeed make a bucket that will carry water. The apologist is arguing that Christian theism is the best explanation of *all* available evidence *taken together*."<sup>83</sup> Thus, Flew's concern that accumulated weak premises do not support the hypothesis is itself an argument that has sprung a leak.

While a type of logic that opens itself to defeaters, abduction still has many strengths that overcomes perceived weaknesses. Abduction is able to choose or create hypotheses that best explain the data to high probabilities using a wide range of arguments and evidences. Even so, these criticisms highlight the necessity that if one is

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<sup>82</sup>Feinberg, "Cumulative Case Apologetics," 167.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid. Emphasis original.



going to make truth claims about a given hypothesis/worldview, there needs to be sound criteria to buttress the conclusion.

### **Criteria for Evaluating Worldview Hypotheses**

Without careful analysis, one may overlook abductive reasoning as nothing more than mere guesswork. Some may argue that anyone could pick and choose whatever premises they wanted, which have no relation to one another, and then conclude with any off-the-wall explanation as proof for any presupposed theory they held (a charge often placed against the Christian worldview). Thus, it is necessary to consider if there are criteria for appraising the creation, choosing, or evaluation of a hypothesis/worldview which guide the process itself and lay the foundation for considering abduction a persuasive rational tool for philosophical thought.

Paul Feinberg notes that “to settle conflicting truth claims and determine what is the best explanation for all the data, there must be some tests for truth. The reason for this is simple: Christianity is not the only worldview that claims to be true.”<sup>84</sup> While several hypotheses/worldviews claim to have abductively given the best explanation, there must be criteria by which to measure such contentions. Peirce considered that a hypothesis must possess three aspects if it is to be a likely explanation for the given evidence—this from a philosophy of science perspective. First, the hypothesis must have the ability to give an account that explains all the facts under consideration. Second, the hypothesis must be testable; otherwise, it is nothing more than a mere suggestion until verified. Finally, it must be economical—a simple explanation.<sup>85</sup>

Christian theologians and apologists have put forth many different lists of criteria which help determine if a worldview is truthful and the best explanation. The lists

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<sup>84</sup>Feinberg, “Cumulative Case Apologetics,” 153.

<sup>85</sup>Aliseda, *Abductive Reasoning*, 36.

are quite similar, so a composite should do in giving an overall picture for what they suggest for hypothesis/worldview testing.<sup>86</sup> First, the hypothesis must have explanatory viability—it must feasibly explain all the given premises. Next, the hypothesis must correspond with reality—it must agree with the facts and with the historical and empirical dimensions of existence. Then it also must have coherence—everything conceptually linked without any contradiction. Next, the hypothesis must be rational—there is a logical consistency in the causal explanation. Then it must be simple—it ought to not need to contain multiple points to touch every fact. One prefers a simple hypothesis with a central point that explains the premises rather than something complicated. Also, it must be compatible with background theories—it cannot contradict theories which it assumes are true. Finally, it must have the ability to accommodate counter evidence, answering possible defeaters and criticisms that others raise.

While helpful, such a long list may beg the question about the rationale for including these criteria. Without some form of reasoning for why a person includes this or that criterion, it may come across that the person just chose these benchmarks on a whim. Any included standards themselves ought to have some philosophical or logical support. The criteria for abductive hypothesis/worldview analysis that several worldview apologists use are tests of truth based upon the epistemological theories of truth (as explained in the next chapter). These criteria are themselves neutral to all views, and therefore theorists cannot manipulate them to the advantage of a hypothesis they already hold. If a theistic hypothesis (i.e., Christian worldview) is the best inference, one cannot dismiss it offhand without further explanation.

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<sup>86</sup>The following list is a compendium from several authors, given in no particular order. See the following: Paul D. Feinberg, “Cumulative Case Apologetics,” 153-56; Samples, *Without a Doubt*, 109; Wallace, *Cold-Case Christianity*, sect. 1, chap. 2; Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 52-59; and Valeriano Iranzo, “Abduction and Inference to the Best Explanation,” *Theoria* 22, no. 3 (2007): 341.

## Conclusion

Abductive reasoning has shown itself an expedient philosophical tool for use in apologetics and is worthy of further scholarly inquiry. As I have argued, abduction is particularly compelling in that it not only has strengths as a form of reasoning in itself and as a philosophical methodology, but it also more than adequately answers the criticisms placed against it. If one comes to the method knowing from the start its limitations—that it does not prove certainty but can only lead one to the *probable* best explanation—one will not expect it to produce what it never was meant to produce. Some may argue that without certainty it is weak. However, as Ronald Nash determines, “even though no worldview can rise above logical probability, it may still be believed with moral certainty. A single proposition or system of propositions that is only probable in the logical sense may still generate certainty in the psychological or moral sense.”<sup>87</sup> Ravi Zacharias even deems that it is wrong to seek and expect absolute certainty (from a rational, scientific, and philosophical standpoint) for such a task is impossible to attain for any human argument or evidence.<sup>88</sup>

What abduction is meant to produce, it does so effectively. Given that numerous criteria are in place to ensure its credence as a methodology, it has the freedom and flexibility to utilize any available form or structure of evidence as its premises, and it has the ability to infer not only particular Christian doctrines but also the entire worldview, and it more than stands up to the criticisms raised against it. Abduction is an

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<sup>87</sup>Ronald H. Nash, *Worldviews in Conflict: Choosing Christianity in a World of Ideas* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 71.

<sup>88</sup>Ravi Zacharias, "The 3.4.5 Grid" (video), vol. 3.1, RZIM Academy Core Course, accessed February 17, 2018, [https://courses.rzimacademy.org/lms/index.php?r=player&course\\_id=1538&coming\\_from=lp&id\\_plan=121#training](https://courses.rzimacademy.org/lms/index.php?r=player&course_id=1538&coming_from=lp&id_plan=121#training). It is important to note that when evangelical stalwarts like Nash or Zacharias claim this about certainty, they in no way deny the certainty of the truths espoused in Scripture. Instead, that which depends solely on human thinking and intellect cannot move much further than a substantial probability of truth as far as human understanding goes. Still, this probability can go a long way in arguing for the truthfulness of a worldview.

acceptable method for consideration in defense of the Christian faith. However, one needs to examine more closely the criteria proposed by several leading worldview apologists for using abduction to demonstrate how it tests the truthfulness of worldview hypotheses.

CHAPTER 4  
DEMONSTRATING WORLDVIEW TRUTHFULNESS

**Introduction**

In what one can only describe as a shocking admission to the spirit of the age, Oxford Dictionaries named “post-truth” as its “Word of the Year” for AD 2016. Post-truth is defined as “relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.”<sup>1</sup> Such a blatant declaration reveals a movement in Western culture that steps away from a belief that there is an objective truth found in reality which everyone (who has reasoning capabilities) ought to recognize and admit, in exchange for a creed of allowing one to create truth and reality according to one’s whim.<sup>2</sup> Besides the obviously self-defeating aspects of such beliefs (i.e., one cannot objectively claim any truth to the statement that there is no objective truth), this also reveals that a person’s worldview manipulates their view of truth to a certain extent.<sup>3</sup> However, one would even need to test this aspect of a

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<sup>1</sup>“Word of the Year 2016 Is . . . ,” *Oxford Dictionary*, accessed December 7, 2018, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/word-of-the-year/word-of-the-year-2016>.

<sup>2</sup>Ravi Zacharias recognizes five major shifts in Western society that are the root cause of the shift away from objective truth: (1) the popularization of the death of God movement (which brought with it the death of truth); (2) the disorienting blow of religious pluralism within the context of Western culture; (3) the power to inform through the visual and the blurring of reality and imagination; (4) the lost center of cultural molding—a vacuum at the heart of a culture, leaving nothing to hold things together; and (5) the shifting of power to a younger world. Ravi Zacharias, “An Ancient Message, through Modern Means, to a Postmodern Mind,” in *Telling the Truth: Evangelizing Postmoderns*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 20-24. These themselves are worldview issues that I believe one can address through worldview apologetics.

<sup>3</sup>Archie J. Hoover notes, “You can’t possibly be a complete sceptic. A total sceptic must say: ‘There is no truth at all,’ which is impossible to affirm because the proposition itself claims to be true. You’d be saying: ‘It is a truth that there are no truths.’”

worldview for truthfulness. The lack of there being a fixed point of reference that is the truth of reality only causes confusion.

Abdu Murray likens the need for truth to a ride he took on a car ferry. While sitting in his car and looking at his radio, he did not see the ferry disembark from the shore nor feel it leave the dock. When he looked up, he saw the river moving but had that weird feeling of being unsure if he was moving or not. He opines that looking at the boat would not have helped because the boat too would have been moving and the ever-flowing river provided no fixed point of reference. Only by looking at the land that never moved could he clear his confusion. The certainty of objective facts that truthfully reflect reality serves as such a reference point.<sup>4</sup> Whether people want to admit it or not, the truth is objective and absolute. “What is true is true for all people at all times in all places, whether they know it or not, believe it or not, and like it or not.”<sup>5</sup>

It might appear that such an attack on truth would place an apologist in a conundrum. If the apologist’s worldview claims an objective truth, while the other person’s worldview makes no such concession, can there ever be any meaningful dialogue and is worldview analysis possible? The issue, as Ravi Zacharias admits it, is that “with the death of truth, the unique capability of Homo sapiens for abstract reasoning

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If there are no truths, then the proposition as a whole is false. The assertion destroys itself. A sceptic can’t even affirm his scepticism without undercutting himself.” Arlie J. Hoover, *Dear Agnos: A Defense of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), 23. As Zacharias humorously states, “It used to be said, ‘If a Cretan tells you all Cretans are liars, can you believe him?’ Now we have to ask ourselves if we can believe it when a post-truth culture tells us it is a post-truth culture.” Ravi Zacharias, “The Death of Truth and a Postmortem,” *Global Blog*, December 20, 2016, accessed September 8, 2018, <https://rzim.org/global-blog/the-death-of-truth-and-a-postmortem/>.

<sup>4</sup>Abdu Murray, “Aspiring Angels,” *Just Thinking Magazine*, February 23, 2017, accessed August 31, 2018, <https://rzim.org/just-thinking/aspiring-angels/>.

<sup>5</sup>Tawa J. Anderson, W. Michael Clark, and David K. Naugle, *An Introduction to Christian Worldview: Pursuing God’s Perspective in a Pluralistic World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017), 70.

and language is now taken to the morgue and all language is meaningless.”<sup>6</sup> Without the existence of truth, there can be no exchange of ideas nor any consequential discourse to come to an understanding of the universe. As Douglas Groothuis admits,

Without objective criteria, each worldview would be hermetically sealed off from other worldviews, since each would have its own truth claims and its own ways of verifying them. But if Christians desire to demonstrate the truth and rationality of Christianity to those who hold other worldviews, they must apply objective criteria to the contending worldviews. If none are given, there is no apologetic.<sup>7</sup>

Thankfully, Zacharias later declares that “the tug of reality is ultimately unbreakable.”<sup>8</sup> A person may deny the truth all that they want, but in the end, the absolute truth of reality will always come to bear. Moreover, truth, by definition, has an exclusivity. If truth was all-inclusive, then nothing would be false. If nothing was false, then there would be no meaning to truth.<sup>9</sup> Even still, armchair philosophers have muddied the waters about the concept itself.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Ravi Zacharias, “Think Again: Timeless Words,” *Just Thinking Magazine*, February 23, 2017, accessed March 20, 2018, <http://rzim.org/just-thinking/think-again-timeless-words/>.

<sup>7</sup>Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 51.

<sup>8</sup>Zacharias, “Think Again: Timeless Words.”

<sup>9</sup>Ravi Zacharias, “The Inextinguishable Light,” *Just Thinking Magazine*, November 8, 1996, accessed September 8, 2018, <https://rzim.org/just-thinking/the-inextinguishable-light/>.

<sup>10</sup>Vince Vitale writes that there is a confusion about the concept of truth: We are very confused about the truth: There’s the truth, and then there’s the naked truth. There’s the truth, and then there’s the gospel truth (though the gospel is taken to be obviously false). There’s the honest truth, and then there’s the God’s honest truth (but that has nothing to do with God). We stretch the truth and bend the truth and twist the truth. We bury the truth because the truth hurts. When we want something to be false, we knock on wood. When we want something to be true, we cross our fingers. Which wooden cross are we trusting in? Why do we have such a confused relationship with the truth? Fear. We’re afraid of truth. Truth has so often been abused that experience has taught us the trajectory of truth—the trajectory of believing you are right and others are wrong—is from truth to disagreement to devaluing to intolerance to extremism to violence to terrorism. And if that is the trajectory, then those committed to truth are in fact terrorists in the making. If that is the trajectory, then truth is an act of war, and an act of war leaves you with only two

In the Bible, Pilate asked Jesus, “What is truth?” but then walked away without receiving the answer (John 18:38). Philosophers have argued that question for many millennia, and there was agreement (until recently) that there is such a thing as objective truth and any claim of truth is testable. Zacharias says that “truth is primarily a property of propositions where words present objective reality as it really is. Even manipulators of the truth know that truth is only subjective when one has victimized others and needs a fabrication.”<sup>11</sup> Since truth is real and objective, truth has specific attributes:

When we use the word truth, truth by its nature is non-contradictory. It doesn't violate the basic laws of logic. Truth is absolute—it does not depend on time, place or conditions. . . . Truth is discovered. It exists independently of our minds. . . . Truth is descriptive—it is the agreement of the mind with reality. . . . Truth is inescapable—to deny truth's existence is to affirm it. . . . Truth is unchanging—it is the firm standard by which truth claims can be measured. There has to be something eternal, beyond time, culture, and relativities of human existence. It is the standard by which we can judge.<sup>12</sup>

Based on this high view of truth people need to rightly and objectively analyze their worldview and the worldview of others for truth. Without such a high view of the truth, a person is vulnerable to the manipulation of those who would attempt to shape truth to their own nefarious ends, and that person is unable to enjoy the freedom and fulfillment of life that the truth makes available to the individual.<sup>13</sup> A worldview (even one that denies such a thing as truth) makes truth claims. It is at this point where one compares worldviews for apologetic purposes—do the claims of a worldview sync with truth?

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options: fight or flee.

Vince Vitale, “The Trajectory of Truth,” *Just Thinking Magazine*, February 23, 2017, accessed August 31, 2018, <https://rzim.org/just-thinking/the-trajectory-of-truth/>.

<sup>11</sup>Zacharias, “Think Again: Timeless Words.”

<sup>12</sup>Stuart McAllister, “Truth and Reality” (video), Foundations of Apologetics, accessed June 9, 2018, <https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Content/Series/161813?episode=2>.

<sup>13</sup>Os Guinness, *Time for Truth: Living Free in a World of Lies, Hype & Spin* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 82-85.



To answer that question and to compare the claims between worldviews, there must be criteria to test for worldview truthfulness.<sup>14</sup> Worldviews as systematic belief structures make claims about truth and assertions about reality—so they are only meaningful insofar as they give a narrative about objective truths.<sup>15</sup> Those narratives are thus comparable at the points of their truth claims. Just because a worldview makes such truth claims does not mean that it answers every possible question about reality and human existence, nor that it is without gaps. However, as Zacharias notes, the question then becomes: “Does my paradigm fit reality and have enough reason behind it to explain how these gaps might actually be filled and remain consistent?”<sup>16</sup> That being the case, “Because various worldviews come to fundamentally different conclusions about the big questions of life, logic and reason mandate that not all perspectives can be true. The rational choice of one particular position ought to be made—and can be made—via testing and evaluation.”<sup>17</sup> However, worldview claims are verifiable for truth only to the

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<sup>14</sup>Hoover, *Dear Agnos*, 26. As Zacharias politely says, “I must state from the outset that one can be gracious in disagreeing and that everyone has a right to his or her belief. What we must all remember, though, is that not everything a person believes is right—and one had better take his or her belief system to the scrutiny of truth.” Ravi Zacharias, “The Chimera of Pantheism,” in *To Everyone an Answer: A Case for the Christian Worldview*, ed. Francis J. Beckwith, William Lane Craig, and J. P. Moreland (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 311. A worldview is only as good as its relationship to truth; therefore, every worldview is open to scrutiny.

<sup>15</sup>Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 76. William P. Alston claims that “*Everything* we believe can be assessed for truth value. Therefore our interpretation of truth affects the status of everything we believe, whatever the subject matter. And if our concept of truth is a realist one, then *all* our beliefs owe their truth value to the fact that they are related in a certain way to a reality beyond themselves.” William P. Alston, *A Realist Conception of Truth* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1996), 8. Emphasis original. That means that one can weigh the entirety of the belief structure of a worldview against reality.

<sup>16</sup>Ravi Zacharias, “Think Again: A Bigger Story,” May 30, 2013, accessed September 1, 2018, <https://rzm.org/just-thinking/think-again-a-bigger-story/>.

<sup>17</sup>Kenneth Richard Samples, *A World of Difference: Putting Christian Truth-Claims to the Worldview Test* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 28. As Zacharias indicates, “Truth by definition is exclusive. Whenever you make a certain affirmation or an assertion you are excluding the opposite. And when you make a statement absolutely,

point that those claims are capable of corroboration by objective truth-tests that lie outside the worldview itself (as much as possible).<sup>18</sup>

The exact criteria for determining if something is true has been the debate of philosophers for many centuries. As mentioned in the previous chapter, any criteria chosen ought to have some sort of basis. Therefore, it is crucial that truth-tests are acceptable and applicable for all people regardless of their worldview—a standard that appeals to humanity’s sense of reasoning to see the difference between truth and error among the varied worldviews.<sup>19</sup> While Zacharias and other worldview apologists recognize two underlying theories of truth (correspondence and coherence), I believe that, with the added pragmatic theory, these give apologists three epistemological principles of truth that then undergird three truth-tests for worldviews.<sup>20</sup> Taken together, these three tests demonstrate the veracity or falsity of a belief structure by revealing whether the worldview holds to the scrutiny of the data revealed by the tests.

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if you start qualifying it, it ends up dying the death of a thousand qualifications and sub-qualifications.” Ravi Zacharias, "Who Is Jesus: Defending Jesus Christ as the Way, Part 1," Let My People Think (MP3 podcast), December 30, 2017, accessed January 6, 2018, <http://rzimmedia.rzim.org/LMPT/LMP20171230.mp3>.

<sup>18</sup>Dan Story, *Christianity on the Offense: Responding to the Beliefs and Assumptions of Spiritual Seekers* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1998), 41-42. Zacharias explains that “if something is true, it will also be true in what God has said of reality and the nature of life and destiny and origin and meaning and so on. So, if it is true, it is not just secularly true, it is also true in the theological realm.” Ravi Zacharias, "Critical Thinking: A Christian Essential Part 2," Let My People Think (MP3 podcast), March 17, 2018, accessed April 3, 2018, <http://rzimmedia.rzim.org/LMPT/LMP20180317.mp3>.

<sup>19</sup>Story, *Christianity on the Offense*, 42.

<sup>20</sup>Ravi Zacharias, "Establishing a Worldview" (video), Foundations of Apologetics, accessed June 30, 2018, <https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Content/Series/161813?episode=4>. See also Anderson, Clark, and Naugle, *An Introduction to Christian Worldview*, 70-90.

## Epistemological Theories of Truth

Philosophers have both upheld and criticized all three epistemological theories through rigorous debate. I contend that while all three have strengths and all three have weaknesses, the three placed together make a stronger case for truth than any single theory on its own. That is, if the points of belief given in a worldview meet the scrutiny of all three theories, then that worldview has strong evidence to claim truth for itself. Moreover, it is these three theories of truth that undergird the means for testing worldview truthfulness or falsity. This chapter first considers what the three epistemological theories of truth state and what their strengths and weaknesses are, and then considers the three tests for truth that they generate for worldview analysis.

### Coherence Theory

A coherence theory of truth argues that when a belief coheres to the other beliefs within one's noetic structure (or, for this paper, if a belief coheres with other beliefs within one's worldview—the belief structure), then it is more likely that belief is true. If the premises of a person's belief structure offer no contradiction to one another, then it is more likely that the whole structure is true. If something does not fit within a system of what is known to be true or what has happened in one's experience, then it is rejected as false.<sup>21</sup> Donald G. Bloesch writes that, according to this theory, “The meaning of the part can only be understood through the meaning of the whole. The measure of truth is the illumination and integration of our total experience in the light of an overarching idea or principle. A proposition is said to be true if it fits into an all-encompassing logical system.”<sup>22</sup> He highlights that a solitary belief is only as good as the

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<sup>21</sup>Perry C. Cotham, *One World, Many Neighbors: A Christian Perspective on Worldviews* (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2008), 44.

<sup>22</sup>Donald G. Bloesch, *The Ground of Certainty: Toward an Evangelical Theology of Revelation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 130.

worldview of which it is a part. Still, if there is a single belief within an entire structure that is false, this demonstrates a fault within the structure itself—the worldview as a whole has less probability for truth when individual beliefs within it do not synch with one another. It is possible to recognize coherence in a belief system because the universe itself is a coherent system—a belief or proposition is true because it “fits into the one comprehensive account of the universe or reality.”<sup>23</sup>

Within coherence, there are no varying levels of beliefs which would justify the inclusion of false beliefs that are not fundamental to the overall structure (i.e., a form of foundationalism that would allow for false non-basic beliefs as long as the basic beliefs are still intact). As J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig explain this theory:

The essence of coherentism lies in the fact that there are no asymmetries between basic and nonbasic beliefs. All beliefs are on a par with each other, and the main, or more likely, sole source of the justification of a beliefs is the fact that the belief appropriately “coheres” with the other beliefs in one’s noetic structure. . . . The coherence theories of truth [mean], roughly, the notion that a proposition is true if and only if it is part of a coherent set of propositions.<sup>24</sup>

What sets coherence apart from other theories is that “truth does not consist in the holding of some correspondence between the proposition and some reality which obtains independent of anything that may be believed about it.”<sup>25</sup> The emphasis, then, is if a particular claim or belief is consistent with a specific set or structure of beliefs (for my purposes, a worldview).

It would seem (in a knee-jerk reaction to the theory) that mere coherence is not

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<sup>23</sup>Alan R. White, *Truth* (London: The MacMillan Press, 1970), 110.

<sup>24</sup>J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017), 109-10. Alexis and John Burgess note that this theory is often connected to idealist theories, and state it formulaically: *A belief is true iff it coheres with other ideas*. Alexis G. Burgess and John P. Burgess, *Truth* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 3.

<sup>25</sup>Ralph C. S. Walker, “The Coherence Theory,” in *The Nature of Truth: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Michael P. Lynch (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2001), 124.

enough on several grounds. One might argue that one could have several consistent beliefs that may be true in and of themselves and yet they have no positive connection between them. But Dan O'Brien recognizes that the coherence theory necessitates that there must be a relationship between beliefs: "A coherent belief system is therefore one that lacks logical contradiction, one that is not probabilistically inconsistent, and one in which there are inferential relations between its constituent beliefs."<sup>26</sup> Random propositions do not make a coherent belief system—for it to be a system there must be relations between the beliefs and propositions that constitute the position.

Another possible problem with this theory is that it initially appears that it does nothing to distinguish between truth and falsity—premises may cohere but that does not make them true. Therefore, there would appear to be a need for one to obtain the beliefs independently from one another. This critique may open the theory to criticisms of advocating a relativity of truth—if one's particular set of beliefs all cohere, then it is true regardless of what is really the case or whether or not it correctly represents the world. It may also open the theory to the criticism that beliefs create the truth rather than the other way around. Coherence theorists would deny this—it is not if a belief coheres with the rest of one's beliefs at a certain moment, but if a belief coheres to the specific set of beliefs that determines the truth.<sup>27</sup> Of course, as Ralph Walker himself admits, a pure coherence theory is untenable, so an impure coherence theory that recognizes that there are at least some propositions for which truth consists in correspondence may be stronger (although he also confessed that this does not make the problems with the correspondence theory disappear).<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Dan O'Brien, *An Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017), sect. 2, chap. 7, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>27</sup>Walker, "The Coherence Theory," 135.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 154.

Regardless of the strengths or weakness of coherence, this theory is important in that it demonstrates why pluralism cannot work. If two worldviews hold contradictory statements from one another, they do not cohere and, therefore, both cannot be true. It also is important in that the theory demonstrates a flaw in a worldview system if there are contradictory beliefs within the system itself or if there are contradictions of worldview beliefs with the fundamental laws of logic. Moreover, any time a false system attempts to integrate the truth into its system, it will find that in some way it refutes itself. J. Mark Bertrand indicates this problem when he writes,

Any time an unbelieving worldview borrows truth, a problem of coherence will develop: the truth doesn't fit within a network of lies. As fallen creatures, we are perfectly capable of holding contradicting ideas in tension (in fact, we can even hold them in the mistaken belief that they are not in tension). But when the contradictions are pointed out to us, we question the validity of the system. Even people who revel in paradox and despise logic don't like to be accused of holding contradictory positions unknowingly. Once a person begins to doubt the fundamental coherence of his perspective, he will test it in terms of observed reality. Are there better solutions to the problems around me? If his own beliefs (from which he is already in the process of distancing himself) do not produce solutions, perhaps other, more coherent beliefs would. This is the mind-set the worldview apologist aims to provoke."<sup>29</sup>

Thus, coherence has its place since a worldview that lacks coherence has a high probability of being false. That being the case, a specific test for truth birthed from this theory is logical consistency.

Bertrand further indicates that coherence is not enough to then find the solution to the truth problem, but one must find beliefs that correspond with reality for them to be true.<sup>30</sup> Kenneth Samples agrees as he states, "Coherence is a necessary condition for truth

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<sup>29</sup>J. Mark Bertrand, *Rethinking Worldview: Learning to Think, Live, and Speak in This World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 201.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.* Donald Davidson indicates that "a coherence theory seems at a loss to provide any reason for a believer to believe that his beliefs, if coherent, are true"; he therefore believes that, to accept the coherence theory of truth, it must be consistent with correspondence and must allow for a "nonrelativized, noninternal form of realism." Donald Davidson, "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge," in *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), 139-40, 146. Thus, as I have indicated, while having weaknesses on its own, when partnered with other theories of

but not a sufficient one. In other words, truth must contain coherence, but coherence isn't all that is needed in order to possess truth. . . . Incoherence shows that a worldview must be false; coherence shows that a worldview may be true. As important as coherence is, more is needed for a worldview to pass the ultimate truth test."<sup>31</sup> Arlie J. Hoover also agrees in that he does not believe it was possible to have a complete worldview by coherence since one can "build an elaborate system of propositions that are all coherent but false;" instead, "coherence must forever remain wedded to correspondence."<sup>32</sup>

### **Correspondence Theory**

The correspondence theory of truth states that in order for a belief or other form of proposition to be true it must correspond to reality, that is, whatever the proposition represents actually exists as fact.<sup>33</sup> To deem something as true, then, is independent of the one holding onto the belief. As William P. Alston explains, "A statement (proposition, belief . . . ) is true if and only if what the statement says to be the case actually is the case. . . . There are no epistemic requirements for the truth of my statement. . . . So long as [for example, if I stated that gold is malleable, and that is the case], then what I said is true, whatever the epistemic status of that proposition for any individual or community."<sup>34</sup> Therefore, truth is not only a matter of what one holds in their mind or intellect but also a question of whether what is held in the mind accurately

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truth it finds a place to buttress the truth-testing process.

<sup>31</sup>Samples, *A World of Difference*, 33.

<sup>32</sup>Hoover, *Dear Agnos*, 47.

<sup>33</sup>Moreland and Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, 118. One can state this formulaically: *A belief is true iff it corresponds to reality*. Burgess and Burgess, *Truth*, 3.

<sup>34</sup>Alston, *A Realist Conception of Truth*, 5-6.

reflects what actually is.<sup>35</sup> Some view an independent reality as problematic—would a fact be true if there was no one to think or verbalize it as such? This surely would be the case since the thought or statement merely reflects what exists.

For there to be communication and discussion about truth, one expresses beliefs and propositions verbally or in writing through language. It is important to note that one considers the expression of belief (as far as it is commonly understood) true or false as long as the basic elements of the expression accurately reflect reality—that is, as the words or expressions and the world correspond to one another. For Ludwig Wittgenstein (in his earlier works) a proposition is true as long as it is in full agreement with its smallest fact-stating unit, the truth-possibilities of what he calls elementary propositions.<sup>36</sup> Later in his writings, Wittgenstein would distance himself from such possibilities since it is seemingly impossible to interact with a fact itself without dependence on human judgment. While this exposes some weaknesses in the correspondence theory of truth, this in no way eliminates the possibility of expressing beliefs in such a way that they reflect what truly is. As W. V. Quine explains the theory, “The truth predicate is an intermediary between words and the world. What is true is the sentence [belief, proposition], but its truth consists in the world’s being as the sentence [belief, proposition] says.”<sup>37</sup> So, a belief or other form of proposition is true only if it is a

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<sup>35</sup>Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1921), 1 Q 16 a.1. This is a reminder of what could be the original definition of correspondence theory of truth from Aristotle where he writes, “To say that what is is not, or that what is not is, is false; but to say that what is is, and what is not is not, is true; and therefore also he who says that a thing is or is not will say either what is true or what is false.” Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. Hugh Tredennick (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 1011b.25.

<sup>36</sup>Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960), 4.4. See also A. C. Thiselton, “Truth,” in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 894-95.

<sup>37</sup>W. V. Quine, *Pursuit of Truth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press,



reflection of the state of affairs of the world—it exists outside the individual as reflected by the described statement and one consciously experiences it as such.<sup>38</sup>

This theory is important in analyzing worldviews, for “a good worldview will have a strong foundation in correspondence; it will have factual support. Furthermore, it will include all kinds of data. . . . A good worldview will seek to integrate all kinds of data into a meaningful, coherent picture.”<sup>39</sup> The beliefs that make up the structure of the worldview must accurately reflect what truly exists within the world. Abduction fits nicely here, gathering the facts against which one may test a worldview. Worldview apologetics weighs all the data since there is “no single argument that is guaranteed to persuade every unbeliever or to assuage every doubt in a believer’s heart. But since every fact testifies to . . . reality . . . the apologist has no shortage of resources, but rather a great abundance.”<sup>40</sup> Therefore, important parts of a worldview’s belief structure must be available for empirical scrutiny, although other parts may be more abstract and logical and therefore open for analysis of its evidential consistency.

Since not every aspect of a worldview is measurable or available for analysis from the purview of a correspondence theory of truth, hanging the entirety of one’s grounds for truthfulness upon this one theory is not tenable. As Hoover indicates,

A far greater limitation to the Correspondence Theory is the simple fact that there is much of reality with which we can’t directly “correspond.” You simply can’t “check the referent” every time you wish. Much, maybe most, of reality outruns our direct investigative powers. Not being omniscient, we must close the knowledge gap with another method of truth-finding. Enter the Coherence Theory! If we can’t correspond with all reality, the only way we can ever escape the tyranny of the immediate and have a worldview—a view of the entire universe—is to round out

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1990), 81.

<sup>38</sup>Hoover, *Dear Agnos*, 45-46.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>40</sup>John M. Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God: An Introduction* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub., 1994), 64.

the Correspondence Theory with the Coherence Theory.<sup>41</sup>

So, one needs the correspondence theory of truth for an overall analysis of the truthfulness of the system, but it is not enough. One must couple it with the coherence theory of truth, where together each is brought closer to analyzing whether a singular belief or an entire belief system of a worldview reflects the truth. Therefore, the beliefs that make up a worldview must both correspond to reality and cohere with one another logically. To lose either of these demonstrates the system as most probably false. However, there is one more epistemological theory of truth that undergirds the truth-testing process of worldviews—the pragmatic theory of truth.

### **Pragmatic Theory**

The pragmatic theory of truth requires something to be livable and useful. One experiences an idea or belief as true as it bears practical fruit in the life of a subject. As William James, one of its earliest proponents, explains, “*True ideas are those that we can assimilate, validate, corroborate and verify. False ideas are those that we can not. . . .*” The truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. Truth *happens* to an idea. It *becomes* true, is *made* true by events. Its verity *is* in fact an event, a process: the process namely of its verifying itself, its *verif-ication* [*sic*]. Its validity is the process of its *valid-ation* [*sic*].”<sup>42</sup> So the epistemological status of a belief is not merely a stagnant mental exercise of data comparison or deep logical analysis but is very much active—truth is truth when it works. As James further explains,

You can say of it then either that “it is useful because it is true” or that “it is true because it is useful.” Both these phrases mean exactly the same thing, namely that here is an idea that gets fulfilled and can be verified. True is the name for whatever

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<sup>41</sup>Hoover, *Dear Agnos*, 46.

<sup>42</sup>William James, *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*, (1907; repr., New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1922), 201. Emphasis original. One can state this formulaically: *A belief is true iff it is useful in practice*. Burgess and Burgess, *Truth*, 3.

idea starts the verification-process, useful is the name for its completed function in experience. True ideas would never have been singled out as such, would never have acquired a class-name, least of all a name suggesting value, unless they had been useful from the outset in this way.”<sup>43</sup>

The truth of an idea is only verifiable as it leads to a worthwhile practical experience since, according to the pragmatic theory, truth is truth only when connected to livability. As James also expounds, “Primarily, and on the common-sense level, the truth of a state of mind means this function of *a leading that is worth while*. When a moment in our experience, of any kind whatever, inspires us with a thought that is true, that means that sooner or later we dip by that thought’s guidance into the particulars of experience again and make advantageous connexion with them.”<sup>44</sup>

James’ fellow pragmatist John Dewey explains,

*If* ideas, meanings, conceptions, notions, theories, systems are instrumental to an active reorganization of the given environment, to a removal of some specific trouble and perplexity, then the test of their validity and value lies in accomplishing this work. If they succeed in their office, they are reliable, sound, valid, good, true. If they fail to clear up confusion, to eliminate defects, if they increase confusion, uncertainty and evil when they are acted upon, then are they false.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, truth is grounded in experience within the context of concrete social and behavioral settings, and one discovers truth through complete human involvement, not merely cold, detached observation from afar.<sup>46</sup> So a belief (or another form of proposition) represents reality not only when it explains experience soundly, but also when it is fruitful in dealing with the practicality of life laid before it—not merely giving an abstract or theoretical explanation for it.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>William James, *Pragmatism*, 204.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, 205. Emphasis original.

<sup>45</sup>John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920), 156. Emphasis original.

<sup>46</sup>Bloesch, *The Ground of Certainty*, 133.

<sup>47</sup>Thiselton, “Truth,” 896.

C. I. Lewis espoused a further consideration with his conceptual pragmatism. As one experiences the world, one holds certain concepts and principles that interpret what one encounters—the a priori. Thus, the concepts and words that one uses to express the experience have pragmatic value. The truth or falsity of one’s conceptual scheme (which is chosen for pragmatic reasons) determines how one experiences and interprets what occurs, and what words one uses to explain them.<sup>48</sup> Thus, not only are the experiences themselves of truth value, but the concepts that interpret them and the words that explain them are also important parts of one’s understanding of truth.

This theory, like the others, is not without its problems. Moreland and Craig note,

Advocates of pragmatism claim that problems with the other two theories, our inability to transcend our theories (language, beliefs) and get to the external world (if there is such a thing; most pragmatists are antirealists) all favor pragmatism. Critics claim that it is self-refuting, that in their defense of the view, its advocates do not recommend pragmatism because the theory is itself “useful” but because it corresponds to certain facts about language, scientific theory testing and so forth, that it is a form of relativism, and that it fails the phenomenological argument for the correspondence theory.<sup>49</sup>

Critics also claim that “a false belief may help someone to come to terms with life, or may help him to see the way forward in a particular situation; but this does not make it true.”<sup>50</sup> In reality, determining causal connections between a belief and its benefits is difficult enough, much less to claim truthfulness. Someone may claim that the sight of a squirrel in a tree caused them to reconsider life choices such that they quit smoking, but to be able to say such a thing is true is difficult without some corroboration of it also corresponding to reality and cohering to the rest of a person’s belief system.

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<sup>48</sup>Clarence Irving Lewis, *Mind and the World-Order* (New York: Dover Publications, 1929), 31-38.

<sup>49</sup>Moreland and Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, 132.

<sup>50</sup>Thiselton, "Truth," 897.

However, the pragmatic theory of truth raises an important consideration regarding worldview analysis. Part of the truthfulness of a worldview is that it is livable. “It is one thing to espouse or hold to a worldview in theory. It is another to live faithfully to that worldview when it meets up with reality.”<sup>51</sup> A worldview can make many lofty claims that look good on paper or in theory in an intellectual discussion, but if it places itself beyond the ability for its adherents to live out, then the theory loses its truthfulness no matter how much empirical verification or how logically consistent it might at first seem.

By no means are these three the only theories of truth propounded by philosophers, yet they have some of the deepest roots in the discussion of truth. While the three have their strengths and weaknesses, what one finds is that together they undergird one another enough that if a worldview would be able to meet all three theories, it has a higher probability of being true than any other worldview. These three theories of truth bear three tests of truth by which inquirers scrutinize worldviews.

### **Tests for Truth in Worldview Analysis**

These three epistemological theories of truth then undergird three tests (or criteria) to measure the truthfulness of not only the individual beliefs of a worldview but also the entire system itself. The question is if worldview A meets the tests of truth and satisfies the criteria better than worldview B.<sup>52</sup> Ravi Zacharias writes, “I suggest that there are three tests to which any system . . . that makes a claim to truth must be subjected as a preliminary requirement if that [system] is to be considered meaningful. . . . These

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<sup>51</sup>Dave Currie, “The Apologetic Method of Ravi Zacharias: A Critical Appraisal and Evaluation” (master's thesis, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1998), 19.

<sup>52</sup>William J. Wainwright, *Philosophy of Religion* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1988), 173.

three tests provide a high degree of confidence that as they are applied to a system of belief, truth or falsehood can be established.”<sup>53</sup> Zacharias later explains that people could make an unbiased analysis of their own worldview and that of others: “Humanity is able to move outside itself to a legitimate degree. And what it ends up doing . . . is [that one can] measure its pronouncements by external verification for correspondence and coherence. When you make a statement you can check it out correspondingly to be true. When you build a system, you can look at it as a systemically coherent worldview.”<sup>54</sup>

It is not enough for a worldview to meet only one of these tests. A worldview might have beliefs that correspond with reality but are not coherent with one another. Alternatively, a worldview may have coherence, but the system itself is not livable or pragmatic. Therefore, it is important to have a series of tests that match the varied ways humanity interacts with reality. As Zacharias notes,

Man is unquestionably multisensory, or multifaceted, and the intimations of reality come to us from a diversity of sources. Therefore, it stands to reason that no one test will capture all of reality. The combination of several weaknesses, would be the ideal path to take. That is why this method is often called combinationalism, or systematic consistency. It combines several methods to arrive at logical consistency, empirical adequacy, and experiential relevance.<sup>55</sup>

Although I do not use the term “combinationalism,” others have used the term to refer to any multi-layered truth-testing system. Worldview apologists use a system of three truth-tests founded on the three theories. For instance, Graham Cole recognizes,

Our [worldview] matters. We all have at least one, or maybe bits of different ones that we have never been able to connect up into some sort of coherent whole. Perhaps this is a question to which we have not really turned our minds in a

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<sup>53</sup>Ravi K. Zacharias, *Can Man Live without God?* (Dallas: Word Publishers, 1994), 123.

<sup>54</sup>Ravi Zacharias, "Is Faith Delusional? Part 1," Let My People Think (MP3 podcast), October 8, 2016, accessed December 1, 2017, <http://rzimmedia.rzim.org/LMPT/LMP20161008.mp3>.

<sup>55</sup>Ravi Zacharias, *A Shattered Visage: The Real Face of Atheism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1990), 192.

sustained way. If we do then the real question becomes: So where do we find a frame of reference or a worldview that tells a coherent and consistent story that really understands us and illuminates the actual world in which we live? We need—if we want to be thoughtful about it—a frame of reference that is thinkable, that is, one that is not riddled with self-contradiction. It also needs to be livable—that is, we can actually live as though this frame of reference really does correspond to the world of our experience, so that we do not have to pretend that it does.<sup>56</sup>

McAllister also recognizes these three tests as the means of scrutinizing worldviews:

Any worldview that would say it gives answers to reality and truth must do certain things. . . . First, it must be logically consistent. There must be a worldview that does not contradict itself. . . . Secondly, is it factual? Does it actually fit the facts of life? Does it help us to live life? Does it explain life adequately? Can we do things as a result of that. . . . The third thing is its viability—its ability to be lived out in the real world.<sup>57</sup>

J. Mark Bertrand likens living out a worldview to following a map. For someone to ensure that the map they follow is accurate and will lead them to the correct destination, there are questions they might ask of the map itself before following its directions.

Likewise, “You can test a worldview the same way you would test a map, by asking yourself if it matches reality, if the proportions are right, and if it gets you to the right destination. In more formal terms, we would call these tests correspondence, coherence, and productivity.”<sup>58</sup>

Thus, scholarship has recognized that for a worldview to be true, it must pass all three tests. The coherence theory of truth begets the test of logical consistency—does the worldview have an internal consistency amongst its varied beliefs and does it follow the known laws of logic? The correspondence theory of truth begets the test of empirical adequacy—although some beliefs may be of the supernatural kind that one cannot necessarily inspect through empirical verification, is there a broad scope of beliefs within

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<sup>56</sup>Graham A. Cole, *Do Christians Have a Worldview?* (Deerfield, IL: The Christ on Campus Initiative—Carl F. H. Henry Center for Theological Understanding, 2007), 4.

<sup>57</sup>McAllister, “Truth and Reality.”

<sup>58</sup>Bertrand, *Rethinking Worldview*, 33.

the worldview that explains the world as it is (i.e., corresponds with reality)? Finally, the pragmatic theory of truth begets the test of experiential relevance—does the worldview have practical application to live in the world (i.e., can one live out the claims of the worldview)? Like the epistemological theories of truth, on their own the tests do not adequately demonstrate the veracity or falsity of a worldview, but together they give the best chance of coming to accurate conclusions.

### **Logical Consistency**

It is a fact that “truth will always be wholly consistent within itself, displaying internal logical harmony. [The logical consistency] test stresses the crucial unity and relatedness of all truth. Therefore any logical inconsistency in the basic elements of a worldview is a mark of essential error.”<sup>59</sup> This test asks of the worldview: “Is it rational and does it make sense?”<sup>60</sup> Since truth will always be entirely consistent with itself, harmonizing in every possible way, so too a worldview that has beliefs that reflect truth will display internal logical coherence.<sup>61</sup> One can consider this from two angles. First, a logically consistent worldview conforms to the three fundamental laws of logic (the law of identity, the law of the excluded middle, and the law of non-contradiction).<sup>62</sup> Ensuring

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<sup>59</sup>Samples, *A World of Difference*, 33.

<sup>60</sup>Ravi Zacharias, "The 3.4.5 Grid" (video), vol. 3.1, RZIM Academy Core Course, accessed February 17, 2018, [https://courses.rzimacademy.org/lms/index.php?r=player&course\\_id=1538&coming\\_from=lp&id\\_plan=121#training](https://courses.rzimacademy.org/lms/index.php?r=player&course_id=1538&coming_from=lp&id_plan=121#training).

<sup>61</sup>Samples, *A World of Difference*, 33.

<sup>62</sup>Moreland and Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, 120. They describe these three laws, “Consider some declarative proposition, P, say, Two is an even number. The law of identity says that P is identical to itself and different from other things, say, Q, Grass is green. The law of noncontradiction says that P cannot be both true and false in the same sense at the same time. The law of excluded middle says that P is either true or false; or, put somewhat differently, either P is true or its negation, not-P, is true.” Thus, the beliefs of a worldview will consistently conform to these deductive laws of logic.



logical consistency does not mean that a worldview will have no paradoxes (seemingly self-contradictory or absurd statements that, upon further inspection, are found not to contradict but rather merely confound).<sup>63</sup> Instead, this test measures if a worldview's essential beliefs remain consistent with the known laws of logic.

Then, stemming from the laws of logic, a truthful worldview will not have any essential beliefs that contradict one another. Here, one tests whether a belief or proposition contained within a worldview “coheres with, that is, is logically deducible from, some of the other propositions, and ultimately the axioms, of its system. It is characteristic of the parts of a logical system . . . that no part would be what it is if its logical relations to the other parts were different from what they are.”<sup>64</sup> It is necessary to demonstrate logical consistency since “any system of belief that is internally inconsistent is false.”<sup>65</sup> Hoover explains,

A good worldview should have a high degree of coherence or internal consistency. One of the quickest ways to kill a system is to show self-contradiction. . . . It's like being killed with a hatpin stuck through the heart; the wound is tiny but death is just as certain. If, for example, your system affirms both determinism and free will you have a problem; you'll need some fancy footwork to show how both can be true at the same time.<sup>66</sup>

However, as I earlier argued, having an apologetic reach perfect certainty rather than a high degree of probability is nearly impossible. One also notices a difficulty for someone

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<sup>63</sup>Geisler and Watkins warn, “We can eliminate a world view if it has actual contradictions in any of its essential premises. However, we must be sure that the contradictions are real and not merely apparent. We must be dealing with real antinomies, not merely mysteries. A real contradiction occurs when two truth claims are given and one is the logical opposite of the other (they are logically contradictory, not merely contrary).” Norman L. Geisler and William D. Watkins, *Worlds Apart: A Handbook on World Views*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 263.

<sup>64</sup>White, *Truth*, 111.

<sup>65</sup>Paul D. Feinberg, “Cumulative Case Apologetics,” in *Five Views on Apologetics*, ed. Steven B. Cowan (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 154.

<sup>66</sup>Hoover, *Dear Agnos*, 48-49.

to completely explain or map out a perfect consistency within their belief system. As Hoover clarifies, “I say a good worldview should have ‘a high degree of consistency’—why not say ‘perfect consistency?’ I’m not sure any mortal could ever achieve perfect consistency, especially in dealing with the whole universe!”<sup>67</sup> Expecting someone to explain every logical connection in their belief system might be difficult. Nevertheless, showing that the major beliefs and claims of a worldview either remain consistent or contradict one another is an achievable goal for this test.

A necessary caveat in this discussion is that it is the essential, fundamental elements of a worldview that must accord with one another—those beliefs and propositions that are necessary for the worldview itself (e.g., the resurrection of Jesus in Christianity). Any inconsistencies between these beliefs (whether one would consider them basic or not) are fatal to the worldview’s veracity. However, there may be smaller, secondary issues of doctrine or dogma within a worldview where differences or inconsistencies between various adherents do no damage to the worldview itself (i.e., the beliefs are not necessary for the worldview to answer life’s most basic questions). An example is the debate among different Christian denominations over the mode of baptism—sprinkling of infants or immersion of those who profess faith. While an important matter of faith, it is not a core belief of the worldview itself, therefore these inconsistencies do not invalidate the whole system. Therefore, the testing of worldview should take place while analyzing its core, best-represented forms and not by eccentricities added by its followers.<sup>68</sup> Geisler and Watkins explain, “The actual contradiction must be between essential premises of a world view. If either or both of the contradictory premises are nonessential, the contradiction does not necessarily falsify the

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<sup>67</sup>Hoover, *Dear Agnos*, 49.

<sup>68</sup>Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 53-54.

world view. All one needs to do is discard the nonessential premises which occasioned the contradiction. Throwing away the nonessential will not affect the essential view.”<sup>69</sup>

It is worth noting that, although all the fundamental laws of logic are at play in this test, the lynchpin is the law of non-contradiction (sometimes referred to as the law of contradiction). This law states that two antithetical statements or propositions cannot both be true at the same time under the same conditions.<sup>70</sup> “The principle of non-contradiction needs to be observed. ‘A’ cannot be non-‘A’ at both the same time and in the same respect. A typewriter cannot be blue all over and red all over at the same time and in the same respect.”<sup>71</sup> The law of non-contradiction is not some Western contraption brought about by Aristotle, nor is it merely philosophical wordplay. Everyday experience bears it witness—it is either one truth or its opposite, but not both. As Ravi Zacharias humorously acknowledges, “Even in India we look both ways before we cross the street—it is either the bus or me, not both of us.”<sup>72</sup> The law of non-contradiction is inescapable because the moment that someone refutes it they actually uphold it.<sup>73</sup> This inescapable law is why pluralism as a phenomenon is invalid since, when the beliefs of one worldview directly contradict the beliefs of another worldview, combining them does not somehow wash this away. As Zacharias explains,

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<sup>69</sup>Geisler and Watkins, *Worlds Apart*, 263.

<sup>70</sup>Cotham, *One World, Many Neighbors*, 46.

<sup>71</sup>Cole, “Do Christians Have a Worldview?,” 22.

<sup>72</sup>Zacharias, *Can Man Live without God?*, 128-29.

<sup>73</sup>Zacharias expounds, “The moment you stand up to challenge what I am saying [about the law of noncontradiction] you will end up proving what I am saying, because if you challenge what I am saying you are actually inferring that I am wrong and you are right. So the law of noncontradiction cannot be challenged without it clobbering you more than you clobbering it.” Ravi Zacharias, “Understanding the Spirit of the Age, Part 1,” Let My People Think (MP3 podcast), November 4, 2017, accessed December 1, 2017, <http://rzimmedia.rzim.org/LMPT/LMP20171104.mp3>.

[Worldview] pluralism is a belief system that sounds good but does disservice to all [worldviews]. All [worldviews] are exclusive. That is a fact. If they weren't, they would not be making any truth claims. Indeed, it is the very nature of truth that presents us with this reality. Truth by definition is exclusive. Every proposition and assertion in contradictory worldviews cannot be true. If every assertion and claim were true, then there would really be no distinctive claim, in effect making all religions equally true or false. Truth has two edges to its claims. One cannot claim mutually exclusive beliefs.<sup>74</sup>

A worldview that contradicts itself or the laws of logic is false, and one may declare it as such if it fails this test. However, it is not enough to say that merely because a worldview is consistent that it is true. A worldview may have consistent propositions of beliefs, but they do not correspond with reality. Thus, it is necessary to place worldviews under further scrutiny.

### **Empirical Adequacy**

The second test for worldview truthfulness, based upon the correspondence theory of truth, is empirical adequacy where there are inspections and verification of correspondence between worldview beliefs and a referent in the real world.<sup>75</sup> It examines if there is a way to verify the facts of stated beliefs in a worldview—is there support for the claims a worldview expounds?<sup>76</sup> This test asks questions of the worldview such as: “Does the worldview fit with reality, and is it capable of offering cogent explanations or interpretations of the totality of things? Does the worldview adequately cover and explain all the data? Is the worldview, to put it in slightly different terms, true to the way things are? Does it cover the whole of life in an adequate way?”<sup>77</sup> David Naugle further

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<sup>74</sup>Ravi Zacharias, “Think Again: A Kaleidoscope of Colors,” *Just Thinking Magazine*, May 25, 2017, accessed March 20, 2018, <http://rzim.org/just-thinking/think-again-a-kaleidoscope-of-colors/>.

<sup>75</sup>Currie, “The Apologetic Method of Ravi Zacharias,” 26-27.

<sup>76</sup>Zacharias, “The 3.4.5 Grid.”

<sup>77</sup>David K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 327. Emphasis original.

explains, “If large chunks of human experience are neglected or negated by the worldview, if it seems incapable of opening up and elucidating important domains of the human experience and the cosmos, then the worldview, or aspects of it, is rendered suspect. A cogent *Weltanschauung* ought to be empirically comprehensive in its coverage and strong in its explanations.”<sup>78</sup>

It is not necessary that every single belief have an equivalent empirical referent. There may be certain spiritual beliefs regarding a heaven or paradise, or possibly spiritual agents, which delve into unseen realms that one cannot measure (although these beliefs must then be consistent with beliefs about the visible world). However, a reasonable worldview will not lack a connection between its beliefs and the real world—one has the capacity of investigating, evaluating, and critiquing a worldview’s central claims, and find that the beliefs have factual support (be they historical, scientific, or otherwise).<sup>79</sup> That is, enough of the claims of a worldview are available for some form of empirical testing and verifiable for correspondence with that which actually exists. Then, the “greater the extent to which a worldview’s essential factual claims can be established in various empirical, scientific and historical ways, the greater is the likelihood that this worldview is true.”<sup>80</sup> On the other hand, if worldview claims conflict with what is generally known to be true about reality (such as holding a belief in a flat earth which science of all forms regards as wrong), it is right to point out these divergences.<sup>81</sup>

Testing for empirical adequacy does not mean that every worldview will interpret all empirical pieces of information the same. However, a worldview is

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<sup>78</sup>Naugle, *Worldview*, 327. Emphasis original.

<sup>79</sup>Samples, *A World of Difference*, 35.

<sup>80</sup>Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 55.

<sup>81</sup>Ronald H. Nash, *Worldviews in Conflict: Choosing Christianity in a World of Ideas* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 57.

questionable if it “ignores or is inconsistent with human experience.”<sup>82</sup> This test also does not mean that the worldview must give an account for every historical or scientific fact that exists. Instead, “the facts of history and science must be understandable in context of the worldview. . . . A worldview consistent with external reality will not fly in the face of what people universally experience and intuitively recognize as reality.”<sup>83</sup> Of course, one must be careful not to make history and general sciences and social sciences the end-all-be-all. Beliefs about scientific theories and beliefs about historical events have changed in light of new evidence. Still, that which has been generally accepted and generally experienced can serve as a guide for testing a worldview. Thus, one can accept a worldview as reflecting truth when shown to be in harmony with and corroborated by the facts of science and history.<sup>84</sup>

However, just because a worldview has one belief with an empirical basis does not automatically make it true. Instead, when the accumulation of a worldview’s beliefs corresponds with reality, the more likely that worldview is true. As James Orr argues, “It is not one line of evidence only which establishes [a] position, but the concurrent force of many, starting from different and independent standpoints.”<sup>85</sup> Thus, there ought to be several lines of empirical evidence for a worldview. As strong as this accumulation of evidence might be, it still is not enough to claim truth for a worldview (although a lack of empirical adequacy does illuminate the falseness of a worldview). Apologists perform this test on worldviews in conjunction with the other two tests, including the third of experiential relevance.

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<sup>82</sup>Nash, *Worldviews in Conflict*, 58-59.

<sup>83</sup>Story, *Christianity on the Offense*, 48.

<sup>84</sup>James Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World: As Centring in the Incarnation*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1907), 87.

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*, 111.

## Experiential Relevance

Based on the pragmatic theory of truth, this test analyzes a worldview for its livability—a worldview must not only seem theoretically sound but must be experientially relevant in the life of its adherent.<sup>86</sup> This test asks of the worldview if it has significance for human experience with meaningful applications for a person’s life, including how it deals with such important areas as ethics, suffering and death, and human meaning.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, on a more personal level, it asks how the worldview meets the individual in their daily life.<sup>88</sup> A worldview must not only be intellectually satisfying but harmonize with lived experience and behavior.<sup>89</sup> If someone claims a particular worldview but is not able to live out its natural consequences, this gives reason to question whether the worldview is adequate for someone to truly embrace as a means of living.<sup>90</sup>

As Os Guinness notes, “Again and again the lesson is simple: all thoughts can be thought, but not all thoughts can be lived. So we should never stop halfway with skepticism [or other worldviews], but insist on pressing ideas uncompromisingly to their conclusion”<sup>91</sup> He rightly argues that beliefs have consequences. To hold to a certain

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<sup>86</sup>Feinberg, “Cumulative Case Apologetics,” 155.

<sup>87</sup>Currie, “The Apologetic Method of Ravi Zacharias,” 28.

<sup>88</sup>Zacharias, “The 3.4.5 Grid.”

<sup>89</sup>James W. Sire, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), 117.

<sup>90</sup>As an example of how an unlivable worldview exposes itself, Graham Cole relates the following: “Bertrand Russell tells the story of a woman who had discovered a philosophical view known as solipsism. Solipsism maintains that the only consciousness to be found is your own. She wrote to Russell wondering why more people weren’t solipsists. In other words, she didn’t live as though solipsism were true to fact (i.e., the actual state of affairs).” Cole, “Do Christians Have a Worldview?”, 31.

<sup>91</sup>Os Guinness, “Turning the Tables,” *Just Thinking Magazine*, July 1, 2015, accessed September 1, 2018, <https://rzm.org/just-thinking/turning-the-tables/>.

belief means that a certain lifestyle or life-choice is the natural result. However, if that natural result is not livable or is not relevant to the existential existence of a person, then one must rethink their worldview position. Guinness continues,

At some point the falseness [of a worldview] shows through [at the point of experiential relevance], and at that moment they will experience extreme cognitive dissonance, so that it is no longer in their best interest to continue to persist in believing what they believed until then. When they reach this point, they are facing up to their dilemma, and they will be open to rethinking their position in a profound way.<sup>92</sup>

This apologetic approach tries to bring the holder of a false worldview to the point of questioning their own worldview and seeing the glories of the Christian worldview.

Guinness relates a story that demonstrates this point. After having given a lecture at a university in the northern part of England, a non-Christian professor approached him saying that Guinness challenged him through what Guinness shared. Having been known for resistance to the Christian faith, the man found an unusual dissonance with his own beliefs and its resultant lifestyle with what he then wanted for his newborn daughter. He and his wife lived out an open marriage, but they did not want that lifestyle for their daughter. Faced with the dilemma of the consequences of their worldview (a worldview that they could not even allow for their daughter) they had to find a worldview that was livable as they finally realized was the only way.<sup>93</sup>

However, within this test, Guinness gives some wise warnings. First, apologists should never confuse a person's worldview with the person himself. A false worldview takes away no value from the person as a person. Second, no person will ever live out their worldview perfectly. Every individual seems to live their worldview their own way. It is rare to find a perfect example of a lived-out worldview—there are no

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<sup>92</sup>Guinness, "Turning the Tables."

<sup>93</sup>Ibid.



textbook versions.<sup>94</sup> That said, the beliefs within a worldview themselves are open to the criticism of experiential relevancy. Any worldview that does not touch upon the critical issues of life that every person deals with, or whose beliefs are practically unlivable, are suspect and one ought to call them to task. However, a worldview that gives answers to the essential areas of life and gives a way of life that is livable is open for serious consideration.

Again, this solitary test is not enough to determine truth or falsity of a system but is an important component in tangent with the others. A worldview might appear livable, but if it is not logically consistent with the known laws of logic, or has incoherence within itself, or has no empirical adequacy, then it has a higher probability of being false. Just as the three theories of truth in themselves are not necessarily enough to explain truth, the three tests by themselves individually are not enough to demonstrate truth. Yet, when taken together, the three tests are reliable in finding ways that worldviews are false, and if there is a worldview that passes all the tests, then it is highly probable that it is true.

Still, there may be worldviews that twist themselves in such ways as to appear to meet all three tests, so Zacharias via Norman Geisler added two further tests that will get beyond some vagaries to find whether or not a worldview is true or false.

### **The Unaffirmability and Undeniability Tests**

There is a possible shortcoming to the three tests. First explicated by Norm Geisler, Zacharias would further develop the notion of two further tests:

It is possible for some philosophical systems to meet these three tests and still be intrinsically false. For example, if one were to grant some of Hinduism's presuppositions, Hinduism can meet the three tests as stated. But when those presuppositions are scrutinized by other methods of truth-testing that fall outside the bounds of sheer logic, the presuppositions themselves are found to be indefensible.

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<sup>94</sup>Guinness, "Turning the Tables."

As an instance, one of the presuppositions of Hinduism is that the material world as we know it is not distinct from the ultimate, impersonal reality, Brahman. If we grant Hinduism that assumption, it meets the three tests for truth. On the other hand, if we can prove that assumption to be false, the edifice of pantheism collapses.<sup>95</sup>

The two tests that Geisler and Zacharias introduce to meet this particular problem are the unaffirmability and the undeniability tests.

Norm Geisler first explains, when speaking about the unaffirmability of a belief or worldview, that it does not mean that something is unsayable or unstatable, because one can put even the illogical or the absurd to words.<sup>96</sup> The unaffirmability test is a test for falsehood. Any statement or belief that one asserts in a way that one cannot affirm is self-defeating. That is, if one undermines the only basis on which one can affirm the belief, that belief is rightly rejected.<sup>97</sup> Unaffirmability does not mean that there is an absolute necessity for an empirical verification to affirm the belief's truthfulness (or even for a belief to assert anything factual at all) as A. J. Ayer would require (although the test would include empirically verifiable propositions).<sup>98</sup> It would also include logical principles and other a priori propositions (which Ayer would dismiss as a tautology).<sup>99</sup> This criterion tests a statement of belief expressing some fact that upon reflection defeats itself (and thereby one cannot affirm empirically or logically) and would thus lead to the natural conclusion that the belief is false. For example, to make the statement, "I cannot speak a word of English," is not affirmable (since logically one makes the statement in English) and it is, therefore, self-defeating and false. An agnostic or skeptic in their

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<sup>95</sup>Zacharias, *Can Man Live without God?*, 124.

<sup>96</sup>Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), 141.

<sup>97</sup>*Ibid.*, 142. Zacharias, *Can Man Live without God?*, 124.

<sup>98</sup>Alfred Jules Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, Dover Books on Western Philosophy (New York: Dover Publications, 1952), 36.

<sup>99</sup>*Ibid.*, 76.

worldview says, “I know that I cannot know anything about reality,” which is not affirmable (since there is a knowledge of a lack of knowledge) and is therefore self-defeating, and thereby false.

The undeniability test suggests that if something is undeniable, it logically must be true.<sup>100</sup> To deny the undeniable is self-defeating. So, for example, if I state as one of my worldview beliefs that I deny my own existence, I fail the undeniability test because I deny that which is inherently undeniable—I have to exist in order to give a denial of my existence.<sup>101</sup> I may deny something in the belief, but what I state defeats itself—my existence is undeniable. Another example is a belief that there are no such things as three-sided triangles. Triangles by definition have three sides—so a three-sided triangle is undeniable. To say a triangle has four sides is self-defeating since a triangle undeniably has three sides.

Any worldview that includes beliefs that affirms the unaffirmable or denies the undeniable are false. Zacharias concludes that these two tests added to the three tests previously given “complete a very effective fivefold system for determining truth.”<sup>102</sup>

### Conclusion

The three tests based on the three basic epistemological theories of truth (along with the added tests of unaffirmability and undeniability) offer a reliable means by which to test worldviews for truthfulness and falsity. When one filters the significant beliefs of

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<sup>100</sup>Ravi Zacharias, “Establishing a Worldview” (video), Foundations of Apologetics, accessed June 30, 2018, <https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Content/Series/161813?episode=4>

<sup>101</sup>Zacharias recalls the humorous exchange between a student and his professor: “‘How do I know I exist?’ demanded the student in a philosophy lecture. ‘And whom shall I say is asking?’ came the reply.” Zacharias, *Can Man Live without God?* 124.

<sup>102</sup>Zacharias, *Can Man Live without God?* 125.

any worldview through these tests, one can determine if the worldview itself holds up to scrutiny. Any worldview that has several of its foundational beliefs that fail these tests is then open to rejection, while any worldview whose beliefs pass these tests have the highest probability of being true and right, and the individual would do well to embrace such a worldview.

The combination of tests proposed by worldview apologists might appear to fit under a form of combinationalism (as mentioned earlier)—combining numerous methods into one single model.<sup>103</sup> As such, one might raise the several criticisms placed against combinationalism for these sets of tests as well. For example, some may argue that a combination of tests that in themselves are inadequate cannot merge to form an adequate test for truth.<sup>104</sup> Similar to the leaky bucket criticism discussed in chapter 3, one may give a similar answer—the three tests for truth (with the addition of unaffirmability and undeniability) do not have the same flaws. One test undergirds the weaknesses of the other tests, such that they miss nothing (or, to stay with the metaphor, nothing leaks).

Another criticism is that the model presupposes what entails the concept of fact and truth within the framework of the truth theories and tests.<sup>105</sup> In other words, all the concepts with which this model works are themselves worldview-dependent. I would respond that these tests are both objective and inescapable—a belief or system of beliefs, to be acceptable as making a statement about truth, must be consistent with incontrovertible laws of logic (the law of non-contradiction is inescapable), consistent within itself (otherwise it destroys its own foundation), have some sort of correspondence with reality (otherwise it is mere fantasy), must have practical application (otherwise it is

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<sup>103</sup>Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Apologetics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 105.

<sup>104</sup>*Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>105</sup>*Ibid.*, 117.

theoretical fancy), and must avoid self-defeating premises. These are not worldview-dependent, they are the reality of existence.

Geisler gives the criticism that combining truth-tests at best tests for falsity, but not truth, since more than one worldview may in some way consistently and adequately meet the original three tests.<sup>106</sup> His critique might have some validity to a point, hence Zacharias enjoins Geisler's tests of unaffirmability and undeniability. The contentions of the apologetic are that the worldview that meets all the tests has a higher probability of truth than any other, so it is accurate to state that the tests seek truth. They do not merely exist to prove a worldview false.

These tests are not necessarily perfect since they do not bring one to a perfect certainty, only that the worldview whose beliefs pass the tests have the highest probability of being correct. However, again, that does not invalidate this apologetic approach. Even as Geisler himself admits, there is no perfect system that gives an undeniable test for truth:

For one thing, no finite mind is in actual possession of *all* the facts. Further, no finite person is able to comprehend completely *all the facts*. Also, finite minds have difficulty in understanding the consistency and inconsistency between all the facts. For these reasons, absolute certitude will be difficult, if not impossible, for every opposing truth claim made within a given worldview. As in almost everything else in life, probability is the guide. However, in some cases of high probability one may reach a level of moral certitude in which, while other views are logically possible, there are no known reasons to veto the acceptance of the truth claim being adopted.<sup>107</sup>

Whatever conclusion one makes from these tests that fit the known facts brings people closer to the truth about the various worldviews. The next chapter demonstrates how this is the case.

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<sup>106</sup>Geisler, *Christian Apologetics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 118.

<sup>107</sup>*Ibid.*, 134. Emphasis original.

CHAPTER 5  
CONTEXT AND CONTRAST OF WORLDVIEW  
TRUTHFULNESS

**Four Basic Questions of Life**

The testing of worldview truthfulness takes place within the context of how a worldview answers life's ultimate questions.<sup>1</sup> Francis Schaeffer notes that the underlying beliefs for each worldview (whether religious or philosophical) deals with the same questions, but each worldview gives different answers and uses different terms.<sup>2</sup> If a worldview is unable to adequately address and answer the important issues with which humanity wrestles, or the answers it gives are not logically consistent, empirically adequate, and experientially relevant, then the worldview cannot be truthful.

Among worldview scholars, there is no consensus about what life issues constitute an appropriate paradigm for testing—or at least no consensus on how the categories are labeled. For example, Perry C. Cotham groups life's great questions under seven broad headings: (1) The Absolute, (2) The World, (3) Humans, (4) The Problem of Evil, (5) The Better Life, (6) Community and Ethics, and (7) Interpretation of History.<sup>3</sup> James Sire, in his work *The Universe Next Door*, tests and compares worldviews according to eight basic questions: 1) What is prime reality—the really real?; 2) What is

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<sup>1</sup>Perry C. Cotham, *One World, Many Neighbors: A Christian Perspective on Worldviews* (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2008), 18.

<sup>2</sup>Francis A. Schaeffer, *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: A Christian Worldview* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1982), 1:279.

<sup>3</sup>Cotham, *One World, Many Neighbors*, 18-19.

the nature of external reality, that is, the world around us?; 3) What is a human being?; 4) What happens to a person at death?; 5) Why is it possible to know anything at all?; 6) How do we know what is right and wrong?; 7) What is the meaning of human history?; and 8) What personal, life-orienting core commitments are consistent with this worldview?<sup>4</sup> Tawa J. Anderson, W. Michael Clark, and David K. Naugle analyze worldviews through four questions: (1) What is our nature?; (2) What is our world?; (3) What is our problem?; and (4) What is our end?<sup>5</sup>

Another angle taken for worldview truth-testing and analysis is following the biblical categories of creation-fall-redemption (CFR). Christian scholars see this as the natural progression of the biblical narrative. For example, J. Mark Bertrand describes this paradigm as the

way of seeing the story of Scripture, a trajectory with three points: creation, fall, and redemption. Like many churchgoers, I was accustomed to thinking of these as doctrines, not chapters in a story, but a subtle shift in thinking made all the difference. The Bible opens with a story about the creation of the world. . . . That story is followed closely by a narrative about the fall. . . . The rest of the Bible recounts the unfolding of that elliptical promise, the coming of a Messiah who will restore what was broken in the fall. Redemption, planned from eternity, enters time in the person of Jesus Christ. All history before the cross looks forward to it, just as all history since looks back upon it. Creation, fall, and redemption are the story of the Bible, but they are also the story of the world in which we live. It is our story. The gospel is a proclamation that God has made good on his promise, that the old enemy, Death, has been defeated by Christ, and if we are in Christ we live in hope of resurrection. This is a starting point, a belief system and a story all at once. It tells us who made us, what's become of us, and what's in store for us.<sup>6</sup>

In his dissertation on worldview analysis, Bryan Billard Sims lists scholars such as Hermann Dooyeweerd, Francis Schaeffer, Albert Wolters, and Nancy Pearcey, among

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<sup>4</sup>James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 22-23.

<sup>5</sup>Tawa J. Anderson, W. Michael Clark, and David K. Naugle, *An Introduction to Christian Worldview: Pursuing God's Perspective in a Pluralistic World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017), 18.

<sup>6</sup>J. Mark Bertrand, *Rethinking Worldview: Learning to Think, Live, and Speak in This World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 103-4.

others who advocate this CFR paradigm, yet he also admits that as of the writing of his dissertation no one had “specifically developed the Christian worldview with these elements for apologetic purposes, specifically interacting with alternative religions.”<sup>7</sup>

Sims defends the use of the CFR matrix by arguing that these are the decisive turning points in salvation history—these events altered not only redemptive history but also world history, and the categories comprehensively encompass human history.<sup>8</sup> He argues that the CFR matrix is a legitimate paradigm for the analysis and testing of worldviews since in some way all worldviews recognize that life came from somewhere, that there is chaos or problems in this life, and they offer a solution of some sort. While these are distinctly biblical categories, other worldviews would not necessarily follow the flow of this paradigm—a Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, or Secular Humanist would not think along the lines of these concepts. Therefore, when interacting with someone from a non-Christian worldview, with the intention of demonstrating their worldview’s falseness and Christianity’s truthfulness, the apologist would not necessarily persuade them with a redemptive model. There are, however, general life questions (that still envelope these groups) that are common to all worldviews and create a shared context for worldview analysis and truth-testing.

Ravi Zacharias finds four categories for worldview analysis under which most of the major questions of life arise. He says,

There really are four fundamental questions of life you at some stage will ask if you are to make sense out of your life. The first is the question of origin. Second is the question of morality. The third is the question of meaning. And the fourth is the question of destiny. Origin: How did I come into being? Morality: How can I determine what is right and what is wrong? Meaning: What is the purpose of life itself? And destiny: What happens to a human being after he or she dies?<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Bryan Billard Sims, “Evangelical Worldview Analysis: A Critical Assessment and Proposal” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006), 130-33.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 133-34.

<sup>9</sup>Ravi Zacharias, "Faith Under Fire: Jesus among Other Gods, Part 1," Let My



In these categories, Zacharias recognizes that no matter what worldview a person embraces (be they pantheist, atheist, polytheist, or theist) they have to answer these four questions in some way since these are the fulcrum points of human existence.<sup>10</sup> So it is at these points where a person then tests the truthfulness of their worldview, and the worldview of others, for logical consistency, empirical adequacy, and experiential relevance. As Zacharias explains,

The issue, then, is not whether the belief system you espouse—monotheistic, atheistic, pantheistic, or otherwise—is exclusive. The issue is whether the answers to the four basic questions of life pertaining to origin, meaning, morality, and destiny within the context of each of these worldviews meet the tests of truth. Are they logically consistent, are they empirically adequate, and are they experientially relevant? Do they meet the tests of unaffirmability and undeniability? The answers to life's four questions must in each instance correspond to reality, and the sum of the answers must cohere as a system. It is absolutely imperative to understand that when an antagonist of the Christian faith poses a question of the Christian, he or she must, in turn, be willing first to justify the question within the context of his or her own presuppositions. Second, he or she must also answer the question on the basis of those presuppositions. In other words, the questioner is also obliged to answer the same question. An attitude that says, "You can't answer my question, and therefore I can believe whatever I want to believe," is intellectual hypocrisy.<sup>11</sup>

He also notes that a worldview must pass the tests of truth across the board of these four categories. It is not enough for a worldview to pass the tests of truth in one category only to fail at one or all of the other three. For a worldview to be true, it must be logically consistent, empirically adequate, and experientially relevant in its corporate treatment of origin, meaning, morality, and destiny.<sup>12</sup> And the conclusion that Zacharias draws after

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People Think (MP3 podcast), May 20, 2017, accessed December 1, 2017, <http://rzimmedia.rzim.org/LMPT/LMP20170520.mp3>.

<sup>10</sup>Julia Duin, "Christian Worldview: An Interview with Ravi Zacharias," *The Washington Times*, December 6, 2008, accessed July 20, 2018, <http://www.virtueonline.org/christian-worldview-interview-ravi-zacharias>.

<sup>11</sup>Ravi K. Zacharias, *Can Man Live without God?* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishers, 1994), 126.

<sup>12</sup>Ravi Zacharias, "Four Questions a Meaningful Worldview Answers" (video), accessed January 9, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNZqDQtfGMs>.

testing all worldviews in this manner is that the Christian worldview is “the only one that takes those four questions with corresponding answers that are truthful and coherent answers that stand the test of time, and the ultimate answer of the resurrection from the dead that gives you hope and meaning.”<sup>13</sup>

Zacharias and other Christian scholars often refer to the worldview that they defend as the “Judeo-Christian worldview.” While Christianity has Judeo origins and shares similar answers to many of these basic questions, there are also great divergences. This ought to cause one to consider them as different worldviews since Judaism does not have the Christ of Christianity who Himself is the answer to the way Christians form their belief structure. Therefore, the term “Judeo-Christian worldview” is not an accurate reflection of the system of belief. Although using the term, Zacharias probably does not embrace the full connotations since he himself says:

When you take the answers of *Christ* to those four questions, there is no parallel that brings individually, correspondingly, true answers to those individual questions. And then you put the four together, there's no other world view that brings such a coherent set of answers, correspondingly true individually, coherently whole when you put them together. *The person of Christ* is so unique that no honest seeker can deny it once you have looked at his answers to these questions.<sup>14</sup>

Christian theologians and apologists who use the term “Judeo-Christian” most likely are not attempting to dilute the Christian message. However, unwittingly, they do confuse the worldviews. Therefore, when using the tests of truth, it is the “Christian” not the “Judeo-Christian” worldview that answers the four questions completely and truthfully.

Zacharias was not the first to use the paradigm of these four basic life

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<sup>13</sup>Ravi Zacharias and John Njoroge, "How Do You Know That Christianity Is the One True Worldview?" (video), accessed August 19, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWY-6xBA0Pk>.

<sup>14</sup>Gordon Robertson, “What Makes the Christian Message Unique? An Interview with Ravi Zacharias,” CBN, accessed July 22, 2018, <http://www1.cbn.com/churchandministry/what-makes-the-christian-message-unique>. Emphasis mine.

questions as the context of worldview analysis. Others would use similar questions or categories, or nuances of these four. James Orr believes that as the mind seeks a belief system to make sense of the world, it pursues answers to these same question—questions that he sees reason itself bringing to the consciousness of the individual. He writes,

On the theoretical side, the mind seeks unity in its representations. It is not content with fragmentary knowledge, but tends constantly to rise from facts to laws, from laws to higher laws, from these to the highest generalisations possible. Ultimately it abuts on questions of origin, purpose, and destiny, which, as questions set by reason to itself, it cannot, from its very nature, refuse at least to attempt to answer. Even to prove that an answer to them is impossible, it is found necessary to discuss them, and it will be strange if, in the course of the discussion, the discovery is not made, that underneath the profession of nescience a positive theory of some kind after all lurks.<sup>15</sup>

Arlie J. Hoover also recognizes that while there may be many ways to analyze worldviews, the best approach is to show how the worldviews answer certain basic metaphysical questions, which the questions of origin, meaning, morality, and destiny closely represent.<sup>16</sup>

Several other theologians defend the use of these questions as the context for worldview apologetics. Melvin Tinker believes these four categories touch upon the total human experience, and therefore give a fitting assessment to any belief system which would seek to make sense out of life.<sup>17</sup> William Brown views these four as the ultimate questions for life and gives a defense for why these are the most appropriate categories by which to compare worldviews:

These are ultimate for basic reasons. First, they are inescapable. Every person has to answer these questions in one way or another. Secondly, the answers to these questions touch every single molecule of the universe. Thirdly, they are ultimate

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<sup>15</sup>James Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World: As Centring in the Incarnation*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), 6-7.

<sup>16</sup>Arlie J. Hoover, *Dear Agnos: A Defense of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), 55-56.

<sup>17</sup>Melvin Tinker, "Reasonable Belief? Providing Some of the Groundwork for an Effective Christian Apologetic," *The Churchman* 125, no. 4 (2011): 349.

because the answers affect you. And fourthly, they are ultimate because there are answers. That's why I want a worldview that fits the world. It want what's true. I want to know why we are here. I want to know how we know what is right and wrong. . . . But considering these questions is what makes us human. And the reality is that they are interconnected. When you answer one, you really answer the others as well. When you answer the question about origin with "God created everything," you've answered why we're here, how we know what's right and wrong, and what happens when you die. They are interconnected. . . . But the issue is, something really happens when we die. It's not a matter of what you believe. What you believe is not going to change what really happens.<sup>18</sup>

For these reasons, I agree that the questions of origin, meaning, morality, and destiny are the appropriate context by which to test and compare the varied worldviews. To elaborate I briefly describe the areas of life that these questions envelope before demonstrating how one could utilize this approach for certain select worldviews.

### **Origin**

The question of origin, since it is about beginnings, is often the first set of questions for which a person seeks answers, or they are the commencing questions a worldview answers by its beliefs. People want to know why there is something rather than nothing, and how that something came into existence. These are no mere theoretical inquiries of armchair philosophers. These are deep, personal questions, because the answer to the origins question bears a heavy weight on the other three questions as well as on one's conception of one's own being.

This category includes the big questions of where the universe itself came from (be it earth and heavens, stars and planets, time and space). However, it also touches on the origins of humanity—was humanity created or a cosmic accident? Does man have a soul and body, or merely a body? This category is where deep metaphysical, ontological, and epistemological questions are laid bare. What is the nature of reality? What is the ultimately ultimate? This category even gets very personal as it asks of a worldview what

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<sup>18</sup>William Brown, "Thinking Worldviewishly," *Cedarville Torch* 26, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 12-15.

it even means to be human, which then often leads one to ask: why am I here? What is the nature of being and how is it that humanity has the capability of knowledge?

### **Meaning**

This category answers where a worldview places the value of existence. As Zacharias states the question for humanity, “How do I find meaning and purpose in life? Meaning that is so powerful that I don’t need a high for it to be meaningful, and no amount of low was going to take it out of my mind.”<sup>19</sup> One worldview might say that humans have no essential worth or ultimate purpose, while another might say that humanity has a calling and purpose granted them by deity. Which, if either, is true? Which worldview is consistent in its dealings with meaning, and are the answers it gives livable in the world?

This category is the most personal of all because it not only asks why a person exists but then ultimately, who cares? Is the value of something or someone inherent within itself, or is value acquired? According to a worldview, why should someone love or be loved? Does anything in the universe have any worth and, if so, from where comes that worth? The question even touches upon aesthetics as it asks what is beauty? Who or what determines what is beautiful? What is the purpose of the aesthetic? What does it add to existence?

### **Morality**

The category of morality discerns how a worldview determines the distinction between right and wrong. Where does a worldview receive its ethical framework? What exists that leads the human mind to form an “ought” out of what “is”? What is the basis for moral decisions? Who determines the difference between good and evil? What is the

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<sup>19</sup>Zacharias, "Faith Under Fire: Jesus among Other Gods, Part 1."

standard and who or what establishes that standard? When one does not meet the standard, are there consequences and who hands out those consequences? What laws, commands, principles, rules, or dogmas lead and guide humanity under which they have a moral obligation? Are those standards, laws, commands, principles, rules, or dogmas livable or merely an ideal? What is pleasure and when does one's seeking for personal pleasure begin to encroach on the rights of others? Does humanity even have rights, and if so, from where do they come? Who determines who has rights and who does not? Who has the power to take away those rights and under what circumstances?

This category not only touches upon chosen ethical systems, but also asks the questions about what is wrong with the world and humanity, and what is the solution to what is wrong. From where comes the corruption of the universe? Who defines this corruption? What determines what is corrupted and unnatural and what is not? What is the recourse to that corruption? This category also places an obligation upon a worldview to answer the great questions of evil and suffering—what is it, where did it come from, what is the solution, and what is the meaning behind it?

### **Destiny**

The final category of questions is that of destiny. Why do people die and what happens when they die? Is there life after death? Is there a heaven or hell or limbo or nothingness? Are there eternal rewards and punishments? Who determines who receives rewards and punishments? Is there an eternity and what is it? Will there be justice where wrongs are righted, or will there be no recourse? Where is the universe headed? What will be its end?

The various worldviews may not answer every question under each category, but they will have answers for the big questions. Within this context, a truthful worldview will be logically consistent, empirically adequate, and experientially relevant across all four categories. If a worldview falters in any of these categories, then it is false.

## **Analysis of Worldviews in Light of the Tests and Questions**

It would be impossible for a project like this to take every worldview to the tests of truth, or even to make a complete analysis of the few worldviews with which I interact. Nevertheless, it is crucial to examine a sample of worldviews that represent the major categories of belief systems in order to demonstrate how the worldview apologetic approach used by Zacharias and others functions. First analyzing representative atheistic, theistic, and pantheistic systems that contradict the Christian worldview, I then finally bring Christianity under the scrutiny of these tests following as closely as possible the four questions of origin, meaning, morality, and destiny.

### **Naturalistic Humanism (Contradictory Atheistic System)**

Atheism as a category speaks of a worldview that disbelieves in the existence of a God, gods, or any supernatural being who has relations to or interactions with the known universe. The term itself is wide-ranging, and there are several subcategories of worldviews that could fall under its nomenclature (for example some may categorize specific atheistic systems as agnosticism, skepticism, postmodernism, or rationalism). Still, others distinguish between mythological atheism, dialectical atheism, and semantical atheism.<sup>20</sup> A good representative of atheism, that also seems to be the most vocal opponent of Christianity, is naturalistic humanism (also termed modern humanism, scientific humanism, democratic humanism, and at times also secular humanism, which is a term I avoid because of the cultural and political ramifications often associated with it). Corliss Lamont defines this worldview as a “naturalistic philosophy that rejects all supernaturalism and relies primarily upon reason and science, democracy and human

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<sup>20</sup>Norman L. Geisler and William D. Watkins, *Worlds Apart: A Handbook on World Views*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 46-47.

compassion.”<sup>21</sup> Although the worldview claims that science compels them toward a materialistic view of the universe, some adherents, such as Richard Lewontin, are truthful enough to admit that no matter where logic or empirical evidence may lead, they will begin with the material presupposition and not stray:

It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our *a priori* adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door.<sup>22</sup>

While not representative of all naturalistic humanists, when conversing with adherents of this worldview the apologist must gauge their openness to alternative explanations.

Zacharias lays a foundation of understanding this naturalistic belief in comparison to Christian claims:

Atheism is not merely a passive unbelief in God but an assertive denial of the major claims of all varieties of theism; atheism contradicts belief in God with a positive affirmation of matter as ultimate reality. Some atheists avoid this frontal attack upon theism and try to soften that absolute denial of God. Their argument asserts that God’s existence is rationally unprovable and is therefore at best a meaningless proposition. In effect, their atheism is arrived at by default. This approach is often taken so as to be conveniently relieved of the burden of defending one’s own alternative view. In actual terms both the soft and the hard form of atheism accomplish the same goal and end up denying God’s existence either implicitly or explicitly.<sup>23</sup>

Naturalistic humanism claims that the known universe is all that exists without any outside help or influence. Nature and the physical universe are the total of reality, are closed and uniform systems of material causes and effects, and are entirely self-contained

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<sup>21</sup>Corliss Lamont quoted in K. Suresh Kumar, “Humanism Philosophy,” *Global Journal for Research Analysis* 6, no. 9 (September 2017): 81.

<sup>22</sup>Richard Lewontin, “Billions and Billions of Demons,” *The New York Review of Books*, January 9, 1997, 31; Emphasis original; quoted in John Lennox, “Naturalism” (video), vol. 10.1, RZIM Academy Core Course, accessed April 13, 2018, [https://courses.rzimacademy.org/lms/index.php?r=player&course\\_id=1545&coming\\_from=lp&id\\_plan=121#training](https://courses.rzimacademy.org/lms/index.php?r=player&course_id=1545&coming_from=lp&id_plan=121#training).

<sup>23</sup>Zacharias, *Can Man Live without God?*, 17. Emphasis original.



and self-sufficient. As such, atheists perceive that one could conceivably know the whole of reality through scientific investigation and the use of reason.<sup>24</sup> While relying heavily on the influences of science and philosophy, and apparently having an answer for the ultimate questions of life, what one finds is that it fails the truth-tests in many areas.

Naturalistic humanism vehemently denies that there is a God who created and sustains the known physical universe. Instead, they hold to the belief of the universe randomly forming itself or always existing, ignoring the consistency problem of explaining how humanity can make order out of a random universe. As such, they undermine the foundations of the rationality and science that they hold so dear.

One variation of naturalistic humanism believes that the universe started on its own having come from nothing. This group usually holds to the scientific theory commonly referred to as the Big Bang Theory. While the science itself may or may not be wrong, their interpretation of the science has serious problems. Zacharias again identifies a problem with the consistency and empirical adequacy of their interpretation:

The laws of science actually break down right at the beginning. The very starting point for an atheistic universe is based on something that cannot explain its own existence. The scientific laws by which atheists want all certainty established do not even exist as a category at the beginning of the universe because, according to those laws of science by which atheists want to measure all things, matter cannot simply “pop into existence” on its own. The silence from atheistic science on why there is something rather than nothing is deafening.<sup>25</sup>

In other words, for a worldview to state that everything is explainable by science or reason, they have yet to explain scientifically or rationally how something (the universe) can come from nothing. In fact, the mathematical chances of the universe coming from nothing and then also randomly forming life are near impossible. Donald Page of

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<sup>24</sup>Kenneth Richard Samples, *A World of Difference: Putting Christian Truth-Claims to the Worldview Test* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 203.

<sup>25</sup>Ravi Zacharias, *The End of Reason: A Response to the New Atheists*, special ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 32.

Princeton’s Institute for Advanced Science has calculated “the chances of ‘the creator sticking in a pin’ and pulling out just this combination of qualities that make such a unique universe are way beyond astronomical,” one out of 10,000,000,000<sup>124</sup>—a number that exceeds all imagination.<sup>26</sup>

Another variation of naturalistic humanism states that the universe has always existed—matter is eternal. However, the science to which they subscribe would say otherwise. The laws of thermodynamics demonstrate the expansion of the universe and its movement toward a state of equilibrium, all indicating that it had a beginning.<sup>27</sup> Zacharias again indicates the irrationality and inconsistency of such a view when he writes, “Once the Big Bang Theory came into being, it tells you that the universe actually had a beginning. So, the Big Bang Theory implies that the universe has not always existed. . . . If there is anything in this universe that could explain its own existence, it would have to be non-physical. It’s a very safe inference, because there is no physical, concrete reality that explains its own existence.”<sup>28</sup> Thus, naturalism’s own pet scientific theories undercut its empirical adequacy. “If the standard Big Bang model is true, then the universe is not eternal; it began to exist at some point in the finite past. If whatever begins to exist has a cause and if the universe began to exist as the Big Bang model suggests, then the universe must have a cause. This cause by necessity is beyond the

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<sup>26</sup>A. R. Marlow, ed., “Proceedings of the Third Loyola Conference on Quantum Theory and Gravitation,” *International Journal of Theoretical Physics* 25, no. 5–6 (1986): 465–661, quoted in Dietrick E. Thomsen, “The Quantum Universe: A Zero-Point Fluctuation,” *Science News* 128, no. 5 (1985): 72–74, accessed April 19, 2019, <http://web.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.sbts.edu/ehost/detail/detail?vid=3&sid=70fc8ac4-450f-4a0d-84a0-614ac4e3d298%40sessionmgr101&bdata=#AN=8814195&db=mih>.

<sup>27</sup>See, for example, William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 140-50.

<sup>28</sup>Ravi Zacharias, "In the Course of Human Events, Part 1," Let My People Think (MP3 podcast), March 11, 2017, accessed December 1, 2017, <http://rzimmedia.rzim.org/LMPT/LMP20170311.mp3>.

physical universe.”<sup>29</sup>

Norm Geisler and William Watkins also argue that one can only explain a finite, contingent object if there is an infinite, intelligent cause. Chance does not explain the origin of the universe’s existence.<sup>30</sup> Even its philosophical advocates, like Bertrand Russell, have difficulty explaining the origin of the universe through this worldview—indicating that the universe needs no explanation when he says, “I should say that the universe is just there, and that’s all.”<sup>31</sup> To which Zacharias rightly retorts, “That is not an explanation. That is an explaining away.”<sup>32</sup>

Not only is naturalistic humanism’s explanation for the origin of the universe fraught with difficulties, so is its explanation of the origin of humanity. Clinging to Darwin’s evolutionary natural selection, they ignore the lack of empirical evidence (such as lack of observable evolutionary events or lack of fossil evidence) as well as the rational hurdles of explaining how something contingent can exist without a cause. Zacharias explains that “the atheist is not able to escape the inexplicability of an impersonal first cause, to say nothing of the awe-inspiring capacity of the ‘raw material’ from whence it all ‘evolved.’ The turning of hydrogen into thinking and purposive beings is scientifically undemonstrated and philosophically devoid of merit.”<sup>33</sup> Again, the mathematical chance that their explanation for the origin of humanity happened as they report is beyond what even their own sciences accept. Fred Hoyle and N. C.

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<sup>29</sup>Anderson, Clark, and Naugle, *An Introduction to Christian Worldview*, 249.

<sup>30</sup>See Geisler and Watkins, *Worlds Apart*, 61-71.

<sup>31</sup>Frederick Copleston and Bertrand Russell, “Debate on the Existence of God” (1948), accessed January 10, 2019, <http://www.biblicalcatholic.com/apologetics/p20.htm>.

<sup>32</sup>Ravi K. Zacharias, *Jesus among Other Gods: The Absolute Claims of the Christian Message* (Nashville: Word Publishers, 2000), 66.

<sup>33</sup>Ravi Zacharias, *The Real Face of Atheism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 44.

Wickramasinghe found that the odds of the formation of a single enzyme from amino acids anywhere on our planet's surface by random trial are  $10^{20}$ .<sup>34</sup> Non-naturalistic explanations for the origin of humanity give a more understandable rationale for humanity's existence:

Michael Behe, who in his book *Darwin's Black Box*, shows us the irreducible complexity of the human cell, which biological evolution cannot explain. Darwin argued that the human eye evolved from a simpler one, and yet he set aside the essential question of its origin. . . . Behe concludes that the irreducible complexity of the human cell reveals that biochemically macroevolution is impossible and Darwinism false.<sup>35</sup>

Alvin Plantinga offers an interesting insight into naturalism's evolutionary claim for humanity's origin. He notes that naturalism and evolution do not give an explanation as to why one can hold his or her beliefs or cognitive functions as reliable. He contends that one cannot solely argue that the reliability of beliefs is dependent on a resulting behavior since there is no satisfactory naturalistic explanation for a causal connection between the two. Plantinga maintains that the probability of the naturalistic explanations for relying on one's beliefs is inscrutable. This leads to a skepticism toward any beliefs produced by one's cognitive faculties since the beliefs are no more likely to be true or false. However, not only is there skepticism about one's beliefs, there is also then a skepticism about one's doubts about one's beliefs since these doubts also are dependent on one's beliefs. This then naturally leads a naturalist to be skeptical about their beliefs about naturalism itself. Therefore, naturalism is self-defeating.<sup>36</sup>

C. S. Lewis offers a similar assesment. Lewis notes that to understand naturalism one must look at it as a total system (a worldview), and within its system

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<sup>34</sup>Fred Hoyle and Chandra Wickramasinghe, *Evolution from Space: A Theory of Cosmic Creationism* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981), 24.

<sup>35</sup>Zacharias, *The Real Face of Atheism*, 39.

<sup>36</sup>Alvin Plantinga, "An Evolutionary Argument against Naturalism," *Religious and Theological Studies Fellowship Bulletin* 11 (March/April 1996): 9–14.

naturalism refutes itself. He argues that naturalism discredits reasoning to a place where it no longer supports the worldview. Naturalists must argue that rational thinking came from the evolutionary process of natural selection. This gives no basis for one's thinking to actually give insight that one could call true. If the process of thinking is nothing more than chemical, there is no reason to suppose that the beliefs produced by that chemical process are true. There is no necessity to accept an argument trying to demonstrate the soundness of an argument when the process of producing the argument itself is suspect. Naturalists give no rational case that supports making a logical jump from cause to effect or from grounds to consequent. They have no support or explanation on how one can know something or make an inference to something.<sup>37</sup> As James Sire notes, "If my mind is conterminous with my brain, if 'I' am only a thinking machine, how can I trust my thought? . . . These and similar questions do not arise from outside the naturalist worldview. They are inherent in it."<sup>38</sup>

Naturalism then is difficult to consistently live out. Although naturalists believe the universe exists by random chance, they do not live as if the universe exists by random chance. In everyday life situations naturalists act as if there is order in the universe and that the universe has a basis of absolute truth. John Frame gives an example:

John Cage, the composer, [is] a man whose philosophy says that all is chance—randomness—a philosophy that he seeks to express in his music. But as an amateur mushroom-grower, Cage does not abide by his philosophy of chance. Rather, he presupposes an order, a world of law. Some fungi are mushrooms, others toadstools, and it matters which ones you pick to eat! Thus Cage is unable to apply his philosophy of randomness to all of life; he cannot live with it. This fact casts doubt on whether he really believes it or not. I would say that he believes it, but not strongly or consistently; he also holds other beliefs inconsistent with this one. . . . Thus he is not able to apply his unbelief to all the areas of his life.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: A Preliminary Study*, rev. ed. (New York: HarperOne, 1960), 17-36.

<sup>38</sup>Sire, *The Universe next Door*, 93.

<sup>39</sup>John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P

As Tommy Allen indicates, “The inconsistency of the Naturalist worldview as [normally defined] cannot give an account for the use of reason, explanation, interpretation, certainty, and the intelligibility of anything.”<sup>40</sup>

The problems with naturalism’s explanation of origin reverberate into the other important areas of life as well. As Zacharias summarizes,

How and why am I here in the first place? . . . That defining question is answered confidently by the atheist that we are here by accident. Turn back the clock and try the same thing again and it will never happen once more. Our presence is a cosmic accident for which there is no script for life or preassigned purpose. But let us be absolutely clear: The atheist has placed all other definitions of life’s imperatives on this one hinge, that we exist on this earth and struggle with human personality, morality, and reality without a personal, moral, or real first cause. That’s the leap of faith—to believe that ultimately life is matter and that it therefore doesn’t really matter. If you submit to the first conclusion, you are inextricably bound to the rest that follow.<sup>41</sup>

A universe and a humanity that are impersonal since they have no cause appear to demonstrate that nothing and no one matters—nothing has value, no one has meaning.

Bertrand Russell explains,

Man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving. . . . His origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms . . . no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave . . . all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and . . . the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins—all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand.<sup>42</sup>

Zacharias notes, “If life is random, then the inescapable consequence, first and foremost,

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& R Publishing, 1987), 149-50.

<sup>40</sup>Tommy Allen, “Transcendental Argument: Contours of C.S. Lewis’ Apologetic,” *Premise* 4, no. 4 (December 1997), accessed April 23, 2019, <http://www.pcahistory.org/HCLibrary/capo/premise/97/dec/p06.html>.

<sup>41</sup>Ravi Zacharias, “Altars against God,” in *Jesus among Secular Gods: The Countercultural Claims of Christ*, ed. Ravi Zacharias and Vince Vitale (New York: FaithWords, 2017), 23.

<sup>42</sup>Bertrand Russell, “A Free Man’s Worship,” in *Why I Am Not a Christian* (Philadelphia: The Great Library Collection, 2015), loc. 501-8, Kindle.

is that there can be no ultimate meaning and purpose to existence. This consequence is the existential Achilles' heel of atheistic belief. As individuals and collectively as cultures, we humans long for meaning. But if life is random, we have climbed the evolutionary ladder only to find nothing at the top."<sup>43</sup> James Sire argues that the issue of meaning and value is troublesome for the naturalist since their explanation of the origins of the universe and humanity give no explanation why one ought to consider humans valuable. The best naturalism can offer is the claim that humans are unique, but gorillas and every other category of nature is unique in itself. Beings that appear by chance have no claim to any value or worth.<sup>44</sup>

The meaninglessness of life and existence echoes very hollowly in the hearts and minds of most people, making this worldview hardly livable, yet it is the inescapable consequence from a random existence. Every individual has his or her own personality, but science has yet to explain how such personality comes from non-personality—how the personal can come from the impersonal.<sup>45</sup> This lack of explanation leaves a barrenness of soul and uncertainty of existence which demonstrates an “underlying message of the futility of life [that] is irresistible.”<sup>46</sup> Although they make lofty claims, “the dead weight of their beliefs leads to a heartless, pointless, and hollow existence.”<sup>47</sup> They try to proclaim the equality of all humanity, yet their worldview is not able to

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<sup>43</sup>Zacharias, *The End of Reason*, 39. Of course, some have no problem with the purposelessness of naturalism. Peter Atkins writes, “Science has no need of purpose . . . all the extraordinary wonderful richness of this world can be expressed as growth from the dunghill of purposeless interconnected corruption.” Peter Atkins, “The Limitless Power of Science,” in *Nature's Imagination: The Frontiers of Scientific Vision*, ed. John Cornwell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 127-28, quoted in Lennox, “Naturalism.”

<sup>44</sup>Sire, *The Universe next Door*, 93.

<sup>45</sup>Zacharias, *The Real Face of Atheism*, 118.

<sup>46</sup>Zacharias, *Can Man Live without God?*, 5-6.

<sup>47</sup>Zacharias, *The End of Reason*, 26.

justify that belief. Vince Vitale observes,

For all people to have equal value, there has to be something about each human person that is equally true and that cannot change. What is it? Any naturalistic answer to this question will not do, because our natural endowments are distributed along a spectrum. Some are less intelligent than others, less healthy, less useful for society, less good looking, less wealthy, less capable of passing on their genes, less moral. Even if currently you measure up well by some of these standards, one day you won't. We will age, we will weaken, and our financial worth will fluctuate. . . . By any naturalistic standard, human value is fleeting and graduated, with some coming out less valuable than others."<sup>48</sup>

Try as it might, naturalistic humanism cannot explain or justify or sustain the existence of such human virtues as love and beauty and liberty and justice—those things which demonstrate purpose and value and worth.<sup>49</sup>

However, the naturalists will not concede so easily. Having no point of reference to give anything meaning or purpose, this worldview finds that it must come up with its own meaning as best as it can in the circumstances in which it finds itself.<sup>50</sup> I would say that naturalistic humanism has to “fake it” since it can give no reason that anything or anyone has value or worth. “Transcending value must come from a person of transcending worth. But in a world in which matter alone exists there can be no intrinsic worth.”<sup>51</sup> The consequence of this is nihilism—nothing has validity, nothing has meaning, everything is just there.<sup>52</sup> Nihilism leaves human beings as nothing more than “conscious machines without the ability to affect their own destiny or do anything

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<sup>48</sup>Vince Vitale, “Pluralism,” in Zacharias and Vitale, *Jesus Among Secular Gods*, 123.

<sup>49</sup>Ravi Zacharias, “Atheism,” in Zacharias and Vitale, *Jesus Among Secular Gods*, 56.

<sup>50</sup>Zacharias, *The End of Reason*, 45.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>52</sup>Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 94.



significant; therefore, human beings as valuable beings is dead.”<sup>53</sup> The reason that naturalistic humanism eventually leads to nihilism is that the worldview “does not supply a basis on which a person can act significantly. Rather, it denies the possibility of a self-determining being who can choose on the basis of an innate self-conscious character.”<sup>54</sup> This is problematic since it is unlivable: “People cannot consistently live out nihilism; no one can live day to day with the affirmation that everything is meaningless.”<sup>55</sup>

Nevertheless, naturalistic humanism appears to allow that these valueless beings (who are the epitome of nature’s accidental existence) are the sole determiners of that which is right or wrong. However, there can be no morality without value:

Morality has no value unless it has something transcending itself that gives itself the value. And every time you raise the question of evil it is either raised by a person or about persons. . . . And if the question is of any value, it can only be of value if persons are of value. And the only way a person can have value is if there is a transcendent Being of infinite worth who has given you that intrinsic worth, not given to you by state or law or by any other fiat. . . . Which means morality is not an abstraction, it is woven into personhood—the moral law has no value in and of itself, unless there is a moral lawgiver of intrinsic worth, by virtue of which all other value pertains.<sup>56</sup>

With the denial of transcendent value, there is no consistency in this worldview’s beliefs about truth and ethics, and as such their morals are hardly livable. Their morality leaves more questions than it gives answers.

There are numerous ethical systems and theories that could fit under naturalism’s broad spectrum. One example is the utilitarianism of John Stuart Mill, where, “actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness . . . pleasure, and freedom from pain, are the

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<sup>53</sup> Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 100.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>55</sup> Anderson, Clark, and Naugle, *An Introduction to Christian Worldview*, 252.

<sup>56</sup> Ravi Zacharias, "Ravi Answers Atheists, Part 1," Let My People Think (MP3 podcast), September 9, 2017, accessed December 1,, 2017, <http://rzymedia.rzim.org/LMPT/LMP20170909.mp3>.

only things desirable as ends.”<sup>57</sup> The problem, however, is that one could use these ends to justify almost any means. Under this system Hitler could justify the Holocaust because of the glorious end of having a pure Arian race. Another naturalistic ethic is Ayn Rand’s objectivist ethics, where value is “that which one acts to gain and/or keep” in the face of alternatives.<sup>58</sup> A person’s life is the standard, so whatever they deem necessary to further that life is good, and reason is the means toward that goal. One’s happiness is paramount, especially found in productive achievement. The problem is that, while Rand may maintain that there would be no conflict between rational people’s interests, it does leave open the possibility of conflict when one person’s life-goals run opposite of another’s life-goals. In such a case, whose life-goals win?

Zacharias notes a commonality between the various naturalistic ethics:

Humanism, secular humanism at least, is inextricably tied to the relativization of truth and of ethics. Humans are the measure of all things. Well, then, this measure is relative to which human person? Which human culture? Which human age? No answers are forthcoming. In this way, the failure of humanism and the failure of relativism are inextricably intertwined. All value is reduced to value according to the preferences and biases of this or that person, culture, or age.<sup>59</sup>

Without humanity having a purpose, there is no consistent place or moral foundation from which to build an ethical society, which could then lead to chaos. “Purpose and oughtness are inextricably bound, and any effort to sever them meets with individual discord and societal disruption.”<sup>60</sup> History has demonstrated this discord many times. “Time and again it was proven that it is not possible to establish a reasonable and coherent ethical theory *without first establishing the telos, i.e. the purpose and destiny of*

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<sup>57</sup>John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1879), loc. 104-11, Kindle.

<sup>58</sup>Ayn Rand, “The Objectivist Ethics,” (1964), <https://campus.aynrand.org/works/1961/01/01/the-objectivist-ethics/page1>.

<sup>59</sup>Ravi Zacharias, “Relativism,” in Zacharias and Vitale, *Jesus Among Secular Gods*, 162.

<sup>60</sup>Zacharias, *The Real Face of Atheism*, 51-52.

*human life*. Even Kant concluded that without a *telos* it all got wrongheaded. If life itself is purposeless, ethics falls into disarray. As Dostoevsky said, if God is dead, everything is justifiable.”<sup>61</sup>

Winfried Corduan argues something similar, noting that naturalistic values have several problems. One problem is that within a naturalistic system the values by which they live are arbitrary since a universe governed by chance can only produce chance occurrences. Any “law” that they posit (be it scientific or ethical) is a generalization on how the universe usually operates, but given the randomness of chance there is no guarantee that the universe is always found that way. Another problem is that even if a naturalist could find ways to accurately describe how the universe operates does not then automatically necessitate how things ought to be. The descriptive data of the universe does not justify any particular prescriptive moral law.<sup>62</sup>

C. S. Lewis argues that, since naturalists have no basis for reasoning, then moral ideals deconstruct to mere illusions or biological by-products. An irrational and non-moral universe cannot lead to a moral judgment—there is no basis to form an ought from what is. Naturalists may argue that moral ideals formed under the influence of natural selection when the resulting behavior caused certain benefits to the species. However, this excludes any basis for it being a moral judgment—one cannot say that the belief or behavior is “right” or “wrong.”<sup>63</sup> As Allen asks, “If morals are simply chemical conditions and random collisions of protons and neutrons, by what standard can the Naturalist argue that natural disasters, children dying, victims of cancer, and ten million

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<sup>61</sup>Zacharias, *Can Man Live without God?* 39. Emphasis original.

<sup>62</sup>Winfried Corduan, *No Doubt about It: The Case for Christianity* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 86-88.

<sup>63</sup>Lewis, *Miracles*, 53-60.

Ukrainians slaughtered in World War II are acts of immorality?”<sup>64</sup>

In a similar vein, Phillip Johnson finds that naturalists lack a way of justifying the imposition of obligations on others. Johnson bases his arguments on those given by law professor Arthur Leff. Leff argues that there can be no normative system of ethics based on anything other than human will, which might be disconcerting to many naturalists. His reasoning is that: “(a) all normative statements are evaluations of actions and other states of the world; (b) an evaluation entails an evaluator; and (c) in the presumed absence of God, the only available evaluators are peoples, then only a determinate, and reasonably small, number of kinds of ethical and legal systems can be generated.”<sup>65</sup> If man, though, ultimately determines the rules, what happens when rules conflict? Whose ethics and ideals will win? As Johnson then argues, without an authoritative evaluator, there is no way to truly distinguish between right and wrong—people just make it up. Johnson then adds his own argument in that as much as naturalists might attempt to use logic for their moral cause, they never reach a foundation for their ethic. Johnson’s reasoning is that logical arguments cannot justify their own premises, so a different logical argument must be used to justify the previous argument’s premises. However, that second logical argument cannot justify its premises, and this will go on ad infinitum. There is no way of coming to a starting point by which to found one’s morals the naturalistic way. Naturalists’ reasoning power and moral assumptions ultimately find no basis.<sup>66</sup>

Still, naturalistic humanists decry the evils of the world. However, with their complaints and criticisms of a world gone wrong (for which they have no reason or

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<sup>64</sup>Allen, “Transcendental Argument.”

<sup>65</sup>Arthur Allen Leff, “Unspeakable Ethics, Unnatural Law,” *Duke Law Journal* 1979, no. 6 (December 1979): 1233.

<sup>66</sup>Phillip E. Johnson, “Nihilism and the End of Law,” *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life* 31 (March 1993): 19–25.

answer), they miss the inconsistency of their belief. When a naturalist confronted Ravi Zacharias claiming that the fact of there being too much evil in the world was proof of God's inexistence, Zacharias demonstrates the absurdity of the argument and the irrationality of that person's worldview:

When you say there's too much evil in this world you assume there's good. When you assume there's good, you assume there's such a thing as a moral law on the basis of which to differentiate between good and evil. But if you assume a moral law, you must posit a moral Law Giver, but that's Who you're trying to disprove and not prove. Because if there's no moral Law Giver, there's no moral law. If there's no moral law, there's no good. If there's no good, there's no evil. What is your question?<sup>67</sup>

Moreover, in their inconsistency, they still argue for their own concoction of right and wrong. However, merely denying God does not excuse them from giving an answer for the problem of evil. Zacharias demonstrates why this is an impossibility:

By denying God's existence, the atheist doesn't solve the problem of evil, he just uses the horrors of evil to deny its moral context, and if hate follows, so be it. In Christian terms, that very denial of evil has everything to do with evil. And that is just for starters. There is more. The human scene is even more fundamentally flawed. You see, for moral reasoning to exist, one must at all times assume the freedom to choose. Within a nontheistic, mechanistic, accidental cause for the universe where "blind and pitiless chance" molds and shapes our choices, determinism is the inescapable conclusion. With the absence of God, true freedom goes as well; thus, as Dawkins says, we dance to our DNA.<sup>68</sup>

The naturalistic humanist has no consistent or livable answer for what is right or wrong, much less for why there is even the existence of good and evil. Even an ardent follower of naturalism such as Bertrand Russell has a difficult time explaining why people embrace this worldview's view of morality while having no basis for it: "I cannot believe that values are simply a matter of my personal taste and so I find my own views actually quite incredible and I do not know the solution."<sup>69</sup> Moreover, even atheist Kai Nielsen

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<sup>67</sup>Zacharias, *Can Man Live without God?* 182.

<sup>68</sup>Zacharias, "Atheism," 38.

<sup>69</sup>Bertrand Russell, "Letter to the *Observer*," October 6, 1957, quoted in Ravi Zacharias, "Living in Critical Times, Part 1," Let My People Think (MP3 podcast), June

had to conclude that sheer reason could not give moral direction when he wrote: “We have not been able to show that reason requires the moral point of view or that all really rational persons, unhoodwinked by myth or ideology, should not be individual egoists or classical amoralists. Reason doesn’t decide here.”<sup>70</sup>

As indicated in the first chapter, several of this worldview’s adherents blame religion for the ills and evils of this world. If any such wrongs came from supposed Christian sources, it did so despite the teachings of Christ, not because of them. Christ never advocated unjust war or injustice or intolerance. On the other hand, one could argue that whatever evil came from the hand of those holding to the naturalistic worldview came as a consequence of the worldview itself. Zacharias highlights,

The attackers of religion have forgotten that these large-scale slaughters at the hands of antitheists were the logical outworking of their God-denying philosophy. Contrastingly, the violence spawned by those who killed in the name of Christ would never have been sanctioned by the Christ of the Scriptures. Those who killed in the name of God were clearly self-serving politicizers of religion, an amalgam Christ ever resisted in His life and teaching. Their means and their message were in contradiction to the gospel. Atheism, on the other hand, provides the logical basis for an autonomous, domineering will, expelling morality. Darwin himself predicted this slippery slope of violence if evolutionary theory were translated into a philosophy of life. Nietzsche talked of the enshrouding darkness that had fallen over mankind—he saw its ramifications. The Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky repeatedly wrote of the hell that is let loose when man comes adrift from his Creator’s moorings and himself becomes god—he understood the consequences.<sup>71</sup>

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23, 2018, accessed July 1, 2018, <http://rzimmedia.rzim.org/LMPT/LMP20180623.mp3>.

<sup>70</sup>Kai Nielsen, “Why Should I Be Moral? Revisited,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (January 1984): 90.

<sup>71</sup>Zacharias, *Can Man Live without God?*, 22-23. A survivor of the gas chambers of Nazi Germany, Viktor E. Frankl, recognizes that the consequences of this naturalistic worldview has grave moral consequences:

If we present a man with a concept of man which is not true, we may well corrupt him. When we present man as an automaton of reflexes, as a mind-machine, as a bundle of instincts, as a pawn of drives and reactions, as a mere product of instinct, heredity and environment, we feed the nihilism to which modern man is, in any case, prone. I became acquainted with the last stage of that corruption in my second concentration camp, Auschwitz. The gas chambers of Auschwitz were the ultimate consequence of the theory that man is nothing but the product of heredity and environment; or as the Nazi liked to say, “of Blood and Soil.” I am absolutely convinced that the gas chambers of Auschwitz, Treblinka, and Maidanek were

The argument that such violence is the consequence of the worldview's beliefs is not merely some *reductio ad absurdum*, but the logical and practical outworking of the worldview itself. Having survived the Russian Communist Revolution, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn recognizes that the "failings of human consciousness, deprived of its divine dimension, have been a determining factor in all the major crimes of this century. . . . Only a godless embitterment could have moved ostensibly Christian states to employ poison gas, a weapon so obviously beyond the limits of humanity."<sup>72</sup> Moreover, the reason why such evil exists under naturalistic regimes is "because there is no overarching point of reference for good and no unified definition of what it means to be human."<sup>73</sup>

This worldview has no basis on which to build a moral system, and yet they loudly pontificate the values of a naturalistic, secular society; but it collapses from having no foundation upon which to set it. "The reason for the collapse of [naturalistic humanism's] literal and figurative utopia is that at the center of the thesis lies a devastating inability to build an ethical theory that is reasonable, coherent, and consistent without reducing it to sheer pragmatism."<sup>74</sup> Yet, even when one demonstrates to them that their moral basis has no basis, they inconsistently cling to their natural law. They recognize a natural law at work in the making of the universe, but they deny a natural law

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ultimately prepared not in some Ministry or other in Berlin, but rather at the desks and lecture halls of nihilistic scientists and philosophers.  
Viktor E. Frankl, *The Doctor and the Soul: From Psychotherapy to Logotherapy*, trans. Richard Winston and Clara Winston, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1986), xxvii, quoted in Ravi Zacharias, "The Distinctives of Christ, Part 1," Let My People Think (MP3 podcast), July 7, 2018, accessed August 6, 2018, <http://rzimmedia.rzim.org/LMPT/LMP20180707.mp3>.

<sup>72</sup>Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, "Men Have Forgotten God—The Templeton Address" (Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion, London, England, 1983), accessed January 9, 2018, <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/47643.html>.

<sup>73</sup>Ravi Zacharias, "Humanism," in Zacharias and Vitale, *Jesus Among Secular Gods*, 159.

<sup>74</sup>Zacharias, *Can Man Live without God?*, 35.

at work in ethics, for to accept the latter might give a foothold to the person of God. As Zacharias notes the inconsistency,

When it came to natural law in the realm of the sun and the planets, they did not allow for the exceptions. But when it came to ethics, it was the exception that debunked the absolute. So what do those two reactions have in common? They both want to get rid of God—because if you bring in the miraculous in natural law, you have to accommodate the presence of God. If you take the normative and the absolute in ethics, you have to invoke upon the very person of God. So it is more the atheist that is anti-reason and anti-rational, but the accusation that is made against the Christian is leveraged to their advantage now.<sup>75</sup>

An empirically inadequate origin births an unlivable view of meaning which leads to an inconsistent view of morality.

Finally, this worldview has no real answer for humanity’s destiny. If the material is all that exists, then man has no soul or spirit. By their view, when a person dies, they cease to exist. This cessation of existence leaves no hope—no hope for righting wrongs, no hope for a meaningful end, no hope for transcendent existence. One loses much of life’s purpose and meaning when one’s destiny goes no further than six feet underground. Zacharias indicates that here, in the subject of death, “atheism meets its nemesis. Any system that does not know the origin of human beings and cannot give our reason for being, certainly must remain silent on our destiny, or at best, argue for nothingness.”<sup>76</sup>

However, the naturalist must ask themselves, what if they are wrong? Since their worldview is wrong about origin, meaning, and morality, what if it is wrong about destiny as well? If one clings to such a worldview to the end, only to learn too late of their mistake, there is no changing their beliefs. “Living without God is also making an absolute commitment to a philosophy of life’s essence and destiny which, if wrong,

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<sup>75</sup>Ravi Zacharias, “Learning to Think Critically,” *Just Thinking Magazine*, December 11, 2012, accessed April 7, 2018, <http://rzim.org/just-thinking/learning-to-think-critically/>.

<sup>76</sup>Zacharias, *The Real Face of Atheism*, 90.



affords absolutely no recourse should it be proven false.”<sup>77</sup> They need be warned, “if the atheist is wrong, there is no recovery of that which he has lost.”<sup>78</sup>

This small analysis of an atheistic system barely scratches the surface but gives slight insight as to why this worldview is logically inconsistent, empirically inadequate, and experientially irrelevant. David Berlinski finds the worldview lacking in truthfulness:

Has anyone provided proof of God’s inexistence? Not even close. Has quantum cosmology explained the emergence of the universe or why it is here? Not even close. Have our sciences explained why our universe seems to be fine-tuned to allow for the existence of life? Not even close. Are physicists and biologists willing to believe in anything so long as it is not religious thought? Close enough. Has rationalism and moral thought provided us with an understanding of what is good, what is right, and what is moral? Not close enough. Has secularism in the terrible 20th century been a force for good? Not even close to being close. Is there a narrow and oppressive orthodoxy in the sciences? Close enough. Does anything in the sciences or their philosophy justify the claim that religious belief is irrational? Not even in the ball park. Is scientific atheism a frivolous exercise in intellectual contempt? Dead on.<sup>79</sup>

As Arlie Hoover summarizes, “*The miracles of science are irrelevant to the truth of naturalism as a metaphysic*. The idea that nature is the sum of reality, that it is impersonal and non-axiological, and that it is eternal can’t be proved empirically by any science or by any combination of sciences or by all the sciences put together.”<sup>80</sup> Still, a world that clings to such a worldview has severe consequences. Zacharias warns, “I am thoroughly convinced that when the last chapter of humanity is written we will find that the implications of atheism, i.e., living without God, if consistently carried through, will

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<sup>77</sup>Zacharias, *Can Man Live without God?*, 60.

<sup>78</sup>Zacharias, *The Real Face of Atheism*, 153.

<sup>79</sup>David Berlinski, *The Devil’s Delusion: Atheism and Its Scientific Pretensions*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2009), dust cover, quoted in Ravi Zacharias, “Jesus Above All, Part 1,” Let My People Think (MP3 podcast), March 24, 2018, accessed April 3, 2018, <http://rzimmedia.rzim.org/LMPT/LMP20180324.mp3>.

<sup>80</sup>Hoover, *Dear Agnos*, 58. Emphasis original.

have made life plainly unlivable within the limits of reason or even of common sense.”<sup>81</sup>

### **Islam (Contradictory Theistic System)**

With both Islam and Christianity being found within the theistic category of worldviews, one would expect many similarities for some of the foremost issues of life. While there are some similar claims, it is the differences that shine even brighter as Islam struggles with several tests for truth.

Like Christianity, Islam believes that there is one God, who is all-powerful, all-knowing, self-sufficient, ever-present, and absolutely sovereign.<sup>82</sup> He has always existed, but for Islam, he was never begotten and will never beget, and never has and never will have any associate with him in the godhead.<sup>83</sup> Therefore, unlike Christianity, there is no Trinity, but one godhead with one personality. Allah’s absolute oneness is such that he does not have any separation or differentiation in his mind, will, and actions.<sup>84</sup> Some sects of Islam so try to protect Allah’s monotheistic nature that they even deny him having separate attributes.<sup>85</sup> It is precisely because of this “vigilant commitment to an absolute form of monotheism . . . that any attempt to identify God with another being or

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<sup>81</sup>Zacharias, *Can Man Live without God?* 17.

<sup>82</sup>Harold A. Netland, *Dissonant Voices: Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1991), 83. Surah 47:19 states, “So know that there is no god but Allah . . . and Allah knows the place of your returning and the place of your abiding.” Surah 59:22-23 says, “He is Allah besides Whom there is no god; the Knower of the unseen and the seen; He is the Beneficent, the Merciful. He is Allah, besides Whom there is no god; the King, the Holy, the Giver of peace, the Granter of security, Guardian over all, the Mighty, the Supreme, the Possessor of every greatness Glory be to Allah from what they set up (with Him).”

<sup>83</sup>Abdu Murray, “Islam or Christianity: Reflections on God’s Greatness,” *Just Thinking Magazine*, December 14, 2015, accessed September 1, 2018, <https://rzim.org/just-thinking/islam-or-christianity-reflections-on-gods-greatness/>. Surah 112:1-4 states, “Say: He, Allah, is One. Allah is He on Whom all depend. He begets not, nor is He begotten. And none is like Him.”

<sup>84</sup>Murray, “Islam or Christianity.”

<sup>85</sup>Anderson, Clark, and Naugle, *An Introduction to Christian Worldview*, 308.

finite creature is viewed as blasphemy or idolatry (shirk). To do so is regarded as one of the worst sins in Islam.”<sup>86</sup> Thus, they deny the possibility of Jesus Christ being God.

In their worldview, Allah created and sustains the known universe and has complete sovereign lordship over its affairs. Humanity is the pinnacle of everything that Allah created, into whom Allah breathed his spirit, to whom also Allah granted a vice-regency over the earth. Nevertheless, even having this higher status over the rest of creation, humanity is little more than a slave—created for Allah’s service and worship.<sup>87</sup> All people are born with some knowledge that Allah exists. Allah created humanity with a nature that is more good than it is evil, and thereby can perfectly obey him if so chosen. Islam does believe in a sin of Adam, but Adam’s disobedience came from Satan’s temptations and Adam’s imperfections. Thus, Adam’s sin did not transform or corrupt human nature, but instead it only affected Allah’s original couple, whom Allah then forgave when they repented. For Islam, sin “is more a weakness, defect, or flaw in human character rather than the radical corruption of human nature.”<sup>88</sup> Thus, everyone throughout history up to the present day is born with an innate ability to both obey or disobey Allah and repent if needed.<sup>89</sup>

Many of Islam’s beliefs are somewhat consistent with Christian accounts of origins and one could defend their account of origins with similar argumentations and evidence utilized by Christian apologists. Yet, it is in other areas where the tests of truth help in constructive analysis, highlighting the problems with the Muslim faith. For example, there are inconsistencies with Muslim claims and historical evidence. The

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<sup>86</sup>Samples, *A World of Difference*, 249.

<sup>87</sup>Anderson, Clark, and Naugle, *An Introduction to Christian Worldview*, 294. See also W. Michael Clark, “Islam: A Challenge to Our Missional Resolve,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Missions and Evangelism* 1, no. 1 (Summer 2012): 23-24.

<sup>88</sup>Netland, *Dissonant Voices*, 89.

<sup>89</sup>Anderson, Clark, and Naugle, *An Introduction to Christian Worldview*, 296.

Quran, their source of authority that claims to be a historical document, denies the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ.<sup>90</sup> However, countless sources verify the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ—many of which are not Christian, with Roman, Greek, Jewish, and Christian historians recording the crucifixion and death of Jesus.<sup>91</sup> However, Islam’s own authority denies the historical evidence.<sup>92</sup> In conjunction with this, since they do not believe that Jesus died on the cross, they also then deny that He rose from the dead. Thus, their claims come into conflict again with reasonable historical evidence and arguments, not corresponding to the empirical proofs that exist.<sup>93</sup> As Netland summarizes, “The differences between Muslims and Christians, then, over the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth are fundamental and cannot be casually dismissed.”<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup>Surah 4:157-58 states,

And their saying: Surely we have killed the Messiah, Isa son of Marium, the messenger of Allah; and they did not kill him nor did they crucify him, but it appeared to them so (like Isa) and most surely those who differ therein are only in a doubt about it; they have no knowledge respecting it, but only follow a conjecture, and they killed him not for sure. Nay! Allah took him up to Himself; and Allah is Mighty, Wise.

<sup>91</sup>For example, the Roman historian Tacitus in his *Annals* speaks of “Christus [who] suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus.” Tacitus, *The Annals*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., vol. 14, *Great Books of the Western World* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1990), 15.44. The Jewish historian Josephus records,

Now, there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works—a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him.

Flavius Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, trans. William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987), 18.3.63-64.

<sup>92</sup>Zacharias and Njoroge, “How Do You Know That Christianity Is the One True Worldview?”

<sup>93</sup>I mentioned evidence for the resurrection in Chapter 3, page 84, including the fact of Jesus’ death, His empty tomb, credible eyewitness accounts, the dramatic life-change of the disciples, among others.

<sup>94</sup>Netland, *Dissonant Voices*, 93.

These historical conflicts also unearth minor inconsistencies within the Quran itself. The Quran, Islam's holy book, denies that Allah would allow anyone to kill his prophets, with Jesus being a recognized prophet. However, elsewhere in the Quran it acknowledges that the unbelieving Jews killed Allah's prophets.<sup>95</sup> Another inconsistency is the doctrine of abrogation. Islam claims that the Quran is the unchanging authority for all the earth.<sup>96</sup> However, by following the doctrine of abrogation, where later pronouncements of the prophets declare null and void earlier pronouncements, they demonstrate the exact opposite.<sup>97</sup> "If the Quran is declared to be a perfect revelation, what is the doctrine of abrogation saying except that all absolutes are relative to the moment?"<sup>98</sup> If any or all of the Quran is open to abrogation, then nothing was true to begin with. What's to say that other teachings or rules or doctrines have not changed over time.

The Muslims' high claims for the Quran are suspect themselves. Muslims claim that the Quran that they have today is precisely as Muhammad received it without any changes or corruptions made to the text. Winfried Corduan finds this claim questionable in two ways. First, there is the historical fact that Uthman, the third caliph, destroyed all copies of the Quran except the one that he claimed to be authentic. This

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<sup>95</sup>Murray, "Islam or Christianity." For example, Surah 3:183 states, "Those are they who said: Surely Allah has enjoined us that we should not believe in any messenger until he brings us an offering which the fire consumes. Say: Indeed, there came to you messengers before me with clear arguments and with that which you demand; why then did you kill them if you are truthful?"

<sup>96</sup>For example, they claim that Allah gives a promise to protect his Quran from error and changes over time in Surah 15:9, "Surely We have revealed the Reminder and We will most surely be its guardian."

<sup>97</sup>Surah 2:106 states, "Whatever communications We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or like it. Do you not know that Allah has power over all things?"

<sup>98</sup>Ravi K. Zacharias, *Light in the Shadow of Jihad: The Struggle for Truth* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2002), 41.

begs the question, what evidence is there that Uthman kept the right one? Second, Corduan notes that several textual variations have appeared which calls into question any claim that there are no changes made to the text.<sup>99</sup>

In addition, Islamic theology teaches that their beliefs are a part of and dependent upon the truth of biblical revelation, and the teachings of the Quran are justified within and built upon these works. But then, on the other hand, they claim that these same biblical documents are inadequate, incomplete, corrupt, and untrustworthy (due to doctrines such as the Trinity or the Incarnation), thereby undermining their own authority.<sup>100</sup> This belief toward the biblical documents is inconsistent at best and logically incoherent at worst. Islam also offers no evidence or rationale to support the claim that the biblical texts are corrupt. Nevertheless, “it can be shown through the writings of the Christian church fathers that such doctrines as the Trinity and the deity of Christ (considered perversions by Muslims) actually had a very early origin in the history of Christianity and were drawn from the canonical writings produced by Jesus’s apostles.”<sup>101</sup>

Zacharias also notes other Quranic and theological inconsistencies when he writes, “Even the Quran, written six hundred years after Jesus, affirmed [Jesus’] virgin birth. . . . This would serve Islam no self-glorifying purpose. . . . Islam, while defending the virgin birth, denies that Jesus was the Son of God. It has, therefore, never been able to

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<sup>99</sup>Winfried Corduan, *A Tapestry of Faiths: The Common Threads between Christianity & World Religions* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 61.

<sup>100</sup>Samples, *A World of Difference*, 257. For example, the Quran first says in Surah 3:3 that God gave the Bible, stating, “He hath revealed unto thee (Muhammad) the Scripture with truth, confirming that which was (revealed) before it, even as He revealed the Torah and the Gospel.” Then Surah 2:75 states that the words were altered: “Do you then hope that they would believe in you, and a party from among them indeed used to hear the Word of Allah, then altered it after they had understood it, and they know (this).”

<sup>101</sup>Samples, *A World of Difference*, 259.

break free from a contradiction of its own making on the matter of Jesus' sonship."<sup>102</sup> So, even though Islam's belief in the creation of the universe and humanity has the capacity of using some of the same support as Christian claims, this worldview's conflict with historically empirical evidence and its inconsistency within its own source of authority is problematic.

Islam's view of humanity is also existentially unsatisfying when considering the meaning and purpose of mankind's existence. Although the pinnacle of Allah's creation, man is a slave to serve and worship him.<sup>103</sup> Emphasis is placed on Allah's sovereignty over the will of man, although Allah does not necessarily have a fulfilling plan for the individual.<sup>104</sup> Allah did not make humanity in his image, nor does Allah seek a relationship with mankind.<sup>105</sup> There is no interaction between a benevolent deity and his creation—humanity has no meaning or purpose for life other than to obey Allah.<sup>106</sup>

The Quran outlines the moral system handed down by Allah by which man shall live. Islam does not center ethics on Allah's love for humanity or humanity's love

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<sup>102</sup>Zacharias, *Jesus among Other Gods*, 39. Surah 19:19-21 reports the announcement of Jesus' virgin birth: "He said: I am only a messenger of your Lord: That I will give you a pure boy. She said: When shall I have a boy and no mortal has yet touched me, nor have I been unchaste? He said: Even so; your Lord says: It is easy to Me: and that We may make him a sign to men and a mercy from Us, and it is a matter which has been decreed."

<sup>103</sup>Surah 51:56 states, "And I have not created the jinn and the men except that they should serve Me."

<sup>104</sup>In fact, some Muslims claim that "the provision, life span, deeds, and ultimate fate in the Hereafter of every human being are written by the angels as soon as the soul is blown into the fetus. Our destiny was decreed for us even before we were born." Justin Parrot, *Reconciling the Divine Decree and Free Will in Islam* (Irving, TX: Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research, 2017), 6.

<sup>105</sup>Surah 50:16-18 states, "And certainly We created man, and We know what his mind suggests to him, and We are nearer to him than his life-vein. When the two receivers receive, sitting on the right and on the left. He utters not a word but there is by him a watcher at hand." These verses seem to indicate that Allah's close presence would be a threat to mankind, and therefore two angels must mediate his presence with man.

<sup>106</sup>Murray, "Islam or Christianity."

for one another—rather, Allah has his law and obedience is the only demand. Therefore, the love found in Islam “very much mirrors human expressions of love. We love those who love us; we love those who are lovable; and we lavish our affections and give of ourselves to those who love us. At best, we act lovingly toward strangers. But we do not love our enemies. We do not love the unlovable. Our love, in general terms, does not transcend the bounds of what is deserved.”<sup>107</sup>

The Quran defines the categories of good and evil, right and wrong, based on Allah’s will. However, Allah’s laws may appear arbitrary, and as mentioned in the discussion about abrogation, the law itself might actually change. This would make it difficult to know what law to follow, how to live, or how to choose between right and wrong.<sup>108</sup> Samuel Zwemer notes that in Muslim theology:

The words “permitted” and “forbidden” have superseded the use of “guilt” and “transgression;” the reason for this is found in the Koran itself. Nothing is right or wrong by nature, but becomes such by the fiat of the Almighty. What Allah forbids is sin, even should he forbid what seems to the human conscience right and lawful. What Allah allows is not sin and cannot be sin *at the time he allows it*, though it may have been before or after.<sup>109</sup>

So, the laws and morals of Allah do not flow from the character or attributes of Allah. Yet, the morals that do flow from Islam’s Sharia law grate against the existential expectations of many. Under Sharia law Muslims can beat women for talking to men or not wearing a headdress, Muslims can behead non-Muslims, and Muslims can molest certain kinds of children.<sup>110</sup> One could argue that Sharia law takes away more from

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<sup>107</sup>Murray, “Islam or Christianity.”

<sup>108</sup>Corduan notes that it is exactly because the Quran does not explain how the individual should live out the faith that the Hadith, the acts and sayings of Muhammad, emerged. Corduan, *A Tapestry of Faiths*, 61.

<sup>109</sup>Samuel M. Zwemer, *The Moslem Doctrine of God: An Essay on the Character and Attributes of Allah According to the Koran and Orthodox Tradition* (New York: American Tract Society, 1905), 51.

<sup>110</sup>See Nonie Darwish, *Cruel and Unusual Punishment: The Terrifying Global Implications of Islamic Law* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008).



human existence than it gives to it. Nonie Darwish writes, “Muslim societies have not contributed much to humanity, but have actually destroyed and sucked away the talent and innovation bit by bit from the nations they conquered. Contrary to conventional wisdom, it is not Arab talent that came out of the Middle East, but the talent of the great civilizations conquered by Arabs and their swords.”<sup>111</sup>

Islam acknowledges that man has the freedom and the capability to choose whether or not to follow that law, yet in the areas where Islam has political power there is a forced compulsion to believe—there is no choice or freedom to do otherwise.<sup>112</sup> Peaceful criticism of the worldview brings the fear of inciting violence. Even its own authority calls for slaying the unbeliever that will not convert.<sup>113</sup> As Mark Coppenger notices, “With over a billion ‘members,’ this religion is typically totalitarian when in power, and it seeks to extend its power along with its numbers in every corner of the earth. Continual violence is performed in its name, and its record of wholesome accomplishment is meager.”<sup>114</sup> This compulsion and violence are the consequence of a worldview that has a deity without love and a humanity without meaning.

Islam’s belief about man seems inadequate and inconsistent with reality.

“Lacking in Islam . . . are concepts of the radical depravity of human nature, the

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<sup>111</sup>Darwish, *Cruel and Unusual Punishment*, 172.

<sup>112</sup>Duin, “Christian Worldview: An Interview with Ravi Zacharias.”

<sup>113</sup>Surah 2:191 reads, “And kill them wherever you find them, and drive them out from whence they drove you out, and persecution is severer than slaughter, and do not fight with them at the Sacred Mosque until they fight with you in it, but if they do fight you, then slay them; such is the recompense of the unbelievers.” Surah 5:33 states, “The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His messenger and strive to make mischief in the land is only this, that they should be murdered or crucified or their hands and their feet should be cut off on opposite sides or they should be imprisoned; this shall be as a disgrace for them in this world, and in the hereafter they shall have a grievous chastisement.”

<sup>114</sup>Mark Coppenger, *Moral Apologetics for Contemporary Christians: Pushing Back against Cultural and Religious Critics* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2011), 134.

pervasive impact of sin and the complete inability of humankind to redeem itself from the bondage of sin.”<sup>115</sup> Kenneth Samples rightly describes how their view of mankind falls short:

Islam’s view of man seems unrealistic and even naïve. According to Islam, human beings are born innocent with an unequivocally good and positive nature. The worst that can be said about people is that as finite creatures they are weak, limited, susceptible to temptation, and generally forgetful of God. . . . Individual people, Islam insists, are capable of living in obedience to God with his guidance. Yet, does this anthropological viewpoint comport with the reality of human experience? . . . The history of humanity—while having many intellectual, moral, and spiritual bright spots—is also filled with brutality, war, racism, and genocide. . . . Islam’s high view of man also seems to run counter to its teachings about ultimate submission to God. If man’s nature is good and humans are merely limited and weak, then why can’t devout Muslims achieve moral perfection?<sup>116</sup>

Even Islam’s founder was unable to live up to Allah’s strong ethical call. As Zacharias observes, “We would consider some of the behaviors and practices of Mohammad in his own personal life reprehensible if someone practiced them within our culture today.”<sup>117</sup>

What is Allah’s response to man’s disobedience? There is an inconsistency in the monotheistic Allah. Two of Allah’s names in Islam is “The Just” and “The Merciful,” meaning that Allah is both all-just and all-merciful.<sup>118</sup> There can be no compromise to either of these. However, humanity is sinful and a lawbreaker. Islam acknowledges that the sin of mankind defaces the whole earth. As Murray then notices,

If God is maximally just, then he necessarily punishes sin. If God is maximally merciful, then he always wants to forgive it. But how can he do both without

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<sup>115</sup>Harold A. Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism: The Challenge to Christian Faith & Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2001), 185.

<sup>116</sup>Samples, *A World of Difference*, 261-62.

<sup>117</sup>Ravi Zacharias, “Defending Christianity in a Secular Culture,” *Just Thinking Magazine*, January 26, 2009, accessed July 21, 2018, <https://rzim.org/just-thinking/defending-christianity-in-a-secular-culture/>.

<sup>118</sup>Zwemer notes regarding the name “The Just”, “It is remarkable and very significant that this title does not occur in the Koran, but is put in the list by Tradition.” Zwemer, *The Moslem Doctrine of God*, 39. One finds the name “The Merciful” at the beginning of the Quran, where Surah 1:1 states, “In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.”

compromising either? One might say that God, as the Almighty, can just forgive sin as an exercise of sheer power. But this presents an incoherent view of omnipotence leading to logical absurdities, like saying that God has the power to create square circles or can cause himself to cease existing.<sup>119</sup>

Where Christianity finds God in Christ being both Just and Justifier, Islam has no recourse. This lack of any advocacy leaves mankind in a lurch. Humanity must cleanse itself without any real capacity to do so.

Regarding Islam's view of destiny, divine judgment comes on the basis that human beings are fully responsible for their actions. Since all human beings have chosen the road of disobedience out of their weaknesses, all human beings are subject to judgment. Muslims believe that before the end of days the Mahdi will come as the final messenger of Allah to eliminate Allah's enemies and usher in a brief time of universal justice. Then Allah himself will destroy the present world and inaugurate a final judgment to determine the eternal destiny of every human being.<sup>120</sup>

Islam also believes in a heaven for the righteous and a hell for the unrighteous. However, what constitutes one over the other?

It is a common belief that two angels follow each Muslim throughout life. The angel on the person's right records his good deeds, while the angel on the person's left records his bad deeds. In effect, a person's destiny rests upon the preponderance of his actions as measured upon a scale. Generally speaking, Muslims have no assurance that they will earn paradise, but this dilemma often is understood as an incentive to strive for greater submission to God's laws. Paradise involves both spiritual and physical pleasures (often described in sensual terms for men), whereas hell consists of eternal banishment from God's presence accompanied by despair and physical punishment. While this judgment seems based solely upon a human being's actions, Muslims also believe that Allah consigns people to paradise or hell based upon his sovereign or arbitrary will."<sup>121</sup>

This worldview misses several components about destiny to make it viable. First, there is no consistent concept of forgiveness since no basis for forgiveness is given other than

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<sup>119</sup>Murray, "Islam or Christianity."

<sup>120</sup>Corduan, *A Tapestry of Faiths*, 183-84. See also Netland, *Dissonant Voices*, 88-91.

<sup>121</sup>Samples, *A World of Difference*, 252-53.

Allah's arbitrary will. Second, there is no concept of assurance.<sup>122</sup> Third, there is no concept of hope. No Muslim, no matter how devout they think themselves to be, can know whether or not their good deeds outweigh their bad, thereby whether or not they will go to heaven upon death. "With all that [the Muslim] observes and all the rules he keeps, there is never a certainty of heaven for the common person in Islam. It is all in the 'will of God,' they say. One's destiny is left at the mercy of an unknown will."<sup>123</sup> One's fate is weighed in the balance of obedience and disobedience. There is no need of a Savior and Islam offers no salvation from one's sins and their consequences.<sup>124</sup> Hopeless and helpless to do anything about it, Islam finds itself logically inconsistent, empirically inadequate, and experientially irrelevant in life important questions of origin, meaning, morals, and destiny.

### **Hinduism (Contradictory Pantheistic System)**

Although Hinduism does not have a singular founder, authoritative text, or sect, there are several core beliefs to which they ascribe that makes worldview analysis possible.<sup>125</sup> It is a monistic worldview that believes all of reality is one—that which exists has no duality, plurality, parts, or distinctiveness.<sup>126</sup> All that exists is the ultimate, impersonal reality of Brahman. This is often described by the nomenclature that god and

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<sup>122</sup>Corduan notes that Islam is a works-based religion which leaves adherents wondering how much is enough to earn heaven? No one is able to claim assurance of heaven since, in the end, it ultimately comes down to Allah's decree of who he believes deserves salvation. Corduan, *A Tapestry of Faiths*, 109 n. 4.

<sup>123</sup>Zacharias, *Jesus among Other Gods*, 98.

<sup>124</sup>Netland, *Dissonant Voices*, 90.

<sup>125</sup>Anderson, Clark, and Naugle, *An Introduction to Christian Worldview*, 269. Netland describes Hinduism as "a family of religious traditions that are the product of some 4,000 years of development." Netland, *Dissonant Voices*, 41.

<sup>126</sup>Samples, *A World of Difference*, 235.

the universe are one. What appears to be an individual within the world is an atman, an emanating consciousness that is either identical to Brahman, or at least a part of the Brahman.<sup>127</sup> Although there is no single authoritative story on when, where, or how the universe emanated from Brahman, adherents generally accept that the universe is some type of illusion or collective hallucination superimposed by the ultimate reality.<sup>128</sup> Hinduism is a form of pantheism, a belief that all is Brahman (or in some sects all is part of Brahman) and Brahman is all—the infinite, absolute, immutable, and indivisible.<sup>129</sup>

Therefore, according to this worldview, the universe and all its inhabitants do not exist in reality. As Zacharias poetically describes their beliefs about existence, “Souls have existed for millions of years. They just come in different costumes. Like any man changes his clothes every day, each life is actually a death. . . . To all of life there is a curtain. Reality is what happens backstage, not front stage. What happens there is merely a drama.”<sup>130</sup> Everything is Brahman through and through. Still, each emanation of atman appears to have its own consciousness—but this too is an illusion. The problem is that the atman has forgotten where it originates from, and so what is called existence is spent attempting to return (or be re-absorbed) into Brahman.<sup>131</sup>

There are several issues metaphysically, ontologically, and epistemologically. First, the idea of Brahman is incoherent. Hinduism describes Brahman as having no attribute or properties—it is a pure undifferentiated Being. It is logically impossible for a

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<sup>127</sup>Anderson, Clark, and Naugle, *An Introduction to Christian Worldview*, 271-72.

<sup>128</sup>*Ibid.*, 276.

<sup>129</sup>Samples, *A World of Difference*, 235.

<sup>130</sup>Ravi Zacharias, *New Birth or Rebirth? Jesus Talks with Krishna*, (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2008), 27.

<sup>131</sup>*Ibid.*, 55

Being to have existence yet have no properties. Not only must the Being have the property of existence, it must have at least another property that describes its existence. Also, when tied with the belief that Brahman emanates itself in several atman, it is logically absurd to claim that the property-less Brahman has the ability to project atman that have several properties.<sup>132</sup>

Next, there is incoherence and inconsistency with the atman and Brahman distinction (or lack thereof). As Samples explains,

According to this form of Eastern monism, all reality is an undifferentiated one without any particular distinctions. Yet this philosophy identifies the distinct human self (atman) as being essentially one in essence with Ultimate Reality. This “distinct true self” idea logically conflicts with monism’s basic assertion that there are no distinctions. In other words, the critical concepts of monism and atman in the worldview of pantheistic monism contradict each other. The concept of atman affirms what monism denies.<sup>133</sup>

There is an inconsistency to claim that the soul is distinct from the all, and yet in the same way the soul is in complete union with the all. It is contradictory to claim in the same way and at the same time that the soul is united and separated from Brahman. This explanation of human existence also fails the unaffirmability test. An adherent to this worldview has to make a claim that “I do not exist,” since they are but illusory projections of Brahman. However, they would not be able to affirm this statement because they have to exist in order to claim not to exist. Therefore, their claims are incoherent and self-defeating. Related to this, it takes a reason and a will to recognize one’s personal existence, which is indicative of a personality. Again, demonstrating incoherence, this worldview has no explanation about how an impersonal Ultimate Reality can project various atman, each with a unique personality.

Corduan also demonstrates a contradiction in Hinduism’s description of existence. They claim that god and the universe are one. Hinduism’s description of

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<sup>132</sup>Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 210.

<sup>133</sup>Samples, *A World of Difference*, 240.

god/Brahman is that it is eternal, omnipotent, and unchanging. However, the universe is finite, temporal, limited, and changeable. The universe did not always exist, but at some time for some reason the universe emanated from Brahman. Yet the two are still one—the infinite Brahman and the finite universe are indistinct. Corduan finds this to be a logical contradiction since something cannot be both finite and infinite at the same time in the same way.<sup>134</sup> Some Hindus may argue that the finite universe is illusory—it doesn't really exist. Corduan then gives an apt illustration to exemplify the logical absurdity:

Let us consider Shirley MacLaine as she stands on the beach proclaiming, "I am God!" We would like to know, specifically, who is God? It cannot be the Ms. MacLaine who is a part of the finite world of appearance, for we just learned that this Ms. MacLaine can only be an illusion. So it must be the infinite God who is now announcing to the world something she has just come to realize, namely that she is God. This is absurd. The infinite cannot forget something and then learn it. It must have always been God and always known it. In short, for the finite Shirley MacLaine to claim that she is God is impossible; for infinite God to become Shirley MacLaine and learn that she is God is incoherent. It just does not make sense.<sup>135</sup>

In addition, Hinduism's concept of truth appears self-defeating. According to Netland, they believe in two levels of reality that offer two levels of truth. There is the higher truth of *para* that is ultimate, then there is the lower truth of *apara*. Hinduism considers the lower truth from the lower reality to be illusion and ignorance. To find the higher level of truth one must transcend the ordinary realm since nothing from the lower level of truth can actually confirm or deny it.<sup>136</sup> However, with this view of truth, how can anyone accept Hinduism's view of ultimate reality since this world works on the lower level of truth? That is, why should anyone accept as true their claims about origin, meaning, morality, and destiny since these claims are illusory and ignorant? By their view of truth, they have undercut any claim to truth. Netland offers his own criticism.

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<sup>134</sup>Corduan, *No Doubt about It*, 93.

<sup>135</sup>*Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>136</sup>Netland, *Dissonant Voices*, 148.

First, even though they deny that logical principles like the law of noncontradiction apply to the highest level of truth, they actually appeal to the law of noncontradiction by stating the distinction between the two levels of truth. Second, adherents are unable to give reasons why one ought to accept this belief, for to do so would appeal to the rational and logical criteria that they deny can justify the assertion that ultimate truth transcends ordinary truth.<sup>137</sup>

This worldview's explanation of origin and existence also has problems with empirical adequacy. Hinduism offers no evidence that bases its claims in reality. Their monistic and pantheistic claims fly in the face of scientific discovery, human psychology, and everyday experience. How could a multitude of consciousnesses come from an impersonal reality along with a world that, by all appearances, is logical and reasonable? "The assertion that the material, physical universe is an illusion completely undercuts the correspondence test. The universe and an individual's conscious and empirical awareness of it strikes human beings as self-evidently real and true."<sup>138</sup>

These problems also extend to the areas of meaning and morality. If what appears to be individuals are nothing but projections, then each projection has no meaning or purpose for existence (since they do not really exist). This belief in humans being mere projections flies in the face of experience. How can an impersonal being project itself in billions of different ways, with each projection having its own hopes and dreams and desires for a relationship? How can the impersonal even seek relationship or communion or union? Zacharias calls attention to the fact that

union with the impersonal absolute defies language, reason, and existential realities. It does not satisfy the longing for communion. However much one may respect the intent of such teaching, we deceive ourselves if we believe that it is philosophically coherent. It is not. That is why some of the most respected Hindu philosophers and thinkers have brandished it as one of the most contradictory systems of life's

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<sup>137</sup>Netland, *Dissonant Voices*, 149.

<sup>138</sup>Samples, *A World of Difference*, 242.



purpose ever espoused.<sup>139</sup>

The system itself somehow let slip that humanity longs for relationship with a transcendent personal other. Hinduism is known as a religion of millions of gods—someone to worship and to seek in the brokenness of existence. Why would projections seeking oneness with reality need to seek something outside itself (when supposedly there is no one besides one’s self)? This worldview believes that the “universe is simply a cosmic puppet theater for the gods. We are simply actors on a stage. Roles and duties are all divinely assigned and beyond human control. Backstage there is always a different script.”<sup>140</sup> One must ask, how can an impersonal reality have a will or a purpose that it imposes on its projections?

Amid these inconsistencies is a moral system tightly woven with its idea of destiny. For Hinduism, each life “is imprisoned in this eternal cycle of death and rebirth called *samsara* . . . [which] could be defined as the ‘passing through or cycling through successive lives as a consequence of moral and physical acts.’ Individuals accumulate karma through moral and physical acts . . . every action has a consequence that will affect this life and the next.”<sup>141</sup> So, wherever a person finds himself or herself in this particular reincarnation is due to the choices made in the previous life. However, several inconsistencies immediately reveal themselves. First, how can an impersonal atman that changes from life to life still somehow maintain its uniqueness from Brahman to have to pay for previous decisions? In other words, how can one atman die and cease to exist, only for that same atman to return in a different form when there is nothing but Brahman? Second, since having an infinite regress of lives is an impossibility, there had to have

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<sup>139</sup>Zacharias, *Jesus among Other Gods*, 97.

<sup>140</sup>Zacharias, *New Birth or Rebirth?* 3.

<sup>141</sup>Anderson, Clark, and Naugle, *An Introduction to Christian Worldview*, 272-73. Emphasis original.

been a first life.<sup>142</sup> How was the lot for that person in their first life determined if there was no karma for which it had to answer? Third, without any recollection from previous births, how would an atman know what not to do or what they need to make right from a previous life? As one of Ravi Zacharias' Hindu friends explained it to him, "If I go to the bank, every bank manager will tell me what my indebtedness is, what I owe. What sort of system is this where I have no clue about what I owe and how many births it will take for me to pay it back?"<sup>143</sup>

Moreover, there are no set rules of right and wrong. In fact, Netland argues that their concept of the two levels of truth and reality make it impossible for them to make an objective distinction between good and evil, right and wrong.<sup>144</sup> Still, with whatever laws one might discern, breaking them is more akin to breaking the laws of nature than breaking the laws of a judicial system.<sup>145</sup> Whatever rules or laws one may claim for this religion often seem reprehensible. For instance, there is the caste system where individuals are born into a particular status in life, supposedly due to the karma of the previous life.<sup>146</sup> "They believe that God created the caste system and that the 165 million

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<sup>142</sup>William Lane Craig summarizes the argument of Muslim philosopher al-Ghazali regarding the impossibility of an infinite regress of events in time. First, if the regress of past events were truly infinite, then it would be impossible for the present moment to arrive. Second, if past events were infinite, then this would lead to infinities of different sizes, which is a logical absurdity. Third, if a current event is truly infinite, it might be asked if the event occurred an odd amount of times or an even amount of times. Yet, it is a logical absurdity to ask if an infinite event is odd or even. If no infinite events can occur in the known universe, then the universe itself must have had a beginning. Therefore, if the universe itself had a beginning, then there cannot be an infinite number of events—including lives. See Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 96-97.

<sup>143</sup>Zacharias, "Defending Christianity in a Secular Culture."

<sup>144</sup>Netland, *Dissonant Voices*, 190.

<sup>145</sup>Corduan, *A Tapestry of Faiths*, 96.

<sup>146</sup>Corduan says of the caste system, "The traditional Hindu society with its caste system is nothing if not institutionalized racism." Corduan, *No Doubt about It*, 261.

[untouchables] in India are justly consigned to their situation.”<sup>147</sup> Nevertheless, instead of doing good to help their fellow man in order to gain good karma, the higher castes poorly treat the lower castes and consider the no-caste untouchables as unclean. Are they not concerned about the karma that they are accumulating in their present incarnation? India (where Hinduism has its highest population and where the caste system still reigns) has some of the most abject poverty and suffering in the world. As Zacharias laments, “Look at the lives of the masses here. So many people are totally uncared for. Disease stalks every corner. The beggars outside the temple are less cared for than the cow that comes into the temple. An animal is revered and worshiped while these poor people here—made in the image of God—are ignored and scolded.”<sup>148</sup>

Women also suffer under such a system where they have less value than men and treated as inferior no matter their caste, which leads to long-standing subordination and oppression.<sup>149</sup> This is especially seen in the suttee, the ritual of burning widows on their husband’s funeral pyre. Richard Grenier described this horror:

In southern India the widow was flung into her husband’s fire. In the valley of the Ganges she was placed on the pyre when it was already aflame. In western India, she supported the head of the corpse with her right hand, while, torch in her left, she was allowed the honor of setting the whole thing on fire herself. In the north, where perhaps women were more impious, the widow’s body was constrained on the burning pyre by long poles pressed down by her relatives, just in case, screaming in terror and choking and burning to death, she might forget her *dharma*.<sup>150</sup>

What happens to these people deemed substandard is the consequence of the system

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<sup>147</sup>Coppenger, *Moral Apologetics*, 147.

<sup>148</sup>Zacharias, *New Birth or Rebirth?*, 37. A story in some of Hinduism’s sacred writings speaks of Krishna counseling Arjuna that it is acceptable for him to kill his cousins because he would only be killing their bodies, not their souls. And yet elsewhere Krishna says not to kill animals because they have souls, again demonstrating some of the inconsistencies in this worldview. *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>149</sup>Anderson, Clark, and Naugle, *An Introduction to Christian Worldview*, 274-75.

<sup>150</sup>Richard Grenier, *The Gandhi Nobody Knows* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983), 106-7, quoted in Coppenger, *Moral Apologetics*, 148. Emphasis original.

itself:

The lower castes in that religious/cultural/societal structure have recognized that a reincarnation-based religious philosophy is practically unworkable, oppressive, and fatalistic in nature. Members of India's lower echelon are consistently marginalized in society, suffer stigma and discrimination, and feel trapped in a religious determinism beyond their ability to change. The practical fruit of reincarnation has proven quite sour in those parts of the world that take this philosophical system seriously. Reincarnation also proves to be a convoluted moral system. It claims that people suffer because of injustices performed in their past lives. However, this claim leads to monumental intellectual and moral problems. First, it means impoverished children living in India are suffering because of their past-life injustices. But if these children are reaping justice for their previous evil actions, then why would anyone want to help them? Why give them food, shelter, and clothing if such acts interfere with the just punishment they so rightly deserve?<sup>151</sup>

Moreover, the system itself has no recourse for the suffering of the world.<sup>152</sup> A system whose only answer to the question of the existence of evil and suffering is that it is only an illusion of a schizophrenic entity has no existential usefulness for those who are experiencing the suffering.

Finally, this Hindu worldview offers no hope for the future that is experientially relevant. Hindus seek for moksha—freedom from the cycle of rebirths in order to reunite with Brahman. There are three ways by which to attempt to obtain this: the way of knowledge, the way of works, and the way of devotion.<sup>153</sup> There is no assurance that someone will find these paths in any of their lifetimes. Even if they did find it, all it would lead to is an absorption into the impersonal Ultimate Reality. So, the only choices are to continue in the seemingly never-ending cycle of birth and rebirth, or

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<sup>151</sup>Samples, *A World of Difference*, 243.

<sup>152</sup>Zacharias recognizes that the “corruption that is endemic to the system and the stratification brought about by the caste system have left millions with nothing more than a hope and allegiance to a fragile strand of language and belief in life’s suffering. But to change and to find answers does not seem to come from their religion itself.” Ravi Zacharias, “The Chimera of Pantheism,” in *To Everyone an Answer: A Case for the Christian Worldview*, ed. Francis J. Beckwith, William Lane Craig, and J. P. Moreland (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 319.

<sup>153</sup>Anderson, Clark, and Naugle, *An Introduction to Christian Worldview*, 278-81. See also Zacharias, *New Birth or Rebirth?*, 56, and Netland, *Dissonant Voices*, 49.

cease to exist. There is no hope in the cessation of existence, nothing to look forward to, no ultimate sense of justice for righting wrongs, and no ultimate meaning for a life well-lived. Thus, Hinduism as a worldview is left wanting.

## **Christianity**

Having briefly surveyed how truth-tests demonstrate the falseness of other worldviews, one also observes that the truth-tests will demonstrate the truthfulness of the Christian worldview. Within the context of the four life questions, the answers of Christianity are logically consistent, empirically adequate, and experientially relevant.

The Christian worldview believes that there is one transcendent God who is eternal, all-powerful, all-knowing, and everywhere-present. This God, although having one nature and being, is comprised of three distinct personalities (a Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). While apologetic arguments for centuries have reasoned toward this God as a First Cause (cosmological), a Grand Designer (teleological), and the Moral Law-Giver (moral), reason is not able to lead one to a Triune Being, nor would one be able to find empirical evidence to prove this as the case. While the doctrine of the Trinity is a mystery and seemingly paradoxical, it is not an outright contradiction. One nature with three persons (one What with three Whos) may be inexplicable, but it is not illogical. Zacharias sees this nature of God as an answer to one of the longest mysteries of existence. He says, “Unity and diversity in the Godhead. Do you realize that answers the greatest philosophical question of all times: Why do we see unity and diversity around us?”<sup>154</sup>

This God, who Himself has always existed, who was never created, is the great Creator of all things that exist outside of Himself. There was an existence where nothing

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<sup>154</sup>Ravi Zacharias, "Is Jesus the Only Way? Part 3," Let My People Think (MP3 podcast), April 15, 2017, accessed December 1, 2017, <http://rzimmedia.rzim.org/LMPT/LMP20170415.mp3>.

but God Himself subsisted. God created the universe of space and time without any previously existing material (ex nihilo). He formed and filled the universe under His watchful care, which led to the pinnacle of His creation: humanity. God made humanity (both male and female) in His image, giving them a co-regency over the earth, with an order to fill and subdue it.

While this makes for a good story, are there logical, rationale, and empirical evidence that verify such claims? Through the worldview apologetic approach, there are several strands of proofs that demonstrate the truthfulness of these worldview beliefs. One area of evidence is scientific. There are four strong points of science, that most naturalists would concede, that point to the truthfulness of the Christian claims of a designed creation: 1) The universe had a beginning and did not create itself (according to scientific proofs discussed earlier); 2) The universe is knowable (otherwise science would be an impossibility); 3) The universe is regular (it follows set laws); and 4) the universe is finely tuned for life.<sup>155</sup> Zacharias notes, “If you take any physical quantity in this universe and section it you will end up with a problem: no matter how you section it you will never find the reason for its existence in itself. The reason for everything physical, however sectioned, however sliced, will ultimately point to a cause outside of itself . . . you will always end up with a state of affairs where it cannot explain its own existence.”<sup>156</sup> While not directly arguments for the Christian God, the Christian worldview makes sense of this line of evidence when placed in conjunction with further

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<sup>155</sup>Vince Vitale, “Scientism,” in Zacharias and Vitale, *Jesus Among Secular Gods*, 66. The argument for the fine-tuning of the earth for life states that “small deviations from the actual values of the constants and quantities in question would render the universe life-prohibiting or, alternatively, that the range of life-permitting values is exquisitely narrow in comparison with the range of assumable values.” This could not happen by mere chance, nor did it arise from physical necessity, but had to be due to design from an outside force. Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 157-72.

<sup>156</sup>Zacharias, “Is Faith Delusional? Part 1.”

lines of evidence and argument.

One can find further evidence for the Christian worldview with its belief that man was a unique creation of God, not merely a product of random chance. Evolutionary chance cannot explain the specified complexity of some of the simplest forms of life or even for one vital bodily organ, much less the entirety of a human being. Zacharias explains and illustrates the arguments espoused by several creationists:

Whenever you see intelligibility and specified complexity, especially in the nature of language and abstract reasoning, you always assume an intelligence behind it. You would never look at a sonnet by Shakespeare and assume that a million monkeys pounding on some typewriters ultimately produced that sonnet. You would never look at a dictionary and believe it developed from an explosion at a printing press. If you were to walk onto a planet that you had never visited, and you saw a million pebbles in a perfect triangle, you can reasonably say that it happened over fifteen-million years—you can assume that because it is an aesthetic design. But if you walked off that platform and saw one piece of paper that said, “Hello John, I hope you brought some good Indian recipes with you,” would you even think for one solitary moment that fifteen-million years put that one solitary sentence together?<sup>157</sup>

How much more complex is the information contained in human DNA? Since random chance appears to be a statistical impossibility, intelligent design of man and universe seems a matter of course. Considering such arguments, former Nasa Scientist Robert Jastrow observes, “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,” and then later admits, “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 mountain 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.”<sup>158</sup> Moreover, skeptical scientist

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<sup>157</sup>Ravi Zacharias, "Is Faith Delusional? Part 2," Let My People Think (MP3 podcast), October 15, 2016, accessed December 1, 2017, <http://rzimmedia.rzim.org/LMPT/LMP20161015.mp3>.

<sup>158</sup>Robert Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: W. W.

Francis Crick has to admit for himself, “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 to be almost a miracle, so many are the conditions which would have had to have been satisfied to get it going.”<sup>159</sup>

What also sets Christianity apart from most other worldviews is that it bases itself in history, opening itself up for empirical investigation for many of its primary claims—often confirmed by sources that are themselves not sympathetic toward Christianity. Gary Habermas notes, “We should realize that it is quite extraordinary that we could provide a broad outline of most of the major facts of Jesus’ life from ‘secular’ history alone. Such is surely significant.”<sup>160</sup> Thus, Christian claims open themselves up to historical investigation. Important events that are crucial to the worldview itself, such as the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, offer themselves for verification, and when researched one finds strong evidence pointing to their reality. For instance, Gary Habermas lists twelve points of historical fact pointing to the reality of the resurrection that I have referenced in Chapter 3 on page 84. Kenneth Sample notes why such

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Norton & Company, 1992), 14.

<sup>159</sup> Francis Crick, *Life Itself: Its Origin and Nature* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981), 88. Although not giving up on an evolutionary possibility, Crick would go on to state the sheer enormity of the task as he continues:

But this should not be taken to imply that there are good reasons to believe that it could not have started on the earth by a perfectly reasonable sequence of fairly ordinary chemical reactions. The plain fact is that the time available was too long, the many microenvironments on the earth's surface too diverse, the various chemical possibilities too numerous and our own knowledge and imagination too feeble to allow us to be able to unravel exactly how it might or might not have happened such a long time ago, especially as we have no experimental evidence from that era to check our ideas against.

Evolutionary explanations have a lot of hurdles to cross. The Christian theistic explanation is the most consistent and empirically adequate explanation both scientifically and rationally.

<sup>160</sup> Gary R. Habermas, *The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Jesus* (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Company, 1996), 224.



empirical evidence is important when he writes,

The truth-claims of Christianity are open to, and even invite, historical investigation. The key events of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the historical person, can be examined and thus are subject to verification or falsification. . . . The ability to objectively test a worldview's truth-claims is critically important in the overall consideration of truth. Historic Christianity invites that type of investigation and scrutiny.<sup>161</sup>

Thus, Corduan claims that "Christianity is the only religion whose truth depends strictly on historical claims."<sup>162</sup> Most of Christianity's major doctrines depend on a correspondence with reality.

That there are historical evidence and arguments for essential Christian doctrines in no way declares that scholars have found empirical evidence for every single Christian belief or assertion, or that they can logically deduce every point of theology. Nevertheless, due to the evidence that has made itself available, there is a strong correlation between Christian claims and truth. Samples again aptly summarizes,

The realities of the world and life match what the Bible teaches about God's creating the universe. . . . Christian theism scores well on the basic correspondence test for several reasons. First, when the Bible discusses truth . . . it generally incorporates a correspondence theory (truth equals that which matches reality). Therefore, according to historic Christianity, beliefs that conform to reality must be embraced. Truth cannot be separated from reality. Second, the Christian theistic worldview affirms a type of scientific realism (believing the time-space-matter universe to be an authentic objective reality). Moreover, history proclaims Christianity's respect for the empirical facts of nature. . . . Third, in the Christian faith, unlike Eastern mystical religions, people can generally trust their experiences in life and in the world. And the encounters characteristic of human existence are consistent with, not contrary to, the faith. The Christian worldview doesn't separate faith from real-life experience."<sup>163</sup>

Moreover, because the Christian account of origins and historical realities is logically consistent and empirically adequate, it makes the other areas of consideration experientially livable.

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<sup>161</sup>Samples, *A World of Difference*, 272.

<sup>162</sup>Corduan, *A Tapestry of Faiths*, 126.

<sup>163</sup>Samples, *A World of Difference*, 271.

Since Christianity claims that God made man in His image, this means that God has placed His own value and worth upon humanity. The individual, no matter any internal or external attributes or factors, has an intrinsic value that God placed upon them that comes from outside themselves. Christianity claims that when Adam disobeyed God and plunged all of humanity into a sinful existence, the image of God was marred but not destroyed. Thus, humanity still has God's spiritual imprint upon them which gives them their essential worth.<sup>164</sup> God bestowed upon humanity a dignity and purpose that nothing or no one else could have conveyed upon them, and thus, nothing or no one else can take that dignity and purpose away.

However, another clue to the meaning of life, according to Christianity, is that God pursues a relationship with humanity, even in their fallen, sinful state. God does not stay distant and transcendent, but God comes near to man—so near, that He Himself took on humanity to restore the relationship that sin stole away. Moreover, with the relationship offered through Jesus Christ, He then offers a relationship via the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. God relates to everyone as an individual, uniquely made and uniquely called, having a purpose for each of them—a purpose realized upon acceptance by faith.<sup>165</sup>

Christianity bases its categorization of morals on the reality of God—good and evil are what they are based upon God's standards which God based on His character. He is the indicative that justifies the imperative—from Him comes the “ought” because of who He is. Humanity existentially experiences this truth whenever they attempt to

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<sup>164</sup>Ravi Zacharias, "Is Jesus the Only Way? Part 1," Let My People Think (MP3 podcase), April 1, 2017, accessed December 1, 2017, <http://rzimmedia.rzim.org/LMPT/LMP20170401.mp3>.

<sup>165</sup>Ravi Zacharias, "Faith Under Fire: Jesus among Other Gods," Part 2, Let My People Think (MP3 podcast), May 27, 2017, accessed December 2, 2017, <http://rzimmedia.rzim.org/LMPT/LMP20170527.mp3>.

categorize right and wrong, or they try to explain the existence of evil. As argued above, if there is evil there is good, if there is good there is a moral law, if there is a moral law there is a moral lawgiver. Christianity posits that God is the Moral Lawgiver.

There are two particular strengths to Christianity's moral claims. First, Jesus Christ Himself exemplified the morals perfectly, setting the example for those who would follow Him. No other worldview has a founder or leader that not only pontificated its ethical system but also lived it out in the open for all to see. Zacharias notes,

Jesus Christ embodies the ideal like no one else I have ever read about or you could ever read about. . . . You can see the names of all kinds of deities writ large in all other worldviews and world systems but none will come close to the purity of our Lord Jesus Christ. He looked at His accusers and said, "Which of you [convicts] me of sin." Pilate said, "I find no fault in this man." The thief on the cross says, "The man has done nothing amiss." . . . You read on and on and on and you see the spotless Lamb of God.<sup>166</sup>

Even skeptic W. E. H. Lecky takes notice when he writes,

The character of Jesus has not only been the highest pattern of virtue, but the longest incentive in its practice, and has exerted so deep an influence, that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists. This has indeed been the wellspring of whatever is best and purest in the Christian life.<sup>167</sup>

Then those who follow in His footsteps, no matter how imperfectly they may try, still enjoin a changed life that reverberates to those around them.

Second, God's moral laws for humanity make sense not only in light of mankind's meaning but also his sinfulness. Humanity, made in the image of God, has essential value, and so morality reflects the sacredness of human life. To say that the actions of a Hitler against humanity are wrong is to make a judgment of ethics based on

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<sup>166</sup>Ravi Zacharias, "Who Is Jesus: Defending Jesus Christ as the Way, Part 2," Let My People Think (MP3 podcast), January 6, 2018, accessed January 6, 2018, <http://rzimmedia.rzim.org/LMPT/LMP20180106.mp3>.

<sup>167</sup>W. E. H. Lecky, *History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1903), no page, quoted in Zacharias, "Jesus above All, Part 1."

that essential worth of man that is found only in the Christian worldview.<sup>168</sup> However, to admit such a moral law is also to admit that humanity falls short of that moral law. What makes Christian ethics a testable truth is that Jesus Christ alone explains the human condition that corresponds with reality—mankind is fallen, broken, and sinful, but also too weak in themselves to change the state in which they find themselves.<sup>169</sup> As Zacharias explains,

Jesus gives you and me the most accurate description of your heart and mine. No, He doesn't tell us we're immoral. No, He doesn't tell us we need more education. No, He doesn't tell us if we only will to do . . . the Four Noble Truths or Eightfold Path or certain hours of inward reflection and meditative disciplines we will get there. He tells you that your problem and mine is that by no ethical means will we ever be able to attain and solve what is the real malady of our souls. Nothing in ourselves can ever attain a solution to that. . . . Jesus described your heart perfectly when He said your heart is rebellious against God. . . . Buddha doesn't tell you that. Krishna doesn't tell you that. Muhammad doesn't call it sin at all—it is unhelpful. The nature of sin in the separation from God is a very profound description of Jesus' words.<sup>170</sup>

Jesus gives the most logically consistent and empirically adequate description of man because this is the lived experience of every person that has ever existed. Zacharias cites journalist Malcolm Muggeridge, "The depravity of man is at once the most empirically verifiable reality but at the same time the most intellectually resisted fact."<sup>171</sup>

Quite often, Christianity's opponents will raise the issue of evil's existence as an objection to this worldview, arguing that if there indeed is a God like Christians proclaim and describe, then there ought not to be evil in the world (or so much gratuitous

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<sup>168</sup>Ravi Zacharias, *The Lamb and the Fuhrer: Jesus Talks with Hitler* (New York: Multnomah Publishers, 2005), 89.

<sup>169</sup>Ravi Zacharias, "In the Course of Human Events, Part 2," Let My People Think (MP3 podcast), March 18, 2017, accessed December 1, 2017, <http://rzimmedia.rzim.org/LMPT/LMP20170318.mp3>.

<sup>170</sup>Ravi Zacharias, "The Distinctives of Christ, Part 1."

<sup>171</sup>Quoted in Ravi Zacharias, "Understanding the Spirit of the Age, Part 2," Let My People Think (MP3 podcast), November 11, 2017, accessed December 1, 2017, <http://rzimmedia.rzim.org/LMPT/LMP20171111.mp3>.

evil, as some frame the argument). Since evil exists there cannot be a good, all-powerful God.<sup>172</sup> There is not necessarily a logical inconsistency to there being both a Christian God and evil. One can make several retorts to the objection: evil exists because of humanity's free will, God uses evil for the transformation of man's moral and spiritual character, or God uses it to bring about a greater good.<sup>173</sup> However, by raising the question, they imply there is an ultimate standard of goodness, and there is something wrong in the world that falls short of that goodness. The Christian worldview's treatment of destiny gives the only remedy to this problem that is both livable and hopeful.

Christianity communicates that humanity cannot overcome their sin and brokenness, but instead, through the death and resurrection of Christ, God offers forgiveness as a gift that one receives by faith. One cannot reach a spiritual apex, follow a rule, or perform a ritual to reach God. Instead, God reached down to humanity. In almost an ironic fashion, "the greatest act of evil on humanity's part (the crucifixion of God in human flesh) resulted in the greatest good for humankind."<sup>174</sup> Here God placed His justice upon another to demonstrate His mercy. God does not compromise His character

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<sup>172</sup>J. L. Mackie argues that the premises of God being omnipotent, God being wholly good, and yet evil still exists entails a contradiction. If any two of the premises are true, then the third premise must be false. He believes a problem lies in the fact that theologians must adhere to all three premises, but are unable to do so consistently or logically. See J. L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," *Mind* 64, no. 254 (April 1955): 200–212.

<sup>173</sup>Samples, *A World of Difference*, 269. For example, Alvin Plantinga offers a free will defense against Mackie's claims. His argument is that a world is more valuable when it contains creatures who are significantly free to perform their actions than if the world did not contain said creatures. God has the ability to create such creatures, but if He does so, He cannot cause them to do only what is right, because if He did they would no longer be free. In order to create creatures that can choose the morally good, they must also be capable of doing that which is morally evil (without God's interference to prevent them from doing so). That creatures choose moral evil does not count against God's omnipotence or goodness because the only way to have prevented the moral evil would be to remove the moral good. Alvin C. Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1974), loc. 329-48, Kindle.

<sup>174</sup>Samples, *A World of Difference*, 269.

and offers the only provision for mankind's common spiritual malady.

With the offer of forgiveness also comes the provision for humanity's common physical malady—death. As Jesus conquered the grave and rose from the dead, so He offers freely to others the hope of a life that does not end—both an eternal, spiritual life, and then a resurrected physical life. His own physical resurrection offers proof of the physical resurrection He offers to others. Zacharias notes,

If Jesus were a charlatan, here's what He would have done: "Kill me and I will spiritually rise again." You'd never be able to prove Him false. How do you prove a spiritual resurrection false? There's no way to prove it. It's an intangible. It's not in the realm of the concrete anymore. But He said something that at least made His claim falsifiable, if it were false, by saying, "I will bodily rise again." His claim to the physical resurrection is the ultimate testimonial that He was not about to fake people. He was going to demonstrate to them the tangible evidence of the resurrection from the dead.<sup>175</sup>

The hope of all mankind rests on an empirically verifiable fact. The problem of death and life thereafter, for which all worldviews must give an answer, finds its most logical and hopeful answer in Christ—hope that is both in the present but reaches to the future.<sup>176</sup>

This hope permeates every belief in the Christian worldview and answers every question of life:

You see, if there is one word that captures the difference of the Christian faith . . . it is "forgiveness." That He is willing to take you as you are with your past and forgive you and enable you to begin your life all over again with a clean slate . . . the message is not despairing; the message is one of hope and ultimate triumph over the grave. . . . You will have to admit that if the resurrection is true, life's paradigm changes dramatically. Everything changes—the idea of justice, the idea of morality, the idea of purpose, the idea of destiny.<sup>177</sup>

Without the resurrection, Christianity would not stand. "For the Christian, the resurrection of Christ from the dead is the tour de force of one's apologetic and

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<sup>175</sup>Ravi Zacharias, "In the Course of Human Events, Part 2."

<sup>176</sup>Ravi Zacharias, "Jesus Above All, Part 2," Let My People Think (MP3 podcast), March 31, 2018, accessed April 3, 2018, <http://rzimmedia.rzim.org/LMPT/LMP20180331.mp3>.

<sup>177</sup>Zacharias, "Faith Under Fire: Jesus among Other Gods, Part 2."

guarantees one's destiny. The resurrection is the linchpin of one's argument as he or she defends the Christian faith. It addresses the most painful of all of life's struggles—the agony of death, which cuts us all down and taunts any hankering we have for omniscience."<sup>178</sup>

By way of summary for testing the Christian worldview, Zacharias writes,

Only in Jesus do you find the answers to the deepest questions of the soul, answers that correspond to reality and in totality are systemically coherent. Indeed, only Jesus describes our condition, provides for our malady, explains suffering, offers his life as an atoning sacrifice, and rose again from the dead to give eternal life to all who would believe. The gospel is the only story where grace and forgiveness are central and unearned—and that is good news to all people everywhere, whatever color or ethnicity.<sup>179</sup>

When placed in comparison with other worldviews, be they atheistic, pantheistic, or theistic, only Christianity gives a realistic accounting of the human condition, and still offers people genuine meaning, purpose, and hope both in this life and in the life to come.<sup>180</sup> Those espousing a Christian worldview may not have all the answers, but the answers given to the foundational questions of origin, meaning, morality, and destiny are logically, empirically, and existentially satisfying.

As a final reflection, Zacharias concludes,

The more I know of Him, the more I read the Scriptures, the more I realize that the other worldviews are not even close to being close. That in Christ you have this comprehensive explanation for the four deepest questions of life . . . origin, meaning, morality, and destiny. How did I come to be? What point of reference do I find for meaning? How do I differentiate between good and evil? What happens to a

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<sup>178</sup>Zacharias, *The Real Face of Atheism*, 145.

<sup>179</sup>Ravi Zacharias, "Think Again: A Kaleidoscope of Colors," *Just Thinking Magazine*, May 25, 2017, accessed March 20, 2018, <http://rzim.org/just-thinking/think-again-a-kaleidoscope-of-colors/>. By way of invitation, Zacharias pleads, "Why Jesus? He's the only one who answers your questions with corresponding truth and coherence in reality. And the reason He does that is because He is the way, the truth, and the life. He will put your life back together if you are willing to trust Him and honestly invite Him. . . . He bridges the greatest journey between the head and the heart." Zacharias, "Jesus Above All, Part 2."

<sup>180</sup>Samples, *A World of Difference*, 274.

human being when he or she dies? . . . When the answers to the individual questions are correspondingly true and testable individually, then when you put all of the answers together there is a coherence to those answers, then you will find that you are moving in the direction of the greatest pursuit of life which is the truth.<sup>181</sup>

Apologetics within the purview of worldviews that tests for truth and falsity demonstrates that Jesus, in the historical reality of His life, death, and resurrection, is not only the way and the life, but He is the truth.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>181</sup>Zacharias, "Jesus Above All, Part 1."

<sup>182</sup>Ravi Zacharias, "Embodied Truth," RZIM, *A Slice of Infinity* (blog), April 11, 2012, accessed July 20, 2018, <https://rzim.org/a-slice-of-infinity/embodied-truth/>.



CHAPTER 6  
CONCLUSION

**Philosophic Presentation of the Apologetic**

Apologetics is not merely a scholarly exercise where one debates issues without concern for the outcome of the interchange; rather, apologetics is an evangelistic and discipleship tool for heart and mind change. Thereby, worldview apologist Ravi Zacharias suggests a method to consider when enjoining others to test their worldview and then testing the claims of Christianity. Zacharias proposes a three-level presentation of the apologetic through which people may analyze worldviews for their truthfulness, formulate their conclusions, and establish their convictions.<sup>1</sup> One may plead the three truth-tests while presenting at any of the three levels.

Zacharias considers the first level of engagement to be one of taking the foundational beliefs of one's worldview or the worldview of others and then interacting with the great philosophical ideas found throughout history. It deals with "why one believes what he or she believes and is sustained by the process of reasoning, incorporating truth and logic."<sup>2</sup> This level is where "the theoretical substructure of logic upon which inductions are made and deductions are postulated. Put plainly, it depends heavily on the form and the force of an argument. . . . Truth has a direct bearing on

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<sup>1</sup>Ravi K. Zacharias, *Can Man Live without God?* (Dallas: Word Publishers, 1994), 10-11.

<sup>2</sup>Zacharias, "Four Challenges for Church Leaders," in *Is Your Church Ready? Motivating Leaders to Live an Apologetic Life*, ed. Ravi Zacharias and Norman Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 31-32.

reality, and the laws of logic apply in every sphere of our lives.”<sup>3</sup> There is a consideration of the interaction of ideas along with the consequences of where worldview beliefs will lead. Here, “if you are dealing with theoretical philosophy you are dealing with the classical philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, or you’re going to some of the great Enlightenment thinkers like Hume and Kant and so on. You are dealing with arguments at a highly theoretical level.”<sup>4</sup> Zacharias warns that during an exchange on this level one must be careful of those who try to twist words rather than interact with the ideas. He says,

I have deliberately taken time to stress the importance of sound reasoning and to warn against its abuse. One of the more subtle, yet drastic upheavals of our time is the way some special-interest groups have illogically fought for certain positions by cleverly redefining words and prostituting ideas. As a sloganeering culture, we have unblushingly trivialized the serious and exalted the trivial because we have bypassed the rudimentary and necessary steps of logical argument. Reality can be lost when reason and language have been violated.<sup>5</sup>

In this exchange of ideas, the laws of logic with the tests of truth are essential for any belief to stand its ground.

The second level comes from the purview of the arts—an invasion of the imagination. Zacharias notes that most people in modern times come to their worldview due to something that they saw or heard in the realm of arts and entertainment.<sup>6</sup> This inclination toward the arts is not surprising as humanity, being in the image of God, is creative like the Creator. However, this becomes problematic when the aesthetic prevents a person’s discernment. The reason this often happens is that felt needs supersede a

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<sup>3</sup>Ravi Zacharias, “Four Challenges for Church Leaders,” 31.

<sup>4</sup>Ravi Zacharias, "Is Atheism Dead? Is God Alive? Part 1," Let My People Think (MP3 podcast), January 28, 2017, accessed December 1, 2017, <http://rzimmedia.rzim.org/LMPT/LMP20170128.mp3>.

<sup>5</sup>Zacharias, *Can Man Live without God?*, 10-11.

<sup>6</sup>Zacharias, "Is Atheism Dead? Is God Alive? Part 1."

coherent intellectual grasp for truth.<sup>7</sup> There have been periods in history where the artistic drives people more prevalently than others. For example, Zacharias attributes the spread of Existentialism that captured the hearts and minds of college students in the 1960's and 1970's to the cognitive that philosophers reached through the artistic. Postmodernism has brought a resurgence of this. Zacharias proclaims, "You can go to a Broadway play, or a movie, or listen to music, and you will find a certain philosophy of life [a worldview] is either being endorsed, espoused, or questioned, and the popular mind today comes to philosophy not from a theoretical superstructure, but it comes to it from an infrastructure in the arts."<sup>8</sup> The artists, knowingly or not, present and propagate their worldviews through their artistic expression, and the consumer quite often takes it in without carrying the ideas and beliefs to their natural conclusions. He admits, "The young people might say that they are not interested in philosophy, but their songs philosophize, their [movies] philosophize, so they are coming up with a philosophy that is not born studying long treatises on ideas, but they are philosophizing in the sense that they want to tell you what

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<sup>7</sup>Zacharias, "Bridging the Heart and Mind," *Just Thinking Magazine*, accessed January 14, 2019, <https://www.rzim.org/read/just-thinking-magazine/bridging-the-heart-and-mind>.

<sup>8</sup>Ravi Zacharias, "Is Atheism Dead? Is God Alive? Part 1." Elsewhere Zacharias writes,

A massive global assault has been launched upon us, and it is the arts more than any other single force that predominate as an influential agent, molding our character, our values, and our beliefs. This invasion bypasses our reason and captures our imagination. . . . This second level of philosophizing, through the arts, has shaped the national mind-set in everything from determining war strategy to electing presidents, to finding one's identity in cars and deodorants. Existentialist philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus did not waste their time establishing syllogisms. They harnessed the passion of an empty world within the human psyche and fused it with their own ethos, affecting the mood and feeling of an educated herd. A homogenization of our cultural tastes quickly ensued, and a fastening upon our sensitivities or rather, a desensitization of conscience, was securely in place. . . . Truth has been relegated to subjectivity, beauty has been subjugated to the beholder; and as millions are idiotized [sic] night after night, a global commune has been constructed with the arts enjoying a totalitarian rule.

Zacharias, *Can Man Live without God?*, 12.

life is all about.”<sup>9</sup> Through their particular forms of expression, the artist tells a story—giving a narrative about reality through symbols that relate to the great questions of life and teach a way of being in the world.<sup>10</sup> A. Steven Evans recognizes how a good story is a catalyst for a change of mind and life. He writes, “Careful attention must be given to the role of oral tradition and the impact it has on cultural transformation, since it holds the key to catalyze worldview and cultural transformation effectively.”<sup>11</sup> For many who take their emotions as the starting point for determining beliefs, giving themselves over to whatever the artist or storyteller is peddling is like grabbing the fist of truth.<sup>12</sup>

This is not to say that people ought to simply ignore the artistic. This level of interaction is important for everyone to learn and to express worldviews—it is highly influential, but like all things can be a force for good or evil. Christianity has propagated its worldview through the arts for many centuries—from architecture to concertos to paintings to sculptures; the Christian message has inspired and found expression. However, Zacharias warns of the danger of being stuck on this one level (either by engaging others about one’s worldview or using this level to shape one’s worldview) without interacting with the other levels. He writes,

By thinking exclusively at this level, they are driven systematically further inward, until their whole world revolves around their personal passion, with a dangerous self-absorption. They reshape their worldview to a “better felt than tell’t perspective—if it feels good, do it.” . . . But we shortchange our audience when we divorce our [teaching] from serious engagement with difficult ideas and instead

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<sup>9</sup>Ravi Zacharias, "The Loss of Truth, Part 1," Let My People Think (MP3 podcast), February 11, 2017, accessed December 1, 2017, <http://rzimmedia.rzim.org/LMPT/LMP20170211.mp3>.

<sup>10</sup>Robert Stewart, “N. T. Wright’s Hermeneutic: An Exploration,” *The Churchman* 117, no. 2 (2003): 156.

<sup>11</sup>A. Steven Evans, “Matters of the Heart: Orality, Story and Cultural Transformation—The Critical Role of Storytelling in Affecting Worldview,” *Missiology: An International Review* 38, no. 2 (April 2010): 186.

<sup>12</sup>Zacharias, “Four Challenges for Church Leader,” 32.

[teach] at the level of emotion.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, for the Christian, it is imperative that they do not merely philosophize, but that they also touch the imagination and feelings of the ones they attempt to reach.<sup>14</sup> Zacharias concludes, “To be sure, the arts have always had, and should have, a role in the imagination and entertainment of a society. What is so unique in our society, though, is the all-pervasive influence of the arts, even upon matters of transcending importance—in effect, desacralizing everything and programming our very beings.”<sup>15</sup>

The third level of engagement is what Zacharias calls “kitchen-table solutions.”<sup>16</sup> This level is the interaction between loved ones and peers where, together,

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 32-33. There need not be a contention between logic and emotion when ingratiating the Christian worldview. Jesus appealed to both in His ministry, and His teachings themselves so bear witness. Zacharias explains,

Obviously Christ’s teaching is therapeutic and restorative. It is therapeutic in the sense that there are answers to our needs. Life’s difficulties make the questioner more reachable. God often enters our lives through our brokenness to show that we’re not as autonomous as we think we are. But Christ’s teaching is therapeutic because it is true. That truth has greater implications for life than just being therapeutic. It is not just a “feel better” but a “know better” situation. Truth demands a commitment. The question of truth has to emerge; everything else hangs on it. Ravi Zacharias, “Reaching the Happy Thinking Pagan,” *Just Thinking Magazine*, October 1, 1995, accessed March 26, 2018, <http://rzim.org/just-thinking/reaching-the-happy-thinking-pagan/>.

<sup>14</sup>For example, Holly Ordway notes, “Reason and imagination are twin faculties, both part of human nature—and both given to us by God our Creator!—that, together, allow for a fuller grasp of the truth. Both of them are necessary and valuable. . . . It is the imagination that provides the foundation for the exercise of the reason—and the imagination has been sorely neglected in apologetics, evangelization, and catechesis.” Holly Ordway, *Apologetics and the Christian Imagination: An Integrated Approach to Defending the Faith* (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Road Publishing, 2017), loc. 250-59, Kindle. Ordway later explains,

When people lack imaginative engagement with the Faith—which may include a deficit of real meaning for the words and ideas that we use, or a failure to see that these ideas are important or interesting—their belief (or potential belief) is not so much destroyed as starved. Rational argument helps to remove the stones and choking weeds from the field we seek to cultivate, but without imagination the soil is dry and hard and the seeds are easily scorched or blown away. Culturally, we are, as it were, in drought conditions for the sowing of the Word. Ibid., loc. 300-9, Kindle.

<sup>15</sup>Zacharias, *Can Man Live without God?*, 12

<sup>16</sup>Zacharias, “Four Challenges for Church Leader,” 33.

they delve into the implications of worldview beliefs and what it means in the daily routine of life. It is the area of prescriptivism—not merely theorizing but making judgments on the repercussions of the system to which one clings.<sup>17</sup> It is the moralizing and prescribing of life where one seeks answers to the “why” as much as the “what” that will then lead to the “how.”<sup>18</sup> Zacharias describes this sharing as the place where “life-defining and life-transforming conversations take place by a seemingly casual exchange of ideas.”<sup>19</sup>

In summarizing this presentation of the apologetic, Zacharias states,

Level one concerns logic, level two is based on feeling, and level three is where all is applied to reality. To put it another way, level one states why we believe what we believe, level two indicates why we live the way we live, and level three states why we legislate for others the way we do. For every life that is lived at a reasonable level, these three questions must be answered. First, can I defend what I believe in keeping with the laws of logic? That is, is it tenable? Second, if everyone gave himself or herself the prerogatives of my philosophy, could there be harmony in existence? That is, is it livable? Third, do I have a right to make moral judgments in the matters of daily living? That is, is it transferable?<sup>20</sup>

However, he warns, “None of these levels can exist in isolation. They must follow a proper sequence. Here is the key: One must argue from level one, illustrate from level two, and apply at level three. Life must move from truth to experience to prescription. If either the theist or the atheist violates this procedure, he or she is not dealing with reality but is creating one of his or her own”<sup>21</sup>

### **Practical Concerns for Presenting the Apologetic**

While delving into the philosophical, ethical, and practical consequences of

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<sup>17</sup>Ravi Zacharias, "Is Atheism Dead? Is God Alive? Part 1."

<sup>18</sup>Zacharias, “Four Challenges for Church Leader,” 33.

<sup>19</sup>Zacharias, *Can Man Live without God?* 13-14

<sup>20</sup>Zacharias, “Four Challenges for Church Leader,” 33-34.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 34.

worldview thought, Zacharias warns that having the ability to parry the arguments of others through eloquent verbal jousting is not enough for full use of this apologetic approach. Worldview apologetics might test for truth and either confirm or destroy the epistemological underpinnings of someone's belief, but just because one can show someone the falseness of their worldview does not automatically lead that person to embrace a truer worldview. Apologists must remember that they are not merely dealing with ideas and theories, but with real human lives. Zacharias writes,

We are living in an era when apologetics is indispensable, but at the same time, we need a Christian apologetic that is not merely heard—it must also be seen. The field of apologetics deals with the hard questions posed to the Christian faith. Having had deep questions myself, I listen carefully to the questions raised. I always bear in mind that behind every question is a questioner. The convergence of intellectual and existential struggles drives a person to a brutal honesty in the questions they have.<sup>22</sup>

All the evidence notwithstanding, someone may still cling tenaciously to a worldview because it soothes some deep wound of their life and facing the alternative (whether true or not) appears to them to be even more painful.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the apologist must remember in dealing with people from other worldviews that they are not merely battling false intellectual ideas but are dealing with an actual human being who, although unbelieving, is still made in the image of God. Zacharias, as a worldview apologist, has encountered and learned from this need to remember the humanity of a questioner. He shares, “At every university where I’ve lectured, the intellectual questions eventually turn into questions of meaning. Often behind a difficult or angry question is a hurting heart; the

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<sup>22</sup>Ravi Zacharias, “Think Again: Deep Questions,” *Just Thinking Magazine*, August 28, 2014, accessed July 20, 2018, <https://rzim.org/just-thinking/think-again-deep-questions/>.

<sup>23</sup>For example, I have experienced that after having shared the gospel with non-Christians one of their first thoughts that they express is the implications it has for unbelieving family members who have died before them. They grasp that if the Christian worldview is true, their loved one is not in heaven. With that thought being unbearable, it might seemingly be easier for them to deny the Christian worldview than face that painful reality. Here the apologist stands by the truth, but with a remembrance of the human element.

intellect is intertwined with the heart. I always try to rescue a question from mere academic connotations.”<sup>24</sup> While recognizing that worldviews themselves are heart orientations, the apologist must take the orientation of an individual’s heart into consideration.

Still, while remembering the heart when presenting the apologetic, it would also be a mistake to disregard the intellectual. There may be a tendency to dumb down the explanation of a worldview’s failure according to the truth-tests or a worldview’s consistency with the truth-tests with an assumption that people are either not smart enough to understand or that they do not want to think deeply about such issues. Worldviews deal with the significant issues of life which demands deep thoughts that are not mere clichés. While it may be true that some people have not thought through the implications of their beliefs, that does not mean one enforces their willful ignorance. Again, Zacharias warns,

We need to give our audiences more credit—that they want to think. We assume sometimes that they don’t. It is fatal to assume that everything we [share] should be on the bottom shelf, where people don’t have to reach for it. We wind up talking down to people and perpetuating the fallacious idea that spiritual pursuit is handed to you. It isn’t. You reach out; you seek; you knock; you search; you find.<sup>25</sup>

When one considers how Jesus challenged worldviews and then taught about the Kingdom of God, He spoke in parables that engaged both heart and mind. Thus, Zacharias concludes, “When you [share about worldviews] engaging the mind—keeping the idea within reach—you are complimenting your audience; they recognize they need to reach for that slightly higher level, that they need to stand on their toes to grasp what

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<sup>24</sup>Zacharias, “Reaching the Happy Thinking Pagan.” In this same article he gave a real-life example: “Once a couple walked up to me after a church service and began asking questions about the problem of evil. As I began answering their questions, I happened to glance at their baby, who had Down’s Syndrome. Seeing their child, I had a whole new appreciation for their questions and the context behind them. Nothing is as offensive as answers perceived to be mere words, uncaring of a human situation.”

<sup>25</sup>Zacharias, “Reaching the Happy Thinking Pagan.”



you're saying. In reaching the heart, we can't forget the mind. 'Balance' is the key word."<sup>26</sup>

When engaging both the heart and mind, Zacharias suggests four stages to communicating the falseness of another's worldview and the truthfulness of Christianity: identification, translation, persuasion, and justification.<sup>27</sup> First, the apologist identifies with the listener, finding a point of reference where one can find common ground through which to communicate. Second, the apologist translates the foundational ideas in a manner that has a persuasive element which leads the listener along the apologist's train of thought. Third, the apologist persuades the listener that the truthfulness or falseness of a worldview has important connotations for their own lives. Finally, the apologist justifies why the ideas presented are worthy of acceptance.<sup>28</sup> So, the practical aspects of communicating the apologetic are just as important as the theoretical underpinnings for the apologetic.

### **Final Considerations**

Although not every apologetic approach has the capability of answering all the various arguments and critiques placed against Christianity, nor the means of proving every fine detail of the faith, testing the truthfulness of belief systems at the level of worldview has strengths that other approaches do not have. This approach is becoming more popular as the worldview concept itself continues to gain traction in both religious and philosophical endeavors. As argued in the first chapter, this approach arose in

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<sup>26</sup>Zacharias, "Reaching the Happy Thinking Pagan."

<sup>27</sup>Ravi Zacharias, "Establishing a Worldview" (video) Foundations of Apologetics, accessed June 30, 2018, <https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Content/Series/161813?episode=4>.

<sup>28</sup>Ravi Zacharias, "The Touch of Truth," in *Telling the Truth: Evangelizing Postmoderns*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 33.

response to the unique challenges placed against Christianity in modern times. As people have more exposure to the different belief systems espoused in religion and philosophy, it becomes critical to demonstrate to them that all worldviews cannot be true. This is done by showing them that there are ways to test the systems for their truthfulness. While several worldviews attempt to relativize the truth, it is essential to demonstrate that this relativism in itself is a worldview that has no logical coherence. The truth-tests of this worldview apologetic reveal why pluralism is not tenable (because it goes against the laws of noncontradiction and is therefore not coherent) and why relativism is not plausible (since it is self-defeating and not livable). Worldview apologetic truth-tests can show people why these worldviews and issues are problematic, while at the same time exhibiting Christianity as the only reasonable alternative. Moreover, it is because of the existence of competing worldviews, pluralistic ideals, and relativistic thinking that apologetics as a discipline is not past its prime—in fact, reasoned, critical thinking is needed now more than ever. An apologetic that one merely lives without the addition of rational argument and evidence cannot convince someone that one worldview is truer than another.

While worldview is a somewhat recent tool in the hands of philosophers, it is as old as thought itself. What makes worldview the perfect purview from which to perform the apologetic task is its inescapability. Everyone has a worldview—the question is if the worldview is true or not. While individual beliefs make up a worldview, it is the system itself as a whole that must stand or fall on its merits. The truth-tests expose the strengths and weaknesses of each. Moreover, because opponents often challenge Christianity as an entire system, it only makes sense that the way of defense would be from the purview of it being an entire system.

The underlying logic for worldview apologetics is abductive reasoning. Whether consciously or not, one takes the data of life and generates (or chooses) a hypothesis to make sense of the data. One finds or makes a worldview that makes sense

of life. However, abductive reasoning is also a means of evaluation. The tests of truth help determine if the hypothesis/worldview has sufficiently considered the available data and if the conclusions are epistemically sound.

What makes this approach unique is that the epistemological theories of truth that have lasted the test of time and scrutiny of critics are the basis for the criteria of testing. Each of the three theories has its particular strengths and weaknesses, therefore, the tests based on those theories also have their own strengths and weaknesses. The individual tests themselves may not fully reveal the veracity or falseness of a system, but together they have a stronger chance to expose worldviews for their reliability. When one scrutinizes the major tenets of a worldview under the microscope of logical coherency, empirical adequacy, and experiential relevancy, what is at the core of the system itself becomes uncovered for all to see.

Since worldviews have beliefs to make sense out of every area of life, it is vital to focus on the important life questions for the context of worldview testing. The areas of origin, meaning, morality, and destiny, while touching on most of the key issues of life, are particularly sound areas to expose the strengths and weaknesses of worldviews. One can expose most faults in a worldview in these areas—not that all worldviews are entirely wrong in each of the beliefs to which they cling. As the old adage goes, even a broken clock tells the right time twice a day. Neither is the one true worldview ever perfectly followed. Even the Christian must retain humility since no espouser of that faith ever holds a perfectly correct Christian worldview.<sup>29</sup> However, when all the core beliefs are taken to the three tests, even if a small minority of worldview beliefs are proven false, the worldview itself is suspect enough for someone to consider changing their belief

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<sup>29</sup>Tawa J. Anderson, W. Michael Clark, and David K. Naugle, *An Introduction to Christian Worldview: Pursuing God's Perspective in a Pluralistic World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017), 55.

structure. Therefore, this approach not only has importance in scholarly considerations of apologetics but also importance within Christianity in its mission of evangelism around the world—exposing false beliefs for what they are and ingratiating the gospel of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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## ABSTRACT

### FROM ORR TO ZACHARIAS AND BEYOND: AN APPROACH TOWARD CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS FROM THE PURVIEW OF WORLDVIEW TRUTH-TESTING

Alan Joseph Pihringer, Ph.D.  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019  
Chair: Dr. James Parker III

This dissertation considers an approach toward Christian apologetics that tests the veracity of truth-claims from within the scope of entire worldviews, demonstrating how it is an effective approach for validating Christianity's truthfulness, revealing other worldview's falseness, and neutralizing arguments against the apologetic task itself.

Chapter 1 sets forth a history of how Christian apologetics dealt with problems and challenges of the different ages and considers how one of the best approaches to modern challenges to the faith is to test the veracity of truth claims from within the scope of entire worldviews.

Chapter 2 discusses the history of the inception of worldview as a concept within Christian thought and how recent apologists have taken worldview analysis as their approach to defending the faith.

Chapter 3 considers the use of abductive reasoning—inference to the best explanation— within Christian apologetics, analyzing how abductive reasoning fits within the scope of testing worldview truths.

Chapter 4 reflects on the philosophic underpinnings for testing the truthfulness of competing worldviews. Certain foundational epistemological theories of truth taken together make a cumulative test for truthfulness that is best able to analyze the claims of various worldviews. The coherence theory tests the logical consistency of worldviews,



the correspondence theory tests the empirical adequacy of a worldview, and the pragmatic theory tests the livability or of a worldview claim.

Chapter 5 considers the four life questions (of origin, meaning, morality, and destiny) that give the context within which these tests of truth analyze the various worldviews. Testing worldviews within the scope of these questions is a viable approach to almost every classification of worldview, be it atheistic, theistic, or pantheistic.

Chapter 6 closes the study of this approach by illustrating how one can practically use the paradigm in presenting the apologetic and answers how this approach crosses many of the barriers to the task at hand, hopefully spurring further conversation and intellectual inquiry into this subject matter.

## VITA

Alan Joseph Pihringer

### EDUCATION

B.S., University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee, 1993  
M.Div., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 2004

### ORGANIZATIONS

Evangelical Theological Society  
Evangelical Philosophical Society  
Society of Christian Philosophers  
American Philosophical Association

### MINISTERIAL EMPLOYMENT

Associate Pastor, Boulevard Baptist Church, 2004-2007  
Interim Pastor, Boulevard Baptist Church, 2007-2008  
Senior Pastor, Boulevard Baptist Church, 2008-2017  
Senior Pastor, Harvest Baptist Church, 2017-