

Apologetics 2: Response to New Atheism (CM5)

*Fridays, 1-3 PM, *Oct. 2 - Nov. 20, 2015*

*Required Texts:

The End of Reason, Ravi Zacharias - \$221 pesos

True Reason, Tom Golson - \$323 pesos

Why God Won't Go Away, Alister McGrath- \$221 pesos

**Ross Arnold, Fall 2015
Lakeside institute of Theology**

Policies and Requirements

1. Classes are free, but all students seeking a certificate or degree must purchase books (paper, not electronic), which will be made available by the Institute.
2. Students in certificate or degree tracks may miss no more than one class per course, without arrangements made in advance with the teacher to make up missed work (at the discretion of the teacher).
3. Students in certificate or degree tracks will be required to take a pass/fail final exam in each course, based on study guidelines provided by the teacher.
4. Students in certificate or degree tracks must make a passing grade (based on "pass/fail") in each course in order to receive credit towards a certificate or degree.
5. Candidates for degrees (Master of Theology and Master of Theology & Ministry) must be approved by the Institute Director before final admission into a degree program.

Policies and Requirements for making up classes, or taking classes online (as of April 3, 2014):

- I. All make-up classes must be completed before the beginning of the following term, unless you make special arrangements with the professor.
- II. All classes made up online must be reported via email to rda@rossarnold.net, as follows:
 - A. Each class must be reported in a separate email as soon after watching as possible.
 - B. Each email must contain the following information:
 1. Course title and/or code (NT4, OT3, TH2, etc.).
 2. The date of the original lecture you missed.
 3. The title of the lecture.
 4. A clear statement that you watched all of the lecture video, reviewed the materials and completed the required readings.
- III. Courses taken entirely online require prior approval, and apply only to audit or Certificate (not degree) requirements.

Our Biblical Mandate


But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. 1 Peter 3:15-17

“The defense of the faith is not a luxury or intellectual vanity. It is a task appointed by God that you should be able to give a reason for the hope that is in you as you bear witness before the world.” R. C Sproul

Introduction to Apologetics

- **Apologetics** – (from Greek ἀπολογία, "speaking in defense") is the discipline of defending a position (often religious) through the systematic use of information.
- **Christian apologetics** combines Christian theology, natural theology, and philosophy to present a rational basis for the Christian faith, to defend the faith against objections and misrepresentation, and to expose error within other religions and world views.
- Early Christian writers (c. 120–220) who defended their faith against critics and recommended their faith to outsiders were called **Apologists**.

Types of Christian Apologetics

- **Biblical apologetics** – (Robert Dick Wilson, Gleason Archer, Norman Geisler, R. C. Sproul) concerned with the authorship and date of biblical books, biblical canon and biblical inerrancy.
 - **Moral apologetics** – (Jonathon Edwards, C.S. Lewis, Peter Kreeft) states that real moral obligation is a fact, and that the existence of a Moral Law is evidence for God.
 - **Scientific apologetics** – (Michael Behe, William Demenski, William Lane Craig) seeks to reconcile Christianity and science in regard to questions of origins, cosmology, geology, biology and physics.
 - **Experiential apologetics** – argue primarily that experience is self-verifying evidence for Christian faith.
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Types of Christian Apologetics

- **Philosophical apologetics** – (Norman Geisler, William Lane Craig, R.C. Sproul) concerns itself primarily with arguments for the existence of God.
- **Prophetic fulfillment** – (Blaise Paschal, Peter Stoner, Josh McDowell) argue that the fulfillment of biblical prophecies provide strong evidence for Christianity.
- **Historical and legal evidentialism** – (Simon Greenleaf; John Warwick Montgomery) legal scholars claiming Western legal standards support the historicity of Christ's resurrection.
- **Presuppositional apologetics** – (John Frame, Greg Bahnsen, Cornelius Van Till) claims that presuppositions are essential to any philosophical position, and that non-Christian presuppositions reduce to absurdity.


Seven Reasons We Need Apologetics

1. We are commanded to defend the faith.
2. Apologetics helps Christians know their own faith.
3. Apologetics can help lead non-Christian to belief and so to eternal salvation.
4. Apologetics can help counter the bad image Christianity has in the media and in culture.
5. Apologetics can help address the threat from false teachings and apostasy in the Church.
6. Apologetics can help stem the rise of immorality.
7. Apologetics offers a Christian alternative to the non-Christian thinking and influence that is dominant in our schools and larger society.

How Apologetics Helps Christians

- To better know their own Christian faith and how to share it more effectively.
 - To answer people's real questions, especially the questions which might hinder them from accepting the gospel.
 - To have influence in the public square (education, media, etc.).
 - To prevent doctrinal apostasy within the Church.
 - To answer the false claims of cults and false religions.
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What Apologetics CANNOT Do

- *Prove* that God exists.
 - Prove beyond any possible doubt that Christianity and the Bible witness are true.
 - Argue people into the Kingdom of God.
 - Take the place of the testimony of Scripture or the work of the Holy Spirit.
 - Exclusively replace biblical, relational evangelism and discipleship.
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Atheism

- ▶ In the broadest sense, **atheism** is the rejection of belief in the existence of deities (God, gods or supernatural beings).
- ▶ Arguments for atheism range from the philosophical to social and historical approaches, and include arguments that there is a lack of empirical evidence; the problem of evil; the argument from inconsistent revelations; the rejection of concepts that cannot be falsified; and the argument from nonbelief. Some atheists have adopted secular philosophies (eg. humanism and skepticism), but there is no one ideology or set of behaviors to which all atheists adhere.

The New Atheism

- ▶ Late 20th-early 21st century social and political movement in favor of atheism and secularism. It is marked by an aggressive attitude, advocating the view that *“religion should not simply be tolerated but should be countered, criticized, and exposed by rational argument wherever its influence arises.”*
- ▶ 2004 publication of ***The End of Faith: Religion, Terror and the End of Reason*** by Sam Harris marked the beginning of a series of popular atheistic best-sellers. (Also ***The God Delusion*** in 2006 by Richard Dawkins; ***Breaking the Spell*** in 2006 by Daniel Dennett; ***God is Not Great*** in 2007 by Christopher Hitchens)

The “Four Horsemen of the Non-Apocalypse”



➤ **Richard Dawkins:** English ethnologist, evolutionary biologist, known for his gene-centered view of evolution. (*The Selfish Gene; The God Delusion; The Blind Watchmaker*)

➤ **Christopher Hitchens:** English author, journalist, polemicist, debater (died 12/11). (*God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything; The Portable Atheist: Essential Readings for the Non-Believer*)



The “Four Horsemen of the Non-Apocalypse”



➤ **Daniel Dennett:** American philosopher, cognitive scientist, evolutionary biologist. (*Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon; Darwin’s Dangerous Idea*)

➤ **Sam Harris:** American author, philosopher, neuroscientist. (*The End of Faith; Letter to a Christian Nation; The Moral Landscape*)



Aggressiveness of the New Atheists

“Tolerance of pervasive myth and superstition in modern society is not a virtue. Religious fundamentalism has gone main stream and its toll on education, science, and social progress is disheartening. Wake up people!! We are smart enough now to kill our invisible gods and oppressive beliefs. It is the responsibility of the educated to educate the uneducated, lest we fall prey to the tyranny of ignorance.”

from The New Atheists website

Primary Arguments of the New Atheists

- They believe **science** is capable of investigating some, if not all, supernatural claims; and that the “God hypothesis” can be scientifically tested, but that it fails any such tests.
- They claim ***naturalism*** is sufficient to explain everything we observe in the universe, from distant galaxies to the origin of life, and the inner workings of the brain and consciousness.
- They argue it is **unnecessary** to introduce God or the supernatural to understand or explain reality.
- Disagreeing with Stephen Jay Gould, they oppose science and religion being confined to non-overlapping domains.
- They accuse religious beliefs and believers of being **irrational**, and claim **religion has been responsible** for much of the suffering and evil in the world.
- They seek to politically reduce the influence of religion, especially in the U.S., promote mainstream acceptance of atheism, and promote an ‘atheist identity.’

Responding to the New Atheists

- Why we believe God exists. (arguments for His existence)
- Why we believe *naturalism* is insufficient to explain everything we observe in the universe (fine-tuning, morality, human intangibles like honor, love, trust, creativity – which mark us as being made in God’s image...)
- Why we believe the Christian faith (and theism in general) is rational and logical.
- Why we believe that theism (and Christianity especially) has been responsible for much of the good in human history, and that religion is not the cause of most wars and suffering.
- Why we believe in the reliability of Scripture, the truth of miracles and the resurrection.
- Why we believe and insist that religious belief is not going away; why it is, in fact, “properly basic” to human existence.