



FOREWORD

Many centuries ago St. Augustine said, "No one indeed believes anything unless he has first thought that it is to be believed." In fact, the scriptural exhortation is to give "a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15). The authors of this book are committed to reaching hearts for Christ without insulting minds. In this book they have provided an excellent tool for accomplishing this purpose.

This book is a handbook on evangelism. But unlike many such books it does not concentrate merely on *how* to reach people without providing the reasons *why* they should believe. The authors are conscious not only of *what* we are to share with the world but with *whom* we are sharing it. They are concerned about reaching unsaved intelligent people who may have intelligent questions. In response to this need they have provided intelligent answers to questions that are often asked.

My own experience in evangelizing people for over 30 years confirms the approach taken in this book. It is a simple, clear, and thoughtful approach to evangelism. The

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application of its principles will yield good results for the cause of the Gospel.

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How TO USE THIS BOOK

How often have you been overwhelmed by an onslaught of tough objections as you attempted to communicate the message of Christianity to your non-Christian friends? It does not take much dialogue before the standard objections begin to emerge:

How can you be sure there really is a God?

What basis is there for believing in miracles?

Isn't Christianity just a psychological crutch for weak people?

The Bible is full of errors and myths—how can you believe it?

If God is good, why do evil and suffering exist?

Isn't it narrow-minded to claim that Christ is the only way to God?

What about people who never heard about Christ—will they be condemned?

How can Christianity be true when its adherents are so phony and hypocritical?

Would God reject people who have lived basically good lives?

Isn't just believing in Christ for salvation too easy?

How much faith do you need to have?

Can anyone be sure he will go to heaven?

These are honest questions that require thoughtful answers, but few Christians are capable of successfully fielding all of them. This book is designed to help you think through the issues involved so that you can become more effective in your defense of the faith.

Christian apologetics—arguments systematically defending the Christian faith—really has a twofold purpose. Outwardly, it defends the truth of the Christian worldview and answers the objections raised by critics. Inwardly, it strengthens the faith of believers by showing that their faith rests upon a firm foundation. We wrote this book with both purposes in mind. The objections we deal with are derived from repeated experience, not theoretical speculation. Many hundreds of hours of conversation with non-Christian friends led us to the conclusion that the same basic objections keep surfacing in individual and group discussions. We have found that these objections can be boiled down to variations and combinations of the 12 questions addressed in chapters 3-14.

"BE READY"

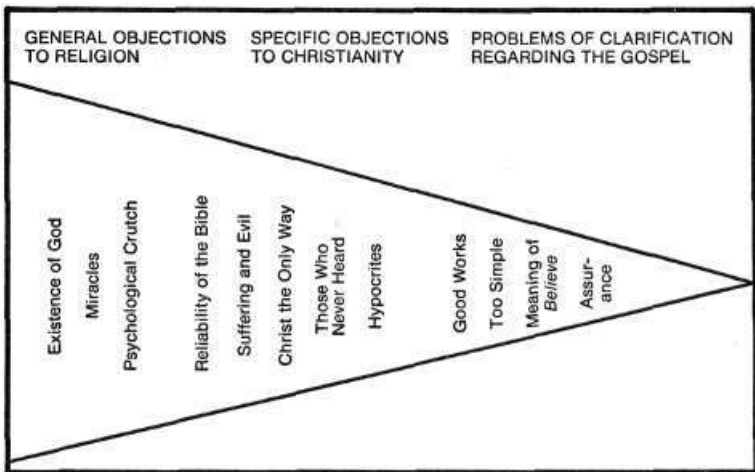
Many Christians shy away from defending their beliefs or resort to a "just take it by faith" attitude. They think that the burden of apologetics is too great to be shouldered by laymen. But Peter exhorts us to be ready to make a defense when we are asked to do so: "Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to every one who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence" (1 Peter 3:15).

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It is encouraging to discover that practically the entire range of objections to the Christian worldview can be conveniently reduced to a set of one dozen basic questions. Furthermore, every one of these objections is actually a golden opportunity—an opportunity to lead up to a natural presentation of the Gospel. This is why our development in this book of each of these 12 objections leads to a confrontation with the claims of Christ.

Chapters 3-14 can be read in any order. In one sense, they stand on their own. But in another way, they all are interdependent, referring to one another for support. The two pillars upon which most answers rest are the authority of the Bible and the historical resurrection of Jesus Christ. These are developed in chapter 6 and in the appendix to chapter 4, and the rest of the book often refers to these two key chapters.

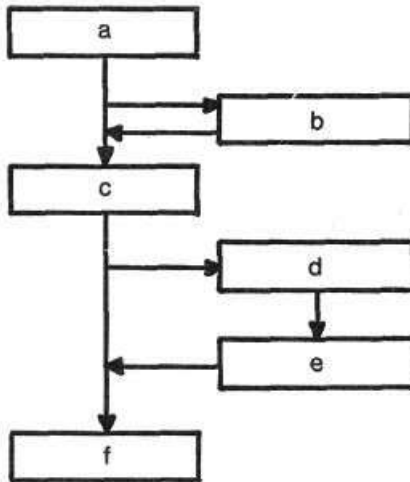
The 12 questions are arranged from general to specific. The first 3 are general objections to religion, the next 5 are objections to Christianity in particular, and the final 4 are problems specifically related to salvation (see Chart 1).



(CHART 1)

The flow charts that appear throughout these chapters will help you visualize the basic options to each question and the logical progression from one option to another. They have been provided as conceptual guidelines, not straitjackets. It is not necessary or advisable to take a person through all the steps in one of these flow charts when he raises one of these objections. Doing so could be disastrous. Instead, a knowledge of these diagrams (you may want to memorize the basic flow of each chart) can enable you to pinpoint the real issues that need to be addressed. The charts are not designed to bog you down but to give you freedom in creatively dealing with these questions.

Some of the flow charts include optional material. This will be represented by boxes that are set off to one side.



(CHART 2)

In Chart 2 you can proceed directly from *a* to *c* to *f*, because the material in boxes *b*, *d*, and *e* is supplementary. If you find it necessary to deal with issue *d*, you will then have to go to *e*, before continuing with *f*.

This book goes into more detail than you will need

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on any given occasion. Use only what is necessary, and don't try to prove too much. It would be unwise, for example, to discuss the existence of God or to plunge into the problem of evil if a person is ready to personally consider the claims of Christ. Your object is to remove barriers to the Gospel as quickly and effectively as possible, and not to exhaustively explore them.

THREE WAYS PEOPLE ASK

Keep in mind that people can ask these questions in three different ways. They can be raised as obstacles intended to defeat the Christian position. They can be asked by people who want to "show off in a group. Or they can be asked out of a real desire to find out the answer, if there is one. A sensitivity to a person's degree of openness will affect the way you handle his question,

We have provided a variety of illustrations to assist you in answering these questions. Illustrations can serve as windows of truth that illuminate concepts by means of analogy. Use the ones you feel comfortable with or create your own.

The supplemental reading at the end of the chapters is limited to fairly brief treatments of these questions. For more detailed reading, consult the bibliography at the conclusion of the book.

We hope *I'm Glad You Asked* will strengthen your confidence in the trustworthiness of God and His Word and further equip you to give an account for the hope that is in you.