

Classical Apologetics

By Shawn Nelson



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MOST INFLUENTIAL
AT CONVERSION



MORE
INFLUENTIAL ↑

Classical Apologetics Statistics

Classical Apologetics (with Evidentialism and Rationalism) did not rank very high for most people at conversion.

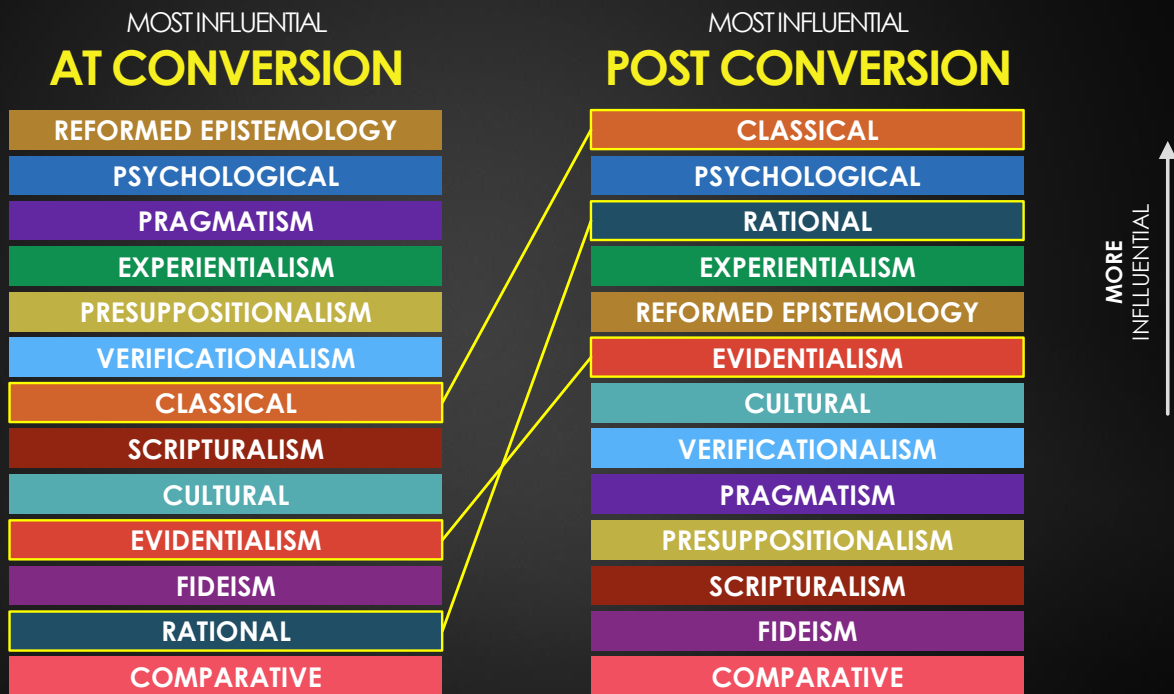
How many times did an apologetic appear in the 90th percentile (top 10%)?

Most Influential At Conversion:

1. ReformedEpist 63%
2. Psychological 49%
3. Pragmatism 35%
4. Experientialism 27%
5. Presuppositional 15%
6. Verificationism 14%
7. **Classical 13%**
(Classical appeared in top 10% of scores for a participant at conversion 131 out of 1023 times)
8. Scripturalism 13%
9. Cultural 9%
10. **Evidentialism 2%**

A Note About Percentiles

It is possible for a participant to have two or more apologetics with the same highest rank value and/or lowest rank value. For example, a candidate could have a top score of 11.0 for both Experientialism and Psychological Apologetics. I use percentiles to accommodate for this. The 100th percentile are the highest-ranking apologetics for a participant. The 90th percentile are those apologetics that were in the top ten percent.



Classical Apologetics Statistics

Notice that Classical Apologetics (with Rational and Evidential apologetics) rose for most people post-conversion.

How many times did an apologetic appear in the 90th percentile (top 10%)?

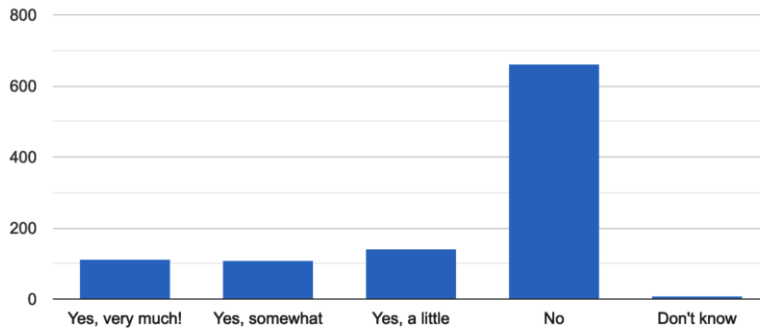
Most Influential Post Conversion:

1. Classical 57%
(Classical appeared in top 10% of scores for a participant post conversion only 578 out of 1023 times)
2. Psychological 48%
3. Rational 28%
4. Experientialism 22%
5. ReformedEpist 21%
6. Evidentialism 17%
7. Cultural 16%
8. Verificationism 10%
9. Pragmatism 9%
10. Presuppositional 4%

A Note About Percentiles

It is possible for a participant to have two or more apologetics with the same highest rank value and/or lowest rank value. For example, a candidate could have a top score of 11.0 for both Experientialism and Psychological Apologetics. I use percentiles to accommodate for this. The 100th percentile are the highest-ranking apologetics for a participant. The 90th percentile are those apologetics that were in the top ten percent.

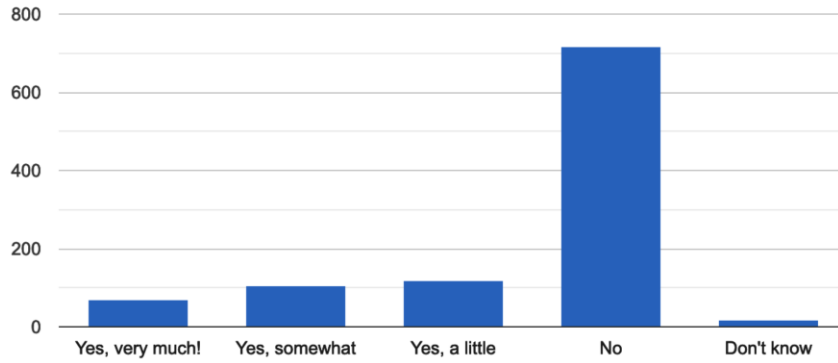
Before I could become a Christian... I needed to see good evidence for Christianity. For example, I studied things like evidence for Christ's resurrection, the reliability of the Bible or evidence of God from science.



Yes, very much!	112
Yes, somewhat	108
Yes, a little	139
No	659
Don't know	7

It's very interesting that most people did not need evidence at conversion.

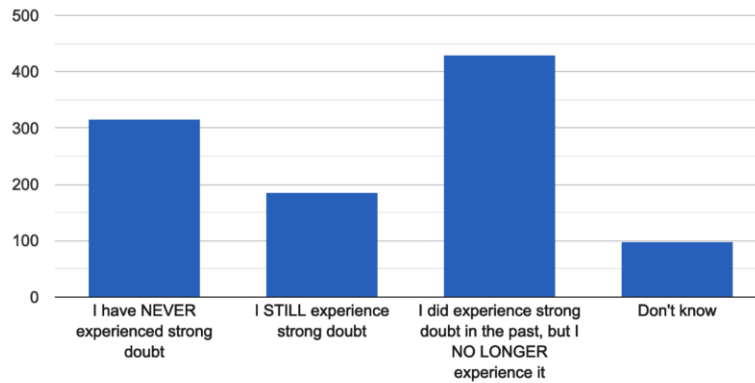
Before I could become a Christian... I needed to work through philosophical proofs for God.



Yes, very much!	69
Yes, somewhat	105
Yes, a little	118
No	716
Don't know	17

Neither did most people need rational proof for God at conversion.

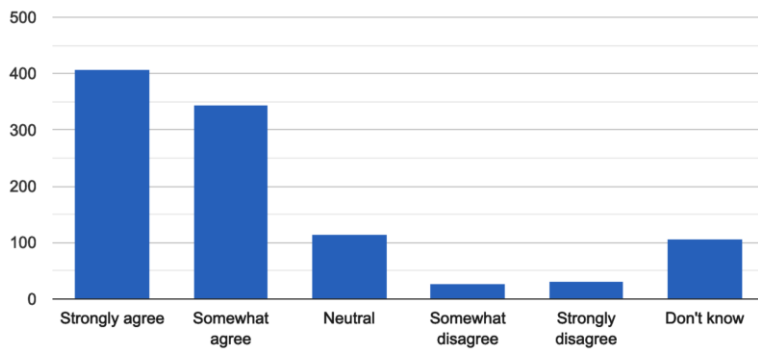
Have you ever had a 'crisis of faith' (a strong period of doubt) while being a Christian?



I have NEVER experienced strong doubt	315
I STILL experience strong doubt	184
I did experience strong doubt in the past, but I NO LONGER experience it	428
Don't know	98

- But many Christians (60%+) did/do struggle with strong doubt.
- Could this be why evidence and reason seem to become more important over time?
- My story about how my faith was attacked, and how this led to me investigating Christianity's truth claims as a Christian.

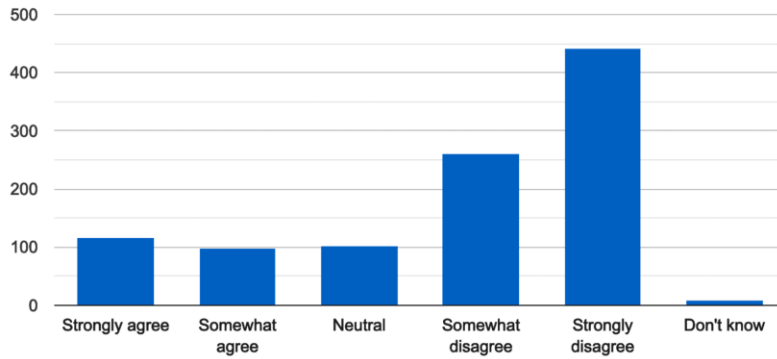
I believe philosophical proofs for God are valid and helpful in proving God exists. For example, the cosmological, teleological, ontological, moral arguments for God.



Strongly agree	406
Somewhat agree	343
Neutral	113
Somewhat disagree	27
Strongly disagree	31
Don't know	105

Most Christians feel reason is very important to faith, post conversion.

We should not use historical evidence, science or philosophy when trying to prove Christianity.
We should just stick to the Bible instead.

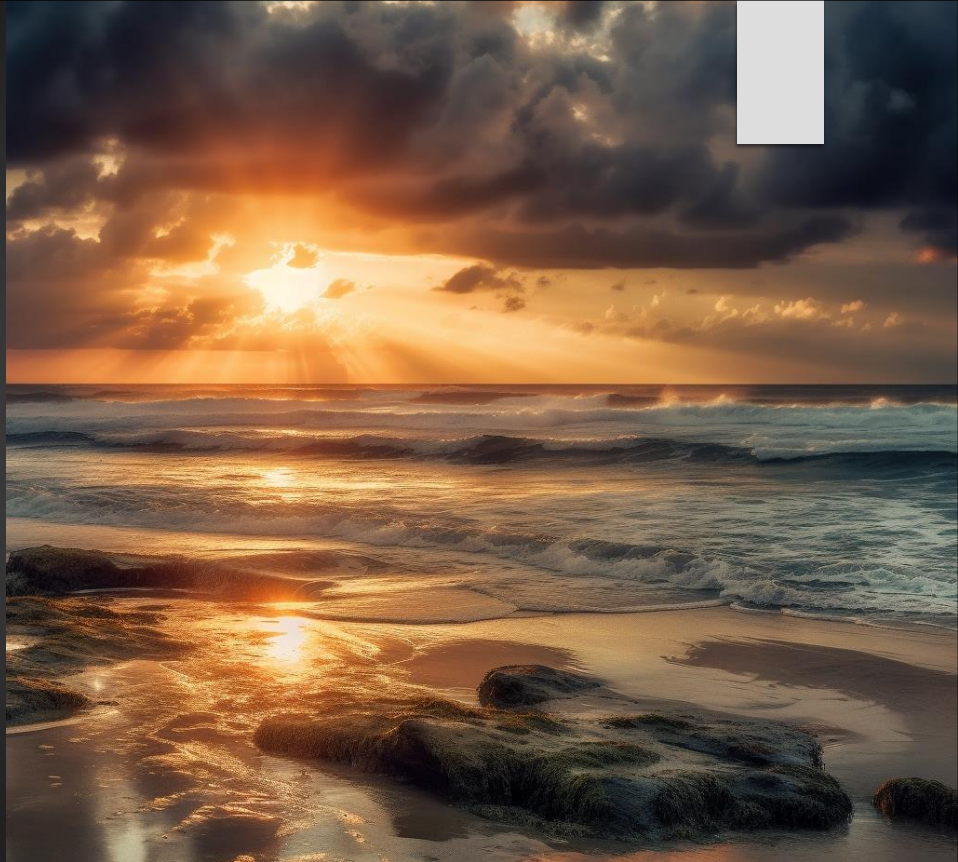


Strongly agree	116
Somewhat agree	98
Neutral	101
Somewhat disagree	260
Strongly disagree	441
Don't know	9

Most Christians also feel that evidence is very important when witnessing to unbelievers.

Overview

- ▶ An ancient method.
- ▶ Popular.
- ▶ Made up of two-parts.



Overview

An Ancient Method

Classical apologetics has a rich history, going all the way back to early Christian apologists such as **Justin Martyr**, **Tertullian**, and **Origen**. Over time, prominent Christian thinkers like **Augustine of Hippo**, **Thomas Aquinas**, and **Anselm of Canterbury** have contributed to its development, creating influential arguments that still hold sway today.

Popular

It's still popular today. Three well-known modern classical apologists are William Lane Craig, Norman L. Geisler, and C.S. Lewis. They've made significant contributions to apologetics and have taken part in important theological and philosophical debates in defense of the Christian faith.

Two Main Parts

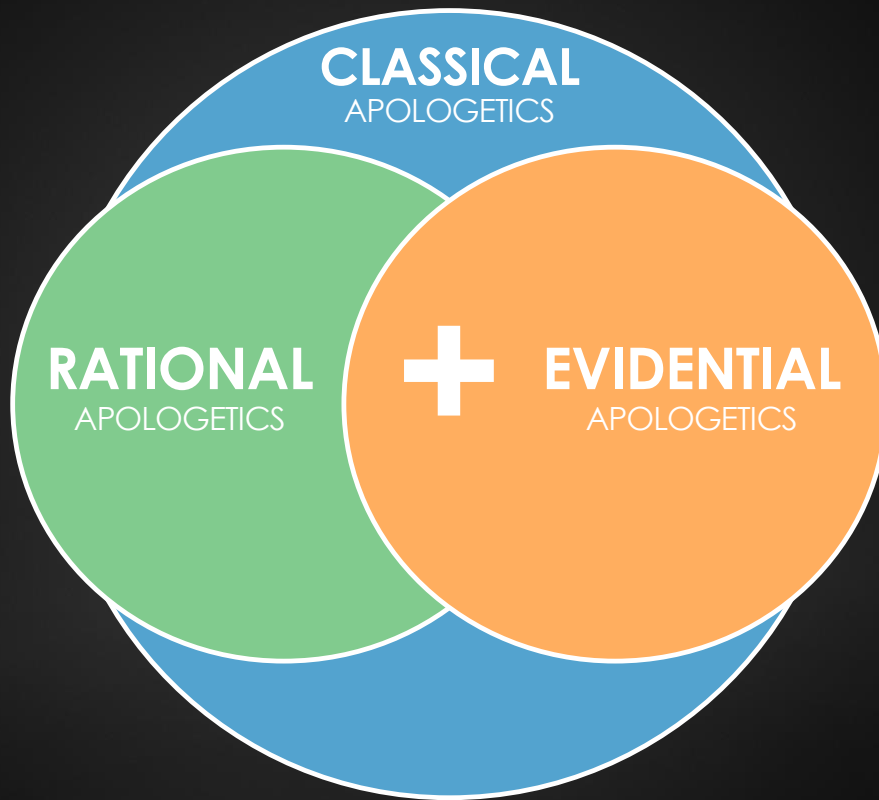
This approach to defending Christianity has two main parts: rational apologetics and evidential apologetics. The rational side uses logic and reason to show that God exists, which is a key belief in Christianity. Evidential apologetics, on the other hand, gathers empirical evidence to support specific claims of Christianity, like the resurrection of Jesus. The goal of this method is to use reason and evidence to make a strong case for Christianity, even to those who are skeptical.



CLASSICAL APOLOGETICS

Christians have long used the **Classical Apologetics** as a basis for knowing Christianity is true.

Let represent it by this big blue circle.



Classical Apologetics is made up of two other apologetics: Rational Apologetics and Evidential Apologetics.

We can illustrate this as shown above.

These two bubbles are the two steps of the Classical Apologetics.

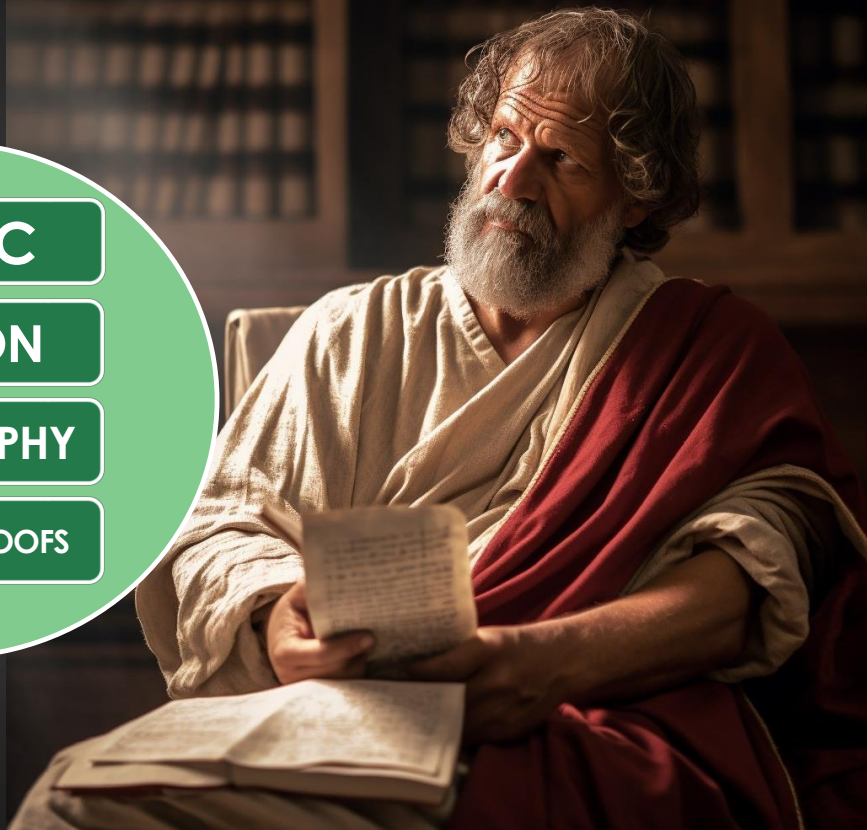
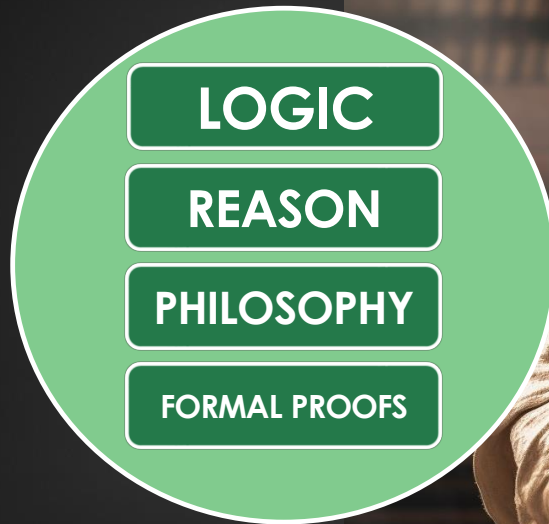
If we could learn what each of these steps are, we'd have a pretty good grasp of what the Classical Apologetics is.



Let's rename these two bubbles so it's easier to follow.

REASON

BELIEF TYPE



Step 1. Reason Belief Type

Let's look at the first bubble called Reason Belief Type.

The person who is into this belief type is **more like a philosopher.**

They use the following to strengthen their belief in Christianity:

- Logic
- Reason
- Philosophy
- Formal Proofs

Here's what I mean...

REASON

BELIEF TYPE

Topics

God's Existence

- ▶ Cosmological argument
- ▶ Moral Argument
- ▶ Ontological Argument for God
- ▶ Argument from degrees of perfection
- ▶ The uncaused First Cause
- ▶ Argument from contingency
- ▶ Argument from Pure Actuality

Principles

- ▶ Proving absolute truth
- ▶ Possibility of miracles
- ▶ Meaningful God talk



Reason Belief Type

Topics

God's Existence

- **Cosmological Argument for God:**
The existence of the universe implies a cause or explanation, which is identified as God.
- **Moral Argument:**
The existence of objective moral values implies a moral lawgiver, which is identified as God.
- **Ontological Argument for God:**
The very concept of a maximally great being entails its existence, implying the existence of God.
- **Argument from Degrees of Perfection:**
The varying degrees of perfection in the world imply the existence of an ultimate standard of perfection, which is identified as God.
- **The Uncaused First Cause:**
The existence of a series of causes necessitates the existence of an uncaused first cause (God), which is the origin of all contingent beings.
- **Argument for God from Contingency:**
The existence of contingent beings implies the need for a necessary being, which is identified as God.
- **Argument for God from Pure Actuality:**
There must be a Being of Pure Actuality with no potentiality, who gives existence to all other things.

- **Proving Absolute Truth:**
The existence of absolute truth is based on the laws of logic.
- **Possibility of Miracles:**
Miracles are possible because God exists, created the world, and remains involved in it (theism). If miracles are possible, then the resurrection of Jesus is also possible, supporting the truth of Christianity.
- **Meaningful God Talk:**
We can know God because analogical language bridges the gap between limited human understanding and God's infinite, transcendent nature.
- **The Explanatory Power of Theism:**
Theism offers a more comprehensive and coherent explanation for various phenomena, such as consciousness, morality, and the existence of the universe, than alternative worldviews.



Cosmological Argument

1. Everything that had a beginning has a cause.
2. The universe had a beginning.
3. Therefore, the universe has a cause.

There must be a supernatural cause of the universe, and this must be God.

Let's look at one formal proof.

This uses a syllogism in **logic**. A syllogism is based on deductive **reasoning**.

Cosmological Argument for God's Existence

The Cosmological Argument is a deductive argument that attempts to demonstrate the existence of God based on the nature of causation and the beginning of the universe. It consists of three premises:

1. Everything that had a beginning has a cause.
2. The universe had a beginning.
3. Therefore, the universe has a cause.

Put Into Strict Categorical Form

(Don't need to get into details, just mention some words to show there is a strong use of logic).

The argument can be put into strict categorical form like this:

1. All things that begin (D/mid) are things that have a cause (U/M).
2. The universe (D/m) is a thing that began (U/mid).
3. Therefore, the universe (D/m) is a thing that has a cause (U/M).

D = Distributed term

U = Undistributed term

M = Major premise

m = Minor premise

Mid = middle term; must be distributed at least once

An argument is considered **sound** if it is both valid and their premises are true. There are rules that govern the use of logic (alluded to above), and the argument meets these rules—**so the logic is valid.**

To determine if the argument is sound, we need to assess the truth of the premises:

1. "Everything that had a beginning had a cause" is a general principle of causality, which is widely accepted in philosophy and science. While it might not cover every conceivable situation, it is considered a reasonable assumption.
2. "The universe had a beginning" is supported by scientific evidence (such as the Big Bang Theory, for those who hold an old-earth position, which suggests that the universe began approximately 13.8 billion years ago).

Given that the argument is **valid** and its premises are accepted as **true**, the conclusion must follow absolutely: "The universe had a cause."

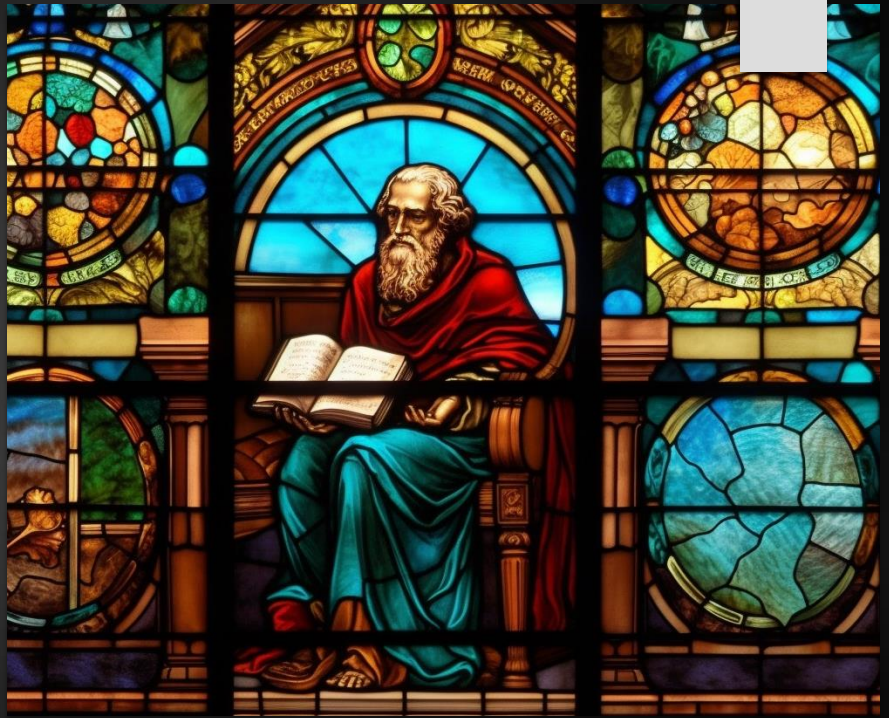
Further Implications

The universe must have been caused by an uncaused, necessary being that exists by necessity, which is identified as God.

The argument further suggests that this being **must be supernatural** (beyond the natural) and the cause of all other things, thus **possessing existence** and **giving existence** to all other things.

Moral Argument

1. A moral law requires the existence of a Moral Lawgiver.
2. An objective moral law exists.
3. Therefore, an objective Moral Lawgiver exists.



Moral Argument for God's Existence

The Moral Argument is a powerful deductive argument that affirms the existence of God based on the presence of moral laws.

This argument is hinged on two foundational premises:

1. A moral law requires the existence of a moral lawgiver.
2. An objective moral law exists.
3. Therefore, an objective Moral Lawgiver exists.

Put Into Strict Categorical Form

When we convert this argument into a strict categorical form, it can be encapsulated as follows:

1. All entities with moral laws (D/mid) inherently have a moral lawgiver (U/M).
2. Our universe (D/m) is an entity with an objective moral law (U/mid).
3. Consequently, our universe (D/m) must have an objective moral lawgiver (U/M).

D = Distributed term

U = Undistributed term

M = Major premise

m = Minor premise

Mid = middle term; must be distributed at least once

An argument can only be deemed sound if it is both logically valid and the premises are irrefutably true.

In the case of these premises:

1. "Moral law necessitates a moral lawgiver"

- Moral laws imply a moral lawgiver just like natural laws (like the law of gravity) imply a designer.
- This is because laws of any kind imply order, and order implies design, and design implies a designer.
- For moral laws to hold universally, they must come from a source outside and independent of humanity - a moral lawgiver.

2. "There is indeed an objective moral law"

- People of all cultures know that murder, rape, theft, fraud, perjury and child abuse are wrong.
- They also know that honesty, fairness, and helping the needy is right.
- People innately know right from wrong when they are wronged by somebody else. The Bible even talks about this in Romans 2:15 (people have the law written on their hearts).
- This suggests an objective standard of justice. This further confirms the presence of an objective moral law.

Accepting these premises as true leads us to the inevitable conclusion: "There is an objective moral lawgiver."

Further Implications

This conclusion points towards the existence of a being, God, who is capable of establishing moral laws and ensuring their universal application.

Furthermore, God is posited as the cornerstone of all morality, the author of moral laws, and the ultimate influence on the moral actions of all beings.

REASON

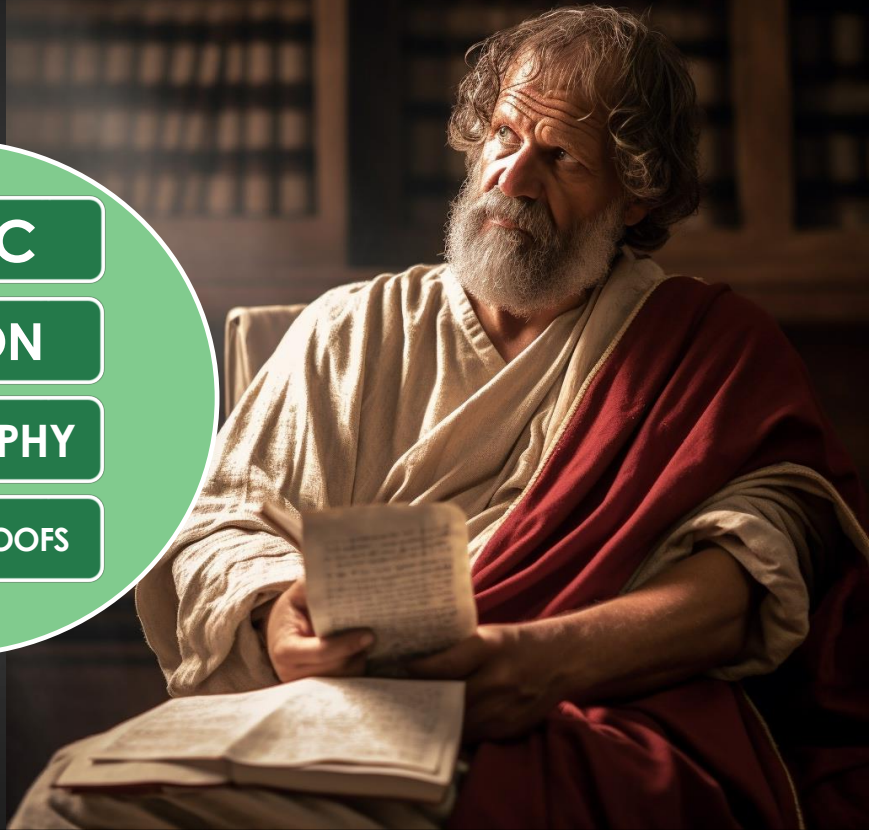
BELIEF TYPE

LOGIC

REASON

PHILOSOPHY

FORMAL PROOFS



That's a quick look at the reason belief type.



Remember, we're looking at the Classical Apologetics. The first step is reason. And the second step is Evidence.

Now let's look at the second step: evidence.



EVIDENCE

BELIEF TYPE

HISTORY

ARCHAEOLOGY

ACCURACY OF BIBLE

FULFILLED PROPHECY

Step 2. Evidential Apologetics

The second bubble is Evidential Apologetics. And this is the second step for Classical Apologetics.

The second step is proving Jesus's resurrection—along with His life, death and burial.

Now, it does this by looking at historical evidence, archaeological evidence, and evidence from fulfilled prophecy.

We can fill in this bubble with things like history, archaeology, Bible accuracy, prophecy, etc.



EVIDENCE

BELIEF TYPE

Topics

- ▶ Reliability of the Gospels
- ▶ Archaeological Evidence
- ▶ Manuscript Evidence
- ▶ Eyewitness Testimony
- ▶ Martyrdom of Early Christians
- ▶ Rapid Growth of Early Christianity
- ▶ Self-Incriminating Testimony
- ▶ Transformation of Scoffers
- ▶ Fulfilled Prophecies

Evidence Topics

1. **Reliability of the Gospels:** Examining historical evidence to establish the existence of Jesus and the reliability of the Gospel accounts. For example, the many accurate details of Acts/Luke.
2. **Eyewitness Testimony of the Resurrection:** The detailed, eyewitness accounts of the resurrection events provide strong evidence for its authenticity.
3. **Martyrdom of Early Christians:** Analyzing the willingness of early Christians to die for their beliefs as evidence for the truth of Christianity.
4. **Rapid Growth of Early Christianity:** Investigating the rapid spread of Christianity in the face of persecution as evidence for its divine origins.
5. **Perseverance Under Persecution:** The unwavering testimony of witnesses despite extreme persecution lends credibility to their accounts.
6. **Self-Incriminating Testimony:** The presence of self-incriminating details in the Gospels suggests that the authors were committed to presenting an honest account of the events.
7. **Transformation of Scoffers:** The dramatic conversion of extreme skeptics into devout believer's points to the power and truth of the resurrection.
8. **Fulfilled Prophecies:** Analyzing biblical prophecies and their fulfillment in history as evidence for divine inspiration.
9. **Archaeological Evidence of the OT:** Utilizing archaeological findings to support the historical accuracy of the Bible.
10. **Manuscript Evidence:** Examining the reliability and consistency of the biblical texts through textual criticism and manuscript evidence.

Now, let's look at a typical presentation of the evidence for Christianity...

Evidence for the Resurrection

1. Detailed, eyewitness testimony
2. Witnesses kept testimony despite persecution
3. Gospels filled with self-incriminating testimony
4. Extreme scoffers became believers
5. Christianity started where people were most familiar



Example: Evidence for Jesus's Resurrection

The entire Christian faith comes down to one event being true or not. That event is Jesus's resurrection. Even the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 15 that if Jesus didn't rise from the dead, then the Christian faith is pointless.

But a resurrection is a big claim. What's the best evidence Christians give that Jesus rose from the dead?

Here are the top 5 reasons for the resurrection.

1. The detailed, eyewitness testimony of the events.

Here's what happened to Jesus according to the people who were there.

- Jesus was arrested. He underwent six trials.
- He was beaten, whipped, and forced to carry his cross until he couldn't stand up.
- They drove nails through his hands and feet.
- He then died by crucifixion (or suffocation).
- He was confirmed dead when they stabbed him with a spear.
- This was all done by professional Roman executioners.
- Then Jesus was buried.
- His body wrapped in 75 pounds of cloth and sealed inside a tomb.
- His tomb then became empty.
- Sixteen Roman soldiers guarding the tomb left their posts.
- The huge stone door was rolled away.
- There was an angel who said, "He's not here, for he has risen!"

- Finally, he was seen alive by over 500 people.
 - They heard him, touched him, saw him eat food and work miracles.
- This is what they said happened!

2. These Witnesses Kept Their Testimony Despite Extreme Persecution.

At first, all the disciples were full of doubt and afraid.

- But overnight they were motivated to:
- Publicly share their faith.
- Be put out of synagogue.
- Leave all, travel to distant lands, spread their faith around the world.
- Be tortured and thrown in prison.
- Most faced death.
- Stephen was stoned.
- James was killed with a sword.
- Peter was crucified.
- Paul faced many persecutions and was decapitated.

The early believers maintained their testimony through waves of organized persecution.

A written account from AD 100 describes how Christians were killed for entertainment: “they were killed by dogs by having the hides of beasts attached to them, or they were nailed to crosses, or set aflame” (Tacitus, Annals, 15:44).

But nobody—not one person—caved under pressure and said, ok, we made it all up!

3. The Gospels Are Filled With Self-incriminating Testimony.

The gospels portray the disciples in a negative light.

For example,

- Jesus called Peter Satan.
- Jesus said the disciples were dull of hearing.
- Peter often spoke before thinking and denied the Lord three times.
- They were all really prideful and argued about who was greatest.
- And all abandoned Jesus at his arrest.

You wouldn't say these things about yourself if you were making the story up.

4. Extreme Scoffers Became Extreme Believers.

Jesus's own brothers didn't even believe in him before his resurrection. But after resurrection, they believed. They even became leaders in the church.

Paul was another scoffer. He was a wealthy and powerful Jewish pharisee who persecuted the church. But after claiming to see the risen Jesus, he became its biggest supporter. He

started many churches and wrote 13 New Testament letters.

5. Christianity Started In The Place Where People Were Most Familiar With What Happened.

If you were going to start a myth about the resurrection, you'd go far away from those who could disprove it.

Jesus was publicly crucified in Jerusalem. And that's exactly where the early church began.

Conclusion

There are only four possibilities regarding what to do with this evidence for the resurrection of Christ:

1. It's A Legend That Crept In Over Time.

The problem with this is legends take centuries to form, and the gospels were written soon after the events.

2. The Disciples Lied Intentionally.

But what would motivate the disciples to lie? Wealth? Power? Fame? They faced death!

3. The Disciples Were Deceived.

Jesus never actually died, or someone stole the body.

The problem with this is Jesus was publicly crucified by professionals and the tomb was guarded.

4. It's The Truth.

Jesus's resurrection is an event in history that really did happen.

The above depends on the New Testament being reliable...

The reasons for the resurrection given above are primarily based on internal evidence. They depend on the New Testament being reliable. Let's look at that next...



New Testament Details Confirmed

New Testament Details Confirmed

The gospels and other New Testament letters are rich in detail. We find names of cities and rulers and read about the people and traditions of that day. Archaeology has confirmed many of the people and places.

Here are 25 New Testament details that have been confirmed through archaeology:

- 1. The city of Jerusalem:** The city where Jesus was crucified is one of the most excavated places in the world.
- 2. Golgotha (Place of the Skull):** Tradition holds that this is the place of Jesus' crucifixion.
- 3. The Garden Tomb:** Some believe this to be the tomb where Jesus was buried and resurrected.
- 4. The Sea of Galilee:** Several events in Jesus' life took place around this sea.
- 5. Capernaum:** Archaeologists have unearthed a synagogue here which Jesus may have visited.
- 6. Nazareth:** Jesus' hometown, with archaeological evidence of 1st-century dwellings.
- 7. Bethlehem:** The traditional birthplace of Jesus.
- 8. The Pool of Bethesda:** Excavations have revealed a pool matching the description in John's Gospel.
- 9. The Pool of Siloam:** This pool, where Jesus healed a blind man, has been discovered in Jerusalem.
- 10. Herod's Palace in Jerusalem:** The place where Jesus was likely tried.
- 11. The Cenacle (Upper Room):** The traditional site of the Last Supper.
- 12. Pilate's Stone:** An inscription bearing Pontius Pilate's name and title was found in Caesarea Maritima.

- 13. Herod Antipas' Palace at Tiberias:** The palace of the ruler who played a part in Jesus' trial.
- 14. The Praetorium in Jerusalem:** The traditional location where Jesus was judged by Pilate.
- 15. Herod's Temple:** The temple that was standing in Jesus' time.
- 16. The Antonia Fortress:** The traditional site of Jesus' trial before Pilate.
- 17. The 'Jesus Boat' from the Sea of Galilee:** A 1st-century fishing boat discovered in the mud.
- 18. The road to Emmaus:** The site where Jesus appeared after his resurrection.
- 19. The city of Jericho:** The city visited by Jesus and the site of the story of Zacchaeus.
- 20. The Decapolis:** A group of cities mentioned in the Gospels where Jesus performed miracles.
- 21. The Island of Patmos:** Where John is said to have written the Book of Revelation.
- 22. The City of Ephesus:** An important city in the early Christian era and recipient of one of Paul's letters.
- 23. The Theatre in Ephesus:** Where the silversmith Demetrius incited a riot against Paul.
- 24. The Bema Seat in Corinth:** Where Paul may have been tried.
- 25. The Philippian Jail:** The traditional site where Paul and Silas were imprisoned.



Early Dates

Critical Scholars And Early Dates

No serious scholar thinks the gospels were written hundreds of years later.

Even a leading skeptic, Bart Ehrman, puts them all in the 1st century AD.¹ And he dates Mark to within 3½ decades from Jesus.

- Matthew – 80-85 CE
- Mark – 70 CE – as early as **36 years from Jesus!**
- Luke – 80-85 CE
- John – 90-95 CE

But there are other scholars who go much earlier.

- John A. T. Robinson, who shaped liberal Christian scholarship, dated Matthew and John to as early as 40 AD.² If true, this would put the writings to within **7 years from Jesus's resurrection!**
- Matthew – AD 40 to about AD 60 – as early as **7 years from Jesus!**
- Mark – about AD 45 to AD 60 – as early as **12 years from Jesus!**
- Luke – before AD 57 to 60AD
- John – about AD 40 to 65AD – as early as **7 years from Jesus!**

Gospel Nucleus Dates Very Early

Even if we didn't know anything about the dates of the gospels, we can still date the nucleus of the gospel to within months of the resurrection.

In **1 Corinthians 15**, Paul talks about a creed that he received. The creed is that Christ died

for our sins, was buried, and was raised on the third day. And he appeared to Cephas, the Twelve, and over 500 people at once.

Most historians date this creed at 30-35 AD.³ One scholar goes on to say that this “was formulated as tradition within months of Jesus’ death.”⁴

All of this shows the resurrection isn’t a legend that developed after many centuries.

¹ Bart Ehrman, “A Synopsis of Each New Testament Book,” The Bart Ehrman Blog, last modified November 11, 2019, accessed May 13, 2022, <https://ehrmanblog.org/a-synopsis-of-each-new-testament-book/>.

² John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 352.

³ For a good sample, see “Does the ‘1 Corinthians 15 Creed’ Date to about AD 30?” BeliefMap.org. Accessed May 13, 2022. <https://beliefmap.org/bible/1-corinthians/15-creed/date#historians>.

⁴ James Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 855, emphasis theirs.

Manuscript Evidence



Copyists Were Experienced Scribes

In general, the people copying the New Testament letters weren't amateurs.¹

Different scholars have studied the manuscript styles to try to gauge the skill level of these copyists.

One study from 2016 concluded this: "the vast majority of the Christian papyri were copied by trained scribes."²

They also weren't in the habit of changing the text and writing whatever they wanted. There were some exceptions,³ but generally, they were very careful to faithfully reproduce the letters as best they could.⁴

More Manuscripts Than Any Other Ancient Text

Yes, there are many differences between the manuscripts because they were copied by hand, and not all manuscripts are as early as others, but we can be confident that we know what the original message was.

One New Testament scholar puts it this way:

"we are better situated to reconstruct the original of the New Testament than that of any other ancient book."⁵

What it comes down to is this: "if you don't think you can trust the New Testament text, then you really can't trust any ancient text."⁶

¹ Zachary J. Cole, “Myths about Copyists: The Scribes Who Copied Our Earliest Manuscripts,” in *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism*, ed. Elijah Hixson and Peter J. Gurry (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019), 134-144.

² Alan Mugridge, *Copying Early Christian Texts: A Study of Scribal Practice* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 147 in Elijah Hixson and Peter J. Gurry, eds., *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019), 139.

³ Peter J. Gurry, “Myths about Variants : Why Most Variants Are Insignificant and Why Some Can’t Be Ignored,” in *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism*, ed. Elijah Hixson and Peter J. Gurry (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019), 209.

⁴ Zachary J. Cole, “Myths about Copyists: The Scribes Who Copied Our Earliest Manuscripts,” in *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism*, ed. Elijah Hixson and Peter J. Gurry (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019), 146-150.

⁵ James B. Prothro, “Myths about Classical Literature: Responsibly Comparing the New Testament to Ancient Works,” in *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism*, ed. Elijah Hixson and Peter J. Gurry (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019), 85.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 84, emphasis theirs.



EVIDENCE

BELIEF TYPE

HISTORY

ARCHAEOLOGY

BIBLICAL ACCURACY

FULFILLED PROPHECY

So that's the evidence-based approach.

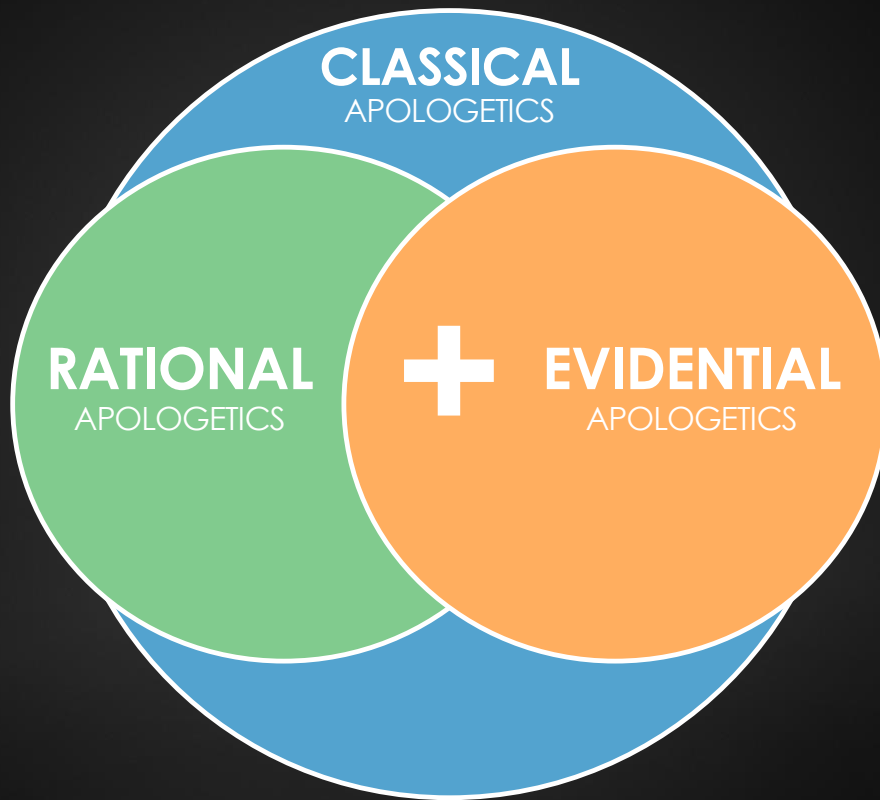
Question: How many of you have had your faith strengthened by this approach in the past?

Do you think this is a good approach to use when sharing your faith with unbelievers?

Why or why not?



Now remember, when we combine reason with evidence, we get Classical Apologetics.



And here are the formal names again.

That's been a long explanation.

Remember, I said it was comprehensive!

Biblical Support



Biblical Support for Using Reason

The Bible says we should use our minds!

- **Image of God.** Part of being in the image of God means we are rational creatures. Gen. 1:27: “So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female.”
- **Commanded to use our minds.** Love Lord with all your mind, etc. (Deut 6:5; Lev. 19:18; Mk 12:30; Lk. 10:27). Jesus says this is the most important commandment! We’re supposed to have healthy, well-working minds!
- **Jesus, our example.** Jesus used logic. Jesus was not just a masterful teacher, but he was also a masterful logician. How did he use logic?
- Jesus often used ***a fortiori* arguments**. This kind of argument starts with an accepted conclusion and then argues there is a stronger conclusion that is more obvious. These types of arguments can be found by looking for the ‘how much more’ statements of Jesus. God feeds the birds—how much more will he feed people! (Lk. 12:24-24). God clothes the grass—how much more will he clothe you! (Lk. 12:28) Sheep are important and worthy of rescuing on the Sabbath—but how much more important are people in need on the Sabbath! (Matt. 12:10-13) This reasoning can also be seen in his ‘one greater than’ statements. People (like Queen of Sheeba) listened to Solomon’s wisdom—but now one greater than Solomon is here (i.e., how much more should they listen to him)! (Lk. 11:31) People repented at the preaching of Jonah—but now a prophet greater than Jonah is here (i.e., how much more should they listen to him)! (Lk. 11:32)
- Jesus demonstrated how to traverse **logical dilemmas**, such as the question about paying the imperial tax to Caesar (Mt. 22:17).
- Jesus used **logical arguments to stump his opponents**, such as the question about the origin of John's baptism (Lk. 20:3).

- Jesus was so good at arguing that towards the end of the Gospel it says, “No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions.” (Mt. 22:46; Mk. 12:34; Lk. 20:40).

Biblical Support for Using Evidence

- God gave Moses a series of miracles to convince the people of His presence (Ex. 4:5).
- The miracle of the fire consuming Elijah’s sacrifice was used as evidence that Yahweh alone was God (1 Ki. 18).
- Jesus frequently appealed to the miracles that he performed as evidence that he was the promised Messiah (Mt. 11:2-6; Lk. 7:20-23; Jn. 3:2; Jn. 5:36; 6:14; 7:31; 9:16; 9:30-33; 11:42; 11:47,48; 12:37; 15:24).
- Jesus pinned his authenticity on the miracle of the resurrection itself (John 2:18, 19, 21, 22).
- The Gospel writers, Matthew, Luke, and John, all used fulfilled prophecy, historical accuracy, and miracles as evidence for Jesus being the Messiah.
- In Acts, Peter and Paul present persuasive arguments for Jesus, including fulfilled prophecy and miracles, as evidence for the truth of Christianity (Acts 2:25-28; 34, 35, Acts 17:2, 3).

Advantages

- ▶ People Have Questions
- ▶ Well-Rounded Defense
- ▶ Confidence
- ▶ Addresses Doubt



Advantages

From an apologetic/evangelistic perspective, Classical apologetics has these pros:

- **People Have Questions:** Many people have intellectual questions and want plain answers.
 - **Explores Fundamental Questions:** It grapples with common, fundamental existential questions such as the nature of truth, the existence of God, and the meaning of life.
 - **Readiness for Tough Questions:** Classical apologetics prepares believers to handle the tough questions that arise from popular critical views about the Bible (from TV, film, online).
- **Well-Rounded Defense:** it provides a robust defense of faith in a culture that is often intellectually hostile to Christianity.
- **Confidence in Faith Sharing:** When Christians are trained to answer questions, they can approach conversations about their faith with less anxiety and greater confidence.
- **Addresses Doubt:** it provides a means of addressing intellectual doubts that even the most steadfast Christians may experience (e.g., Charles Templeton).



Challenges

- ▶ Deep, comprehensive
- ▶ Could neglect the heart
- ▶ Potential for pride
- ▶ Christian disagreement

Challenges with this Apologetic

The following challenges could be a challenge for this apologetic approach:

- **Deep, Comprehensive:** Philosophical and logical arguments can be complex and challenging for some people to grasp.
- **Could Neglect the Heart:** It may focus more on intellectual arguments and neglect the emotional, relational, and experiential aspects of faith.
 - **Relies Heavily on External Evidence:** While evidence is important, faith also involves trust and personal commitment which can't be fully established through external proofs alone.
- **Potential for Pride:** It can potentially lead to pride in one's intellectual abilities or arguments, rather than humble dependence on God.
- **Christian Disagreement:** Not all Christians agree evidence and reason-based apologetics are valid for reaching unbelievers.