



# Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith

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2012 *Christianity Today* Book Award of Merit winner The Christian worldview proposes answers to the most enduring human questions. But are those answers reliable? In this systematic text, Douglas Groothuis makes a comprehensive apologetic case for Christian theism--proceeding from a defense of objective truth to a presentation of the key arguments for God from natural theology to a case for the credibility of Jesus, the incarnation and the resurrection. Throughout, Groothuis considers alternative views and how they fare intellectually.

## **Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith Details**

Date : Published July 27th 2011 by IVP Academic

ISBN : 9780830839353

Author : Douglas R. Groothuis

Format : Hardcover 752 pages

Genre : Philosophy, Religion, Theology, Christianity, Nonfiction

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## **From Reader Review Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith for online ebook**

### **Frankie Della Torre says**

A massive work that seeks to present a cumulative-case for the Christian faith. Groothuis begins at the bottom, addressing the various views on truth, and seeks to establish what customs are necessary for constructing a coherent worldview. Then, within those parameters, he seeks to first provide good reasons (arguments) for belief in God. Then, upon that foundation, he provides strong reasons to think that God has revealed Himself in the person of Jesus Christ. He has chapters on the Problem of Evil, Islam, the Incarnation, Hell, and the greatly criticized commands of the OT Law.

Overall, this book was well worth the read. Like I said, it is pretty big (over 650 pages). If Groothuis ever produces a Magnum Opus, this is it. I heartily recommend it. Dr. Groothuis has produced honest, clear, and intellectually rigorous answers for some of the most difficult questions ever posed to the Christian worldview. This is a work that is worthy to have on the shelf. Enjoy the reading!

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### **Todd Miles says**

A textbook of this magnitude cannot be concisely summarized nor reviewed. Let me commend the book in this way: Christian Apologetics is solidly evangelical and Christ-honoring. Groothuis writes in a clear and concise way. The author exhibits a strong commitment to the authority and sufficiency of Scripture throughout. Christians will be encouraged and strengthened in their faith as they become convinced that there is strong philosophical and intellectual justification for their commitment to Christ. Christians will also be given ample arguments to engage our pluralistic culture for Christ. On a more personal and technical level, I was pleased that although Groothuis was supportive of evidentialism, he was not dismissive of presuppositionalism. He also held to the exclusivity of Christ, the orthodox doctrine of hell, and was compatibilistic his understanding of human freedom. This is a great summary text of apologetics that will benefit the college student, seminarian, pastor, and layman.

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### **Samantha DeVoir says**

One of my favorite books on my bookshelf. I go back to this again and again. This book is broken down by different arguments Christians will face and how to approach these. Great reference book and not a boring read.

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### **Maryann Spikes says**

Favorite quotes, summaries and questions:  
<http://ichthus77.com/2012/11/02/blog-...>

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## Richard Hillyer says

A great work on apologetics.

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## Michael Boling says

The field of apologetics and the subject contained therein seems to be an ever expanding array of subjects. Thus a work that is intended to be a comprehensive treatise on the subject of apologetics will inherently be a rather large tome covering a number of key topics that fall under the umbrella of apologetical discussion. *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* by author and Denver Seminary Professor of Philosophy Dr. Douglas Groothuis is a compendium of information on the topic of apologetics, covering the major issues found within this particular discipline.

In the acknowledgements section of this book, Groothuis described it as “close to a magnum opus as I will ever have.” At over 700 pages in length to include numerous footnotes, an extensive bibliography, and interaction with some of the most demanding aspects of apologetics, this book can truly be counted as one of the more comprehensive treatments of apologetics to hit the market in a number of years. Groothuis utilizes his extensive experience as a professor and author to bring to the forefront issues such as how to define and examine worldviews, the reason why all believers should be involved in apologetics, a reasoned defense for Christian theism, and a response to objections to that Christian theism approach.

At the outset, it must be noted that Groothuis presents an evidentialist approach to apologetics as opposed to a presuppositionalist approach. Those not familiar with those terms may not see or understand the difference in how these two apologetical methods engage certain issues differently. Groothuis does provide a few paragraphs to critique the presuppositionalist methodology, presenting that approach as the product of Reformed theology under the guise of individuals such as Cornelius Van Til, Gordon Clark, and Carl F. H. Henry. So while Groothuis is certainly guided in his outlook on apologetics from the evidentialist position, it can be argued that his efforts in that regard still affirm that all truth is grounded in God and His Word as the point to which all apologetics discussions should be rooted. As Groothuis rightly notes, “Classical apologists argue first for the existence of a monotheistic God and then argue for the particulars of Christianity.” To that degree, both presuppositionalism and evidentialism seem to point back to a common point of departure, namely the existence of God with both positions from that point arguably diverging on how they go about proving that original assertion.

The section by Groothuis on the Christian worldview is quite excellent to include the follow on chapters where he further examines this topic. He aptly notes that Christianity is indeed a worldview, one grounded in God and that “shapes who we are and what we do. We are driven by our deepest beliefs and interpret the world according to them, often almost automatically.” How apologetics impacts our worldview is of great importance and it is comforting not only to see such a substantial effort being given to this subject matter by Groothuis in this particular book, it is also encouraging to note the resurgence of discussion in recent years across the board in both apologetics blogs and recent apologetics books. As Groothuis comments, “a Christian worldview, at its deepest level, is a system of truth claims or assertions about reality.” For the believer, those claims are necessarily rooted in our ultimate authority, namely the Word of God. Ultimately, according to Groothuis, the Christian worldview can be summarized “into three broad categories: creation, fall, and redemption.” All elements of Scripture and truth claims can and must flow back into those categories.

After covering what he calls the “Apologetic Preliminaries”, Groothuis next engages the case for Christian

Theism or the Christian worldview. This section comprises the vast majority of this book and rightly so as the defense of a biblical worldview is at the heart of apologetics. Groothuis avers that theistic arguments can be divided into two main categories, posteriori or empirical arguments that “depend on some evidence in the world as a basis from which to infer God’s existence.” The other category is a priori arguments or those arguments that “rely on what is rationally known apart from the empirical world.” Underneath both umbrellas fall a number of arguments that can be utilized to argue for the existence of God and thus for the Christian worldview. Groothuis examines in great detail the ontological argument, the cosmological argument, the design argument, issues concerning origins, the moral argument, arguments from religious experience, and the uniqueness of humanity.

Groothuis is a clear proponent of the Intelligent Design (ID) movement, pointing to recent works provided by authors such as Michael Behe and the argument for irreducible complexity that points to the clear design inherent in the created order. In short, ID presents for apologists such as Groothuis a strong point of argumentation against Darwinism and “the reigning naturalism in the realm of biology, as well as some support for theism as an overarching worldview.” With that said, while thankfully providing an outright rejection of the Darwinian model or a naturalistic view of origins, Groothuis is decidedly not a fan of a young-earth approach to origins. While he does reject theistic evolution in total describing their approach as “strained”, he also makes clear mention that he believes “a creation week of six literal twenty-four days is unwarranted”, referring to the days of creation as merely being “six creative periods.” Groothuis attempts to present his old earth stance as necessary because one must “attempt to bring together the “book of nature” (Psalm 19:1-6) and “the book of Scripture” (Psalm 19:7-10; 2 Timothy 3:15-17) as leaders of the scientific revolution understood it.” Such an approach seems to overlook such leaders of the scientific revolution did their science largely based on a belief in the biblical account of creation. Groothuis seems to have an issue with looking to the biblical genealogical accounts as evidence for the age of the earth despite Scripture noting an individual such as Enoch being the seventh from Adam, something the biblical accounts affirm, yet he has no issue with assuming the evolutionary account of the age of the earth, namely billions of years of existence for the universe. Such an argument thus seems to be inconsistent at best. With all that said, Groothuis is again decidedly opposed to evolution and on that basis, his approach to origins, while in the Old Earth segment, nevertheless rejects any element of leaving God out of the equation which in the grand scheme of things, supports the overall premise of his book in relation to a Christian worldview that looks to God as the source of all things.

The section on the claims and credentials of Jesus is another excellent section of this book. When one examines the evidence for the existence of Jesus and for the resurrection for that matter, they are left with a clear decision point. Either one can accept the monumental facts that demonstrate his existence, or else reject any element of sound reasoning and logic. Groothuis does an excellent job of outlining the various proofs for Christ, noting why they are important and why the apologist should defend them. Additionally, Groothuis aptly compares other religious leaders to Jesus, noting how their respective lives fail in comparison to the claims made by Jesus, in particular how the various claims and actions of Jesus marry perfectly with historical accounts and more importantly with biblical prophecies that predicted those very actions would take place. Such proofs are elements which all apologists should study and understand as they are devastating to arguments against a Christian theistic worldview and which provide as much as one can possibly prove the existence of God.

Yet another important section of this book is the section devoted by Groothuis to the issue of Islam. Given the growth of this religious viewpoint across the globe, understanding how apologetics relates to Islam and how believers can demonstrate the vast differences between the God of the Bible and the god of Islam is of course of vast importance. Groothuis does a masterful job of walking the reader through the various claims made by Islam concerning issues such as God, Scripture, Jesus, and the human condition. Defending the faith against the growing tide of Islam and its followers is a decidedly important issue and thus understanding the arguments involved is something that needs to be addressed and thankfully Groothuis does so in a pretty comprehensive manner.

Finally, what apologetics effort would be complete without a discussion of the problem of evil? Why evil exists and why an all-powerful God allows evil to exist as well as when or if He will do anything about the current condition of things is a perennial source of discussion amongst apologists and those who take issue with Christian Theism alike. In his chapter on the problem of evil, Groothuis does an admirable job of tackling this subject, digging down to the root of what exactly the problem of evil is all about to include providing a strategy to address what is “often flashed before Christians as a trump card.” Groothuis notes that he placed this section on the problem of evil at the conclusion of his book as “the problem should be debated in light of the evidence for a personal and moral Creator of the universe, who created humans in his image and who pursued them even in their fallen state through his revelation to Israel, culminating in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.” Thus in order to properly examine and engage the problem of evil, we must have in place a well-formed apologetic rooted in the aforementioned elements of the faith as the problem of evil engages all of those elements.

*Christian Apologetics* by Dr. Douglas Groothuis is indeed a monumental work on the subject and one that provides a plethora of valuable insight into developing a solidly based biblical worldview in response to the barrage of attacks thrown at the believer by those who oppose Christian theism and the God of the Bible. While I prefer a presuppositional approach to apologetics and despite my disagreement with an old earth approach to the issue of origins, I nevertheless found this work to be helpful on many fronts. I certainly recommend this book as a solid resource for seminary students and those working in or interested in the field of apologetics.

I received this book for free from IVP Academic for this review. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission’s 16 CFR, Part 255 : “Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising.”

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## **Craig Hurst says**

It is probably not a stretch to say that the task of Christian apologetics has been necessary since the Fall. Fallen man rejects God and in his rejection casts doubt on the validity of Christianity. If you need evidence for this then just pick up a recently published book by the dubbed New Atheists Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Daniel Dennett or Sam Harris. If reading any one of these authors does not impress upon you the necessity of apologetics then not much will.

Throughout the history of apologetics, and more so within the last 50 years, there have been many formidable Christian apologists. These defenders of the Christian faith have serviced the church and any inquiring unsaved minds with many written apologetic works. Many of these works deal with single issues within the field of apologetics such as methodology, defending its importance or necessity, dealing with specific issues like the resurrection of Christ or the five theistic arguments from natural theology, addressing and answering Old and New testament issues and a host of other related subjects.

Douglas Groothuis is a long time Christian apologist, author and professor of philosophy at Denver Seminary and Metropolitan State College of Denver. He has recently written a new book on Christian apologetics titled *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith*. Groothuis does something that few if any other apologetic works have ever done. As the sub title indicates, Groothuis has written a comprehensive book on apologetics within the scope of 730 plus pages. Granted, given the vast field of apologetics, what is covered in this book is not exhaustive nor is it intended to be. However, Groothuis has provided us with a magnificent introductory work on Christian apologetics that will serve the

laymen, pastor and student alike. Christian Apologetics is a go to guide for not only the beginning student of apologetics but the more seasoned apologetists among us.

## Part One: Apologetics Preliminaries

Part one deals with a number of preliminary issues. "Christian apologetics is the rational defense of the Christian worldview as objectively true, rationally compelling and existentially or subjectively engaging (p. 24)." The basis for the task of Christian apologetics is found in I Peter 3:15-16 where Peter tells us to be "prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you (ESV)." Therefore, the task of apologetics is for every believer.

Groothius utilizes the cumulative case method of apologetics. Distancing himself from fideism, presuppositionalism and evidentialism Groothius states his methodology "is to verify the Christian worldview by arguing for its essential elements one by one (p. 60)." He further defends his method by stating, "I will offer a variety of arguments that verify or confirm the Christian worldview as superior to its rivals, this showing that Christianity alone makes the most sense of the things that matter most (p. 72)."

Groothius explains the eight criteria that every worldview should be evaluated on (p. 52-59). In chapter four he defines and explains the Christian worldview and addresses issues such as Christian epistemology, reality, mankind, salvation, a Christian approach to history and the afterlife. On the heels of defining the Christian worldview Groothius addresses a number of distortions of the Christian worldview. In chapter six and seven the nature of truth is discussed. Groothius evaluates various forms of relativism showing them to be theologically, philosophically and practically wanting.

## Part Two: The Case for Christian Theism

Part two gets to the heart of the book as thirteen separate arguments are made in favor of the Christian worldview. These arguments center around the five theistic arguments for God's existence, the Christian view of origins, the Christian view of morality, the place of religious experience and the Christian view of man and Jesus Christ as seen through his person, work, incarnation and resurrection.

In defining the theistic proofs for the existence of God Groothius lends himself heavily towards their explanatory power. This is consistent with the cumulative case method. The cumulative case method relies heavily on natural revelation (deducing truths from what can be observed) as opposed to revealed revelation (revelation from God about what is true as found in Scripture) (p. 172). Groothius is careful to distinguish between general revelation and natural theology:

"General revelation means that God has revealed himself in nature and conscience. Natural theology engages in logic in order to derive rational argument's for God's existence (p. 174)."

Though the theistic proofs for the existence of God can be overly technical, Groothius manages to clearly state, defend and explain them such that the average reader can comprehend and in turn defend them for themselves. Groothius does not necessarily say anything new but he does have his own style of articulating what they are.

Once the theistic proofs for the existence of God have been established the move is then made to how does the God of Christian theism best explain the origins of everything. Groothius engages the atheist arguments against God and marshals the counter support of scientists like Michael Behe, Phillip Johnson, Jonathan Wells and Stephen Meyer. A good presentation of Behe's contribution to the Intelligent Design argument is set forth here. Throughout Groothius critiques many of the classic and contemporary arguments made by atheists against a creator.

In regards to the moral argument for God's existence Groothius provides a thorough and convincing case

against ethical relativism as expressed in its cultural and individualistic forms (chapter 15). He concludes that the heart of the source of all that is good is God himself in his character and will. "God's moral will is based on God's changeless character. Objective moral values have their source in the eternal character, nature and substance of a loving, just and self-sufficient God (p. 356)."

The argument for the existence of God from man could be said to center on three truths that distinguish man from the rest of creation. First, mankind is conscious of himself and the world around him including God. Second, mankind possesses cognition and can therefore, as a consciously self-aware being, relate to concepts rationally. Finally, mankind possesses language and "can communicate their rational awareness through signs, both written and spoken (p. 389)." Chapter seventeen essentially fleshes out these three aspects of humanity as an argument for Christian theism over against naturalism. Groothius also discusses man as created in the image and likeness of God and that he has fallen into sin. The essence of Groothius' discussion here centers on the belief that Christian theism best explains the existence (as opposed to non-existence of) and present condition of man (as in a fallen state of sin).

The final section of chapters on part two deal with many apologetical issues surrounding Jesus Christ. In chapter nineteen Groothius has scholar Craig Blomberg discuss how a person can know Jesus and why it matters (subtitle, p. 438). Blomberg provides a general overview of the historical information concerning the historical presence of Christ in both biblical and extra-biblical sources.

Following Blomberg, Groothius discusses many of the events in the life of Jesus, his worldview, miracles, uniqueness and death. Separate chapters are dedicated to the incarnation and resurrection of Christ. A defense is made for the rationality of the incarnation (p. 518-20) as well as the incarnation as paradox as opposed to logical contradiction (p. 520-23). Perhaps one of the best parts of the entire book is the discussion of metaphysics of the incarnation in which Groothius tackles the reality of both the divine and human nature of Jesus co-existing fully and harmoniously within the same person (p. 523-26). Concerning miracles, "a biblical miracle is an act of divine agency whereby a supernatural effect is produced for the purpose of manifesting God's kingdom on earth (p. 532)." Interaction is made with Hume's denial of the possible existence of miracles. A careful walk through the Gospel account(s) of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus are made in addition to his numerous postmortem appearances. Groothius concludes his discussion of Jesus' resurrection by stating that "the alternative naturalistic theories of the resurrection fail to account for commonly agreed-on facts relating to Jesus and the early church (p. 563)."

### Part Three: Objections to Christian Theism

The final section of the book deals with three main objections to Christian theism. First, is the objection of religious pluralism. Here Groothius compares the teaching of Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism to show how they contradict each other in order to demonstrate the absurdity of believing that all religions speak truth of the same God. Groothius spends several pages interacting with John Hick's religious pluralism and concludes that "Hick creates a new religious (and ultimately irreligious) category in order to harmonize religions (p. 585)." In dealing with the issue of the unevangelized Groothius lands on the side of particularism and believes that one must hear the gospel and respond to it in faith in order to be saved (p. 589-92). The second major objection to Christian theism is that of Islam. Here a basic overview is provided on Islamic doctrine and the major areas in which it conflicts with Christianity.

The final chapter deals with the problem or challenge of evil. Groothius discusses the nature of evil as something that exists not of itself but rather in the absence of good. The deductive and evidential problem of evil are defined and explained. A defense as opposed to a theodicy of evil is presented and argued for (p. 631). Groothius takes a compatibilist view of freedom and sovereignty in regards to the problem of evil and he makes a compelling case for "the greater-good defense" in regards to the reason evil exists (p. 637-44). He concludes on the subject by saying:

"Evil in the world is a possible defeater to theism and Christian theism; it is a *prima facie* problem. But given the wide array of reasons to believe in Christian theism – the varied arguments for God, the reliability of the Bible, the person and achievements of Christ, and so on – the claim that God does not exist loses much of its sting philosophically (p. 641)."

Whether or not this is the best way to conclude the discussion of the problem of evil is up to the reader but it does fit with the cumulative case method. Regardless of how strong the problem of evil is against Christian theism, there is so much evidence in its favor that it outweighs anything to the contrary. Though God has defeated Satan and evil in Christ on the cross, he will one day come again and destroy it and remove it from his creation and his image bearing creatures.

### Some Concerns

With a book that has so much that is commendable it is hard to criticize anything but there are a few concerns I have. First, as a presuppositionalist, the biggest issue I have with the book is the method of apologetics used – that of the cumulative case method. The cumulative case method relies heavily on the convincing power of arguments for or in favor of the existence of God. While I believe they do in fact support a basis that God exists I feel the cumulative case method has limits exactly because it relies on natural revelation almost solely. The result is that not enough consideration is given to the necessary and saving power of special revelation through Christ and Scripture. Natural revelation is limited because through the knowledge it gives us about God it still cannot bring salvation. "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17, ESV)." Second, in addition to other apologetic methods, Groothius too easily dismisses presuppositionalism in the span of two pages. For a book as thorough and introductory as *Christian Apologetics*, it would have been more helpful (and I feel it is necessary) to have a separate chapter explaining these other methods along with pros and cons. This is a glaring omission. As a result, much good presuppositional material is absent and its defenders are rarely cited (consider John Frame who I believe makes a solid case for a reasonable blend between presuppositionalism and evidentialist arguments). Third, in the introduction, Groothius states that "the book does not presuppose the truth of Christianity, nor does it want to beg any theological questions (p. 21)." As a presuppositionalist this statement is very interesting. When one makes an argument for something they presuppose that the argument is convincing and that the thing in which they are arguing for is indeed true. If Groothius did not believe Christian theism to be true then he would not have written an over 700 page defense for it. The fact that he wrote this great book is evidence that he presupposes its contents to be true. Following this quoted statement is an uncanny presence of irony: "My approach is that of Francis Schaeffer, who said, 'I try to approach every problem as though I were not a Christian and see what the answer would be' (p. 21)." Schaeffer came to Christianity through a dark period in his life and he later sought to write his book with the unbeliever in mind. But Schaeffer was undoubtedly a presuppositionalist and one of the best that Christianity has ever been blessed to see. Finally, in his discussion of origins in chapter thirteen, Groothius argues for progressive creationism as the best explanation for Gen. 1. While my contention here is not over his view it is for how he supports it. He does give a list of six nonnegotiable biblical and theological statements in favor of this view he does not define what he believes progressive creation to be (p. 274-75). Groothius does not believe in macroevolution yet he does not explain his view of how the creation of the earth and animals happened. He does believe a lot of time elapsed between the creation of animals and man (who is not the process of naturalistic evolution). But does he believe that God got all of the "kinds" of animals started with on "species" and then they all evolved from there through microevolution? He does not explain and thus leaves the reader confused.

### Some Commendations

Despite some concerns, *Christian Apologetics* is a solid book that will give defenders of any apologetic method. Its arguments and logic are true and its case is sure. There is nothing like it under one roof. This book will be well suited for the classroom of an introductory course on Christian apologetics in a college

setting. It would also be useful as a course book for churches to use to equip their members to be better apologists and as a book to refer to and even go through with unbelievers in helping answer their objections and struggles with Christianity. Grootius' conclusion is a fitting close to this review: "God is an apologetical God, the Bible in an apologetical book, and Christ is an apologetical Christ. Therefore, it is imperative for the Christian to defend and commend Christianity ardently, knowledgeably and wisely." Thus, "Christians must offer a genuinely Christian worldview so that unbelievers can discern just what is being defended and how it differs from their own worldviews (p.647)." That being the case, Christian Apologetics is a solid tool in aiding the believer to accomplish this goal.

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### **Jeff says**

If anyone is interested in the topic of apologetics this is a great book. If you are a boardline believer or non-believer, you might find this book gets you to rethink your position. It begins by arguing why what be believe is import, our world view. It then presents the case that God exists using several different arguments, ontological, cosmological, cosmic fine-tuning, intellegent design, moral argument and existential argument. He then goes on to show how Christianity fits reality better than other world views. It is a dense read, and the chapters build on previous ones so skipping around might be confusing. No it is not a comprehensive text on any one of the arguments, but it nicely summarizes the arguments and molds those arguments into one large meta-argument.

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### **Roger says**

This was the primary required textbook for a graduate school class. As the subtitle suggests, it is comprehensive (it's also the apologetic method that the textbook teaches and advocates). I tend to almost never get rid of books, but this one will stay on my shelf probably forever.

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### **Rick Mattson says**

I appreciate having main arguments on various apologetic issues all in one place. It makes for a good "cumulative case" for Christian faith.

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### **Justin Bailey says**

In his Christian Apologetics, philosopher Douglas Grootuis offers his "magnum opus", a cumulative case argument for the explanatory power and persuasive truth of the Christian faith. In his own words: "Christianity alone makes the most sense of the things that matter most." (72) Weighing in at around 700 pages, the volume is not particularly innovative; nor is it trying to be. Rather, Grootuis is hoping to update the apologetic conversation to account for recent developments (scientific discussions, new atheism, the spread of Islam) and to give a succinct and substantive presentation of the best apologetic arguments for Christianity.

The book is composed of 26 chapters plus two appendices and is divided into three sections. Part one (chs.

1-8) is concerned with methodological preliminaries; part two (chs. 9-22) is a constructive case for Christian Theism; part three (chs. 23-26) addresses three of the most pressing objections in contemporary times: religious pluralism, the claims of Islam and the problem of evil. Included are a chapter by Craig Blomberg on the historicity of Jesus and an appendix by Richard Hess on Old Testament apologetic issues.

Groothuis summarizes the Christian worldview he aims to defend in this “touchstone proposition”: “The universe (originally good, now fallen and awaiting its divine judgment and restoration) was created by and is sustained by the Triune God, who has revealed himself in nature, humanity, conscience, Scripture, and supremely through the Incarnation, that God may be glorified in all things.” (92) His methodology to establish this worldview is abductive: to look at multiple lines of evidence and make an inference to the best explanation. As he puts it: “[t]he best method of apologetic reasoning is hypothesis evaluation and verification.” For Groothuis this entails thinking in terms of worldview, which is “a large-scale hypothesis (or meta-narrative) that attempts to explain what matters most” (49). Accordingly, Groothuis gives eight criteria for evaluating worldviews: explanatory scope, internal consistency, coherency, factual adequacy, existential viability, cultural fecundity, historical consistency, and lack of unnecessary complexity (45-60). As mentioned above, Groothuis is attempting to provide a cumulative case that is broadly applicable to those who may not find particular arguments for Christianity compelling. He admits that people often hold a smorgasbord of beliefs that do not easily fit into any unified worldview; thus practical wisdom is needed to discern when and how to present the arguments for Christian faith.

Groothuis argues for a modified foundationalist, correspondence theory of truth, stating that truth is “part of the intellectual oxygen we breathe” (139) He avers that people have the responsibility to try to “get reality right” lest they “forfeit the humility of being beholden to a reality outside of themselves – a reality that may prove right or wrong, but which they do not command.” (137) Groothuis contrasts the virtue of truth-seeking with intellectual vices of self-deception, willful disbelief, arrogance, intellectual apathy (“apatheism”) and diversion (he has harsh things to say about television which might be extended to other technological distractions). Groothuis rejects postmodern insights about truth, arguing that it is common sense that some things are simply wrong, and that others things are simply true. Furthermore, within the Christian worldview, the final authority is Scripture, which “repeatedly promises that confident knowledge of God is possible... We may have justified certainty apart from absolute proof.” (148)

Despite the appeal to Scripture, Groothuis claims that his cumulative case method neither presupposes Christianity nor attempts to marshal a mountain of irrefutable evidence. While he ably defends each of the arguments he presents, the arguments seem to be arranged in order of Groothuis’ estimation of their persuasive force. He begins with the classic theistic arguments: ontological (ch. 10), cosmological (ch. 11), teleological (chs. 12-14), moral arguments (ch. 15), and the argument from religious experience (ch. 16). Groothuis is aware of the pitfalls of natural theology, but he is more concerned that to reject natural theology is to run the risk of divorcing “Scripture from nature and faith from reason” (182), leading to fideism or irrationalism. Again, these theistic proofs are not ends in themselves, but are a prelude to moving deeper into faith. To these classic arguments he adds two other arguments: an argument from human consciousness and rationality (ch. 17) and Pascal’s anthropological argument (the Christian narrative best explains the human capacity for greatness and misery, ch. 18). This anthropological argument signals a shift to arguing for Christian theism specifically. Groothuis grants that while the classic arguments may rule out certain worldviews (like atheism or pantheism) they do not bring us all the way to the God of the Bible. Thus the capstone of part two is found in chapters 19-22, in which Groothuis argues for the historicity and ultimate importance of the Incarnation, redemptive work and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Groothuis fits well within and frequently cites the “Biola School” of apologetics (e.g. William Lane Craig and J.P. Moreland), and thus is relatively optimistic about the power of reason in guiding us to the truth when presented with clearly articulated reasons to believe. Groothuis’s evidentialist tendencies are moderated, however, by his most frequent conversation partner, Pascal. Indeed, among the greatest contributions of this volume is that it puts many of Pascal’s elegant, lesser-known arguments into wider

circulation (the anthropological argument in ch. 18 is particularly well-presented).

While even a volume that claims to be comprehensive cannot include every argument, there are a few glaring omissions. There is no mention of the argument from beauty, an argument that has particular relevance in contemporary times, and one that would helpfully balance out Groothuis's heavy reliance on reason. While Groothuis attempts to engage the global context, his analysis is an idea-based approach that is limited to Buddhism, nondualistic Hinduism and Islam. Supernatural manifestations of God's presence get a mere mention in the second to last paragraph of the book, thus muting a significant apologetic source for believers living in the Majority world. These weaknesses notwithstanding, Groothuis's work is a substantial achievement, a thorough and formidable demonstration of the cumulative case approach.

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### **ANNA DEMETRA says**

This apologetics book is dense, thorough, scholarly, detailed, and exhaustive. It was a very big book, but I felt like I had all bases covered. It was not particularly inspiring or moving, but I'm very glad that I read it.

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### **Jonathan Biddle says**

Groothuis does a good job of surveying the primary arguments for theism and Christianity and presenting well thought out defenses of them. He writes in an accessible style and assimilates a wealth of learning into the book.

My main critique would be that he probably tries to prove too much in one book. When examining the claims and credentials of Jesus, he somehow manages to squeeze in an argument for the inspiration of the Old and New Testament! Though that's an important discussion to have, it seemed a little forced and out of place in this book. He also ends up assuming that every traditional argument is valid even when he doesn't present convincing arguments for them (especially seen in the ontological argument). It's OK that he thinks that, but it seems disingenuous to affirm that every way people have argued for God's existence has succeeded. It's as if he feels that no critique can succeed against any argument for God's existence. Some arguments aren't that great, and Christians shouldn't be afraid to admit that. Intellectual honesty demands that Christians critique and discard false arguments, even if we hold the beliefs they purport to prove.

All in all, a good book.

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### **John Brackbill says**

This was certainly worth my time to read. It is readable (though chapter eleven's discussion on the Kala Cosmological argument was a real brain stretcher for me) and touches on most things. Though, I must admit that I am not widely read in this field such that my review cannot be as helpful as some who are.

Here are some things that I was not excited about in the book:

"Yet some Christians are reluctant to accept the arguments just given" (referring to his acceptance of a "big ban" but with God being the initiator).

"if the theory lends support to the crucial biblical doctrine of divine creation from nothing, then the savvy apologist should endorse it." (seems a bit wrong headed as motivation goes. What about what fits with the authoritative revelation of God's Word on the matter?)

"While creationists often do yeoman work to bring aspects of Darwinism into question, particularly regarding the lack of evidence for macroevolution in the fossil record,<sup>30</sup> their biblical literalism concerning a six-day creation is troublesome for two reasons."

"There is overwhelming evidence that the universe is 13-15 billion years old and that the earth is ancient as well."

"Although the exact timing of the events of Genesis 1 is left somewhat open, the general sequence is clear: first the inorganic world, then nonhuman life, then human life."

"While we need not necessarily defend a "young earth" or six literal days of creation, the Bible does commit us to claims about God's hand in the creation of the major groupings (kinds) of life."

Clearly not a cessationist:

"Particularists need not assume that humans are the only messengers to bring the gospel to the lost....Outside of the Bible there are many credible reports of non-Christians hearing the gospel through dreams and visions before being evangelized by Christians" (6447, 6483)

"the supernatural manifestations of God's kingdom-signs and wonders such as healings, prophecy, visions and other miracles-provide powerful apologetic evidence that God is alive and powerful today." (7083)

Apologetic Method:

"The best method for this holy endeavor is to present Christianity as a hypothesis that passes rational testing better than rival worldviews."

He is certainly does not agree with presuppositionalism.

There were three areas that I was especially in disagreement: His view on creation, his continuationism, and his evidentialist focus in apologetics rather than presuppositionalism.

Misleading or Unfortunate Statements:

"Yet even if there might be some irreconcilable difference in the accounts, this would not prove that the resurrection itself did not occur, since all the accounts agree..." on the major facts of the event.

"in fact, some minor differences in the telling of this story indicate authenticity, not substantial error" (6114)

"The most powerful apologetic for Christianity will be ignored by anyone who simply-and probably ignorantly-accepts all religions as equally spiritual." (6138)

His Frame work:

-On the issue of the problem of evil:

"By so doing, I am affirming the traditional Reformed or Calvinist concept of human agency and God's sovereignty, and denying the traditional Arminian view, which is libertarian." (6894)

Things to think more about:

"Nor did Jesus himself fully understand his own redemptive sufferings while he agonized on the cross." (6993)

In the last appendix he deals with the "Ban" in Joshua and Deuteronomy. He put forth some arguments about it being forts and never non-combatants that I would like to pursue further.

Things that were very positive about this book: I guess if I give several quotes that I was not excited about I should mention some that I were especially helpful. Certainly there were more in this category than in the negative category.

Reading this book was a positive project. I especially found the following chapters excellent:

- Chapter 14: "Evidence for Intelligent Design"
- Chapter 17: "The Uniqueness of Humanity: Consciousness and Cognition."
- Chapters 20-22: These chapters on Jesus I thought were especially good.

Overall, I am very glad that I read this book and I certainly found many other resources for further reading. I certainly do not want to communicate I am negative toward the book, but wanted to point out areas of my own disagreement.

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## **Cindy Nipper says**

This was part of my assigned reading for my Apologetics class at Liberty University.

This was a wonderful book about defending the Christian faith! Many discussions I was well aware of where the author brought additional comprehensible data to, and many arguments I wasn't aware of until this book! A few things I disagree with, but for the most part, I found this book extremely sane and a wonderful source for all Christians! It will help build your faith in the why of your belief, give you strength against the many worldviews of modern society and help you answer questions for fellow believers! An excellent resource!

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