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# Evidentialist Apologetics: Faith Founded on Fact

The title of John Warwick Montgomery’s best-known book, *Faith Founded on Fact*, well illustrates the methodological perspective of the evidentialist model of apologetics. Evidentialists believe that “the facts speak for themselves”—that the best approach to defending the Christian faith is simply to present the factual evidence for the crucial claims of Christ. This rather simple way of stating their position, of course, does not do justice to the sophisticated way that evidentialist scholars have developed a philosophy of fact to undergird the apologetic task. In this chapter, then, we shall consider in some detail the evidentialist system of apologetics in order to come to terms with the distinctive way it responds to the challenges facing the Christian apologist.

## Methods for Discovering Truth

Evidentialism in Christian apologetics seeks to show the truth of Christianity by demonstrating its factuality. Whereas classical apologetics characteristically regards logic or reason as the primary criterion of truth, evidentialism characteristically assigns this priority to fact. (This difference can be understood largely a matter of emphasis; of course, both classical apologists and evidentialists consider reason and fact to be both essential to apologetic argumentation.) The meaning of “fact” in evidentialism is quite broad. Bernard Ramm, for

example, classifies the scope of Christian evidences under the three categories of *material fact* (historical events, documents, archaeological artifacts), *supernatural fact* (events or phenomena that can only be explained by “invoking the category of the supernatural”), and *experiential fact* (individual and social phenomena).<sup>1</sup> This empirical approach makes use of a wide variety of concrete evidences, although some, like the historical evidence for the resurrection of Christ, are more extensively developed and emphasized.

## TWO KINDS OF “EVIDENTIALISM”

Evidentialism in evangelical Christian apologetics should be carefully distinguished from *epistemological evidentialism*, which adheres to W. K. Clifford’s dictum that “it is wrong, everywhere, always, and for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence.”<sup>2</sup> Clifford’s maxim has rightly been questioned from a variety of perspectives. For one thing, the statement itself is not one for which we can even imagine what would constitute “sufficient evidence”; what would count for or against evidence for the maxim? Second, it establishes what we might call an *epistemology of suspicion*: the belief that we should consider all beliefs false unless proven true by sufficient evidence. But why should the burden of proof be placed on a belief rather than on its denial? If I believe that the world exists as a reality independent of my senses, I am perfectly right to adhere to this belief in the absence of reasons or evidence to the contrary.

Apologetical evidentialism does not assume epistemological evidentialism, and most if not all evidentialist apologists would reject Clifford’s maxim. If we were to formulate a maxim for evidentialist apologetics, it would be something like this: it is wrong, everywhere, always, and for anyone, *to tell someone else* to believe something other than on the basis of evidence. In other words, evidentialism in apologetics places a certain burden of proof on the apologist to

show non-Christians why it is rational to believe in Christ. At the same time, evidentialists claim that the truth of the Christian message cannot be successfully or properly denied without a fair consideration of the factual basis for the Christian truth claim. Henceforth when we refer to evidentialism, we are referring to the apologetic approach.

Although apologetical evidentialists generally do not subscribe to epistemological evidentialism, they sometimes do argue that people ought to have evidence or reasons for the beliefs they hold in matters of supreme importance. Dan Story, for example, contends, “If you and I are to bet our eternity on a particular religion, we had better have reasons for why we believe as we do.”<sup>3</sup> The point here is to press non-Christians to inquire whether they have good reasons for believing what they believe instead of believing in Christ.

## PRIORITY OF FACT AND INDUCTION

Although there are different varieties of evidentialist apologetics, they have several crucial aspects in common. First, *evidentialism is primarily inductive, rather than deductive, in its logical form*. Inductive arguments reason from as many facts, or data, as can be mustered to a conclusion that is shown to be supported in some way by the facts. By contrast, deductive arguments, such as those favored in classical apologetics, reason from as few facts, or premises, as are needed to a conclusion that is shown to follow from the facts. Evidentialism makes induction, rather than deduction, the primary form of apologetic argumentation.

We say “primarily” because deduction does play a role in evidentialist argument (as of course induction plays a role in classical apologetics), and it would be a mistake to characterize evidentialism as relying *solely* on inductive argument. Even John Warwick Montgomery, whose advocacy of empirical method is more thoroughgoing than perhaps any other noted evidentialist,

denies that all knowledge is gained solely through inductive reasoning—a position known as **inductivism**. He recognizes that there is actually a complementary interplay of deduction and induction in investigative operations, as well as a second level of induction that C. S. Peirce called imaginative retroduction or **abduction**. This involves an interaction between concepts, hypotheses, and theories and facts, observations, and experiments through imagination and logic.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, evidentialists insist that verification of the central claims of Christianity unavoidably involves induction. Moreover, at least some evidentialists are dissatisfied with the primarily deductive approach used in classical apologetics. They insist that a sound apologetic can and must consist primarily in an appeal to the facts. For Montgomery the facts take precedence over rationality and should be viewed as essentially self-interpreting. He explicitly rejects the claim that one must first establish the truth of a worldview and then view the facts within that worldview context. Rather, he insists, the facts determine the worldview.

Facts are not made of wax, capable of infinite molding from the pressure of interpretive world-views. . . . Facts ultimately arbitrate interpretations, not the reverse, at least where good science (and not bad philosophy) is being practiced. . . . If one removes his nose from philosophical speculation and breathes the fresher air of societal and personal decision-making, he will find abundant illustration that facts must carry their own interpretations (i.e., must arbitrate among diverse interpretations of the data).<sup>5</sup>

More recently he reiterated this point in an essay defending a “juridical” approach to apologetics—one that adopts legal principles of evidence as the methodological basis for verifying the Christian truth claims. He argues that “the very nature of legal argument

(judgments rendered on the basis of factual verdicts) rests on the ability of facts to speak for themselves.”<sup>6</sup>

The priority assigned to factual evidence over against rational deduction does not mean that evidentialists are critical of reason or logic. According to Montgomery, “The law of contradiction and the logical thinking based upon it are not optional. They must be employed for any meaningful thought, theological or otherwise.”<sup>7</sup> However, evidentialists are suspicious of logic employed in a speculative manner, and they emphasize that rational arguments are only as good as the facts with which they work. Logical coherence or consistency is at best a negative test for truth, because it is possible to construct a coherent worldview that is actually false. Montgomery observes that “the greatest of the world’s madmen have held the most consistent delusions,”<sup>8</sup> and illustrates his concern in an amusing parable about a man who was convinced he was dead.

His concerned wife and friends sent him to the friendly neighborhood psychiatrist. The psychiatrist determined to cure him by convincing him of one fact that contradicted his belief that he was dead. The fact that the psychiatrist settled on was the simple truth that dead men do not bleed, and he put the patient to work reading medical texts, observing autopsies, etc. After weeks of effort, the patient finally said: “All right, all right! You’ve convinced me. Dead men do not bleed.” Whereupon the psychiatrist stuck him in the arm with a needle, and the blood flowed. The man looked with a contorted, ashen face and cried: “Good Lord! Dead men bleed after all!”

Montgomery concludes that the moral of the story is “that if you hold unsound presuppositions with sufficient tenacity, facts will make no difference to you at all.”<sup>9</sup> His solution to this problem is to urge people to abandon any presuppositions that would close their

minds to potential facts, whether they be metaphysical assumptions that prejudge the possibility of certain kinds of facts or methodological assumptions that preclude the discovery of certain kinds of facts.

Moreover, some evidentialists have argued that logical coherence or consistency is from one perspective faulty even as a negative test for truth. They point out that assigning priority to rational deductive logic can actually undermine the apologist's position because of the paradoxical nature of central Christian teachings. Montgomery, a Lutheran, follows Martin Luther in asserting that Christianity involves antinomies. An **antinomy** is an apparently intractable contradiction between two ideas, both of which we have good reason to accept as true (for example, predestination and free will, or God as one Being and three Persons). Such humanly irresolvable paradoxes are to be believed, according to Montgomery, because we have evidence from Scripture that they are true, not because they pass the test of logical consistency.

In defense of the rationality of believing such antinomies, Montgomery points out that antinomies exist in science as well as in theology. He asserts that “to blast other systems for internal inconsistencies does not necessarily destroy them, since in a real sense life *is* bigger than logic (the paradoxical wave-particle character of light does not destroy the empirically established evidence of light's characteristics or the physics that investigate it—and the paradoxical character of the Trinity surely doesn't destroy the Biblical evidence for God's trinitarian nature or the validity of Christian faith in the Triune God!).”<sup>10</sup>

## PROBABLE CHARACTER OF EVIDENTIALIST ARGUMENTS

Evidential apologists of all stripes hold in common a second crucial aspect: *the conclusions of the apologetic arguments they employ are shown to be probable rather than*

*certain*. This follows from the inductive nature of the arguments typically employed. Inductive reasoning assembles facts and argues that a particular conclusion offers the best or most probable explanation of the facts. Such reasoning does not absolutely close the door on other possible explanations of the facts, and for that reason inductive arguments do not attain certainty for their conclusions.

This lack of certainty is one of the most commonly criticized aspects of the evidentialist approach. If one concludes that God probably exists, or that Jesus most likely rose from the dead, how does that provide an adequate basis for the absolute commitment of faith in Jesus Christ to which people are summoned by the gospel? Evidentialists respond to this complaint on two levels.

On one level they insist that the lack of rational certainty is dictated by the nature of the Christian message. For Montgomery the probabilistic character of apologetic argument is an unavoidable result of the fact that the Christian faith centers on historical events. While he admits that his evidential apologetic leads only to a “high level of probability,” he points out that we never have absolute rational certainty in our knowledge of the real world.<sup>11</sup> His argument “is not a rational proof in the sense of a demonstration in pure mathematics or formal logic; rather, it is an empirical argument based upon the application of historical method to an allegedly objective event. Thus it provides no more than probable evidence for the truth of the Christian world view.”<sup>12</sup> For Montgomery, apodictic certainty is possible only in deductive arguments that proceed from self-evident axioms. No arguments that appeal to facts from the real world can furnish mathematically certain conclusions. But while empirical proofs fall short of certainty, all factual decisions in life are based on such proofs. “Historians, and indeed all of us, must make decisions constantly, and the only adequate guide is probability (since absolute certainty lies

only in the realms of pure logic and mathematics, where, by definition, one encounters no matters of fact at all).”<sup>13</sup> Probabilistic arguments for the truth of Christianity, then, “cannot be summarily dismissed just because a vital religious question is at issue.”<sup>14</sup>

On another level, though, evidentialism affirms that a kind of certainty is possible. Evidentialists do not claim that the most or best we can ever say is that God “probably exists” or that Jesus “most likely” rose from the dead. For them, apologetic arguments are designed to *show* that their conclusions are *at least* probably true. That they are certainly true can also be known, according to evidentialists, but not by argument. Such certainty is a characteristic of faith and is made possible by the work of the Holy Spirit. There is no contradiction in claiming that something is probably true (on the basis of a particular argument) and also certainly true (on some other basis). After all, if something is certainly true, then it is also probably true—with the probability of 1, or 100 percent.

## CONTENT-NEUTRAL METHODS

The third point on which all evidential apologists agree is that *evidentialism seeks to employ methods that are in principle acceptable to non-Christians* as a means of convincing them of the truth of Christianity. These methods are modeled on those used by both Christians and non-Christians in various disciplines. The evidentialist goal is to avoid gratuitous or disputable assumptions about the nature of things. Montgomery, for example, prefers the empirical method because the truth-*discovering* presuppositions of empiricism assume as little as possible while providing optimal conditions for objective discovery. He rejects apologetic approaches that begin with dogmatic, truth-*asserting* presuppositions, whether of a philosophical

theism (as in classical apologetics) or of the biblical Christian theism (as in Reformed apologetics).

Properly, we should start not with substantive, “content” presuppositions about the world (e.g., the axiom of revelation), which gratuitously prejudge the nature of what is, but with heuristic, methodological presuppositions that permit us to discover what the world is like—and (equally important) what it is not like. Such are the *a priori*s of empirical method, which are not only heuristic but *unavoidably necessary* in all of our endeavors to distinguish synthetic truth from falsity.<sup>15</sup>

In other words, Montgomery begins with presuppositions of *method* rather than of substantive *content*, which already assume a body of truth.

Evidentialists believe it crucial to employ methods modeled on those of disciplines other than Christian theology or apologetics, so that non-Christians can understand and appreciate the validity of the arguments. As Montgomery puts it, “Objective empirical evidence for Jesus Christ and his message is the only truly valid Christian apologetic possible, for it alone is subject to the canons of evidence employed in other fields of endeavor.”<sup>16</sup>

Montgomery himself uses both historical methods and legal or juridical methods. These methods are closely related, because in fact legal evidences are a form of historical inquiry, pursuing an accurate understanding of past events related to cases brought before a court. In the previous chapter we surveyed a recent articulation by Montgomery of a juridical model of evidentialist apologetics. We also noted that such apologists as Thomas Sherlock and Simon Greenleaf developed evidentialism with a heavy reliance on the legal evidence model. Francis Beckwith, a former student of Montgomery, also prefers the legal evidence approach, especially in its defense of belief in miracles. Beckwith notes that miracle claims rely heavily on

eyewitness testimony, and the legal model is particularly useful in evaluating such testimony.<sup>17</sup> Lawyers and professors of law, most recently Berkeley law professor Phillip Johnson, have also used legal reasoning to evaluate the arguments for evolution.<sup>18</sup>

Another model of evidentialist apologetics makes use of the scientific method. Dan Story, a former student of Montgomery, speaks for many evidentialists when he expresses a preference for the scientific method, precisely because it makes the truth of the Christian position verifiable for all people. “Truth, if it is to be acknowledged and accepted by all people as universal truth, must stand up to critical scrutiny; it must be able to be tested.” Such criteria as authority, common sense, rationalism, and pragmatism cannot be used to discover the truth, but only to confirm what we have already learned to be the truth. “We are left with only one remaining truth-test. It is the only valid and reliable way to determine truth: the scientific method. . . . The [naturalistic] scientific worldview is subject to many distortions that evolve out of its erroneous presuppositions. But I am suggesting that the *scientific method* for discovering truth is the most reliable method because *it alone can be tested*.”<sup>19</sup>

While Montgomery typically does not present apologetics as employing the scientific method per se, he does argue that an evidentialist apologetic is based on the same methodological assumptions as the scientific method. “In our modern world we have found that the presuppositions of empirical method best fulfil this condition; but note that we are operating only with the presuppositions of scientific method, not with the rationalistic assumptions of Scientism (‘the Religion of Science’).”<sup>20</sup>

These empirical presuppositions are threefold: (1) epistemologically, knowledge is possible; (2) metaphysically, the universe is regular; and (3) ethically, the results of empirical investigation will be reported honestly.<sup>21</sup> The evidentialist uses these presuppositions as

methodological assumptions that justify the empirical investigation of the universe rather than (as in classical apologetics) as axioms or premises from which the theistic worldview is deduced.

## THE POSTMODERN CHALLENGE TO EVIDENTIALISM

Evangelical evidentialist apologetics seeks to present evidence for the truth of Christianity using methods of inquiry that are in principle acceptable to non-Christians. This methodological approach has come under frontal assault from postmodernism. In essence, postmodernism is a philosophical movement that is rooted in modernism but proclaims the bankruptcy of certain aspects of modern thought. In particular, it denies the modernist belief that there is an objective truth about the world that can be discovered using reason. According to postmodernists, truth is subjective, not objective. Our knowledge of reality is a construction that we build up as we look at the world through our eyes and through the assumptions and experiences of our communities. This is true whether we are reading the Bible, watching the news, hearing testimony and arguments in a criminal court case, studying history, or doing science.

The old rationalist, modernist ideal was of a single, objective method of gaining more and more complete and accurate knowledge of the real world in the disciplines of history, law, science, and theology. Postmodernists argue that this ideal is to be replaced by a methodological pluralism in which there is no one right way to look at the world. And therein lies the problem for evidentialism: if there is no universally recognized way of determining the truth, the evidentialist project of presenting evidences using the accepted methods of established disciplines cannot get off the ground because such accepted methods no longer exist. Objective

methods of discovering truth cannot be used with people who believe that “truth isn’t discovered, but manufactured.”<sup>22</sup>

In general, evidentialists make common cause with classical apologists in rejecting outright the relativism and subjectivism of postmodernism, but both acknowledge that the rationalistic ideal of modernism deserves criticism as well. People cannot find out the truth about God or any other ultimate issue in life through human reasoning or investigation. The postmodernist is thus left with no way at all to attain ultimate truth. For the Christian, on the other hand, the failure of modernism leaves us with revelation as the only viable way to know the truth about God and his world.

Moreover, evidentialists, like classical apologists, stress the indispensability of reason as a means by which we are able to *recognize* God’s revelation. While these apologists would deny that we can discover the truth about God on our own, they do contend that we can “discover” the truth of God’s revelation by applying the methods of such established disciplines as law, history, and science to the facts of Christianity. In order to make this case classical apologists directly confront what they regard as the self-defeating, irrational character of postmodernism. That is, they argue that postmodernism is forced to make absolutist statements denying absolute truth.

Evidentialists endorse the criticism that postmodernism is self-defeating, but their chief objection to it is that in everyday matters people do not accept a pluralistic, relativistic view of truth. Virtually all people are outraged when neo-Nazi groups claim that the Holocaust never happened. So much for the postmodern claim that history is whatever people construct it to be! When the *Challenger* exploded, no one would have been satisfied had NASA issued a statement claiming that the cause of the accident was different for different people; everyone demanded to know exactly what happened, and why. In short, evidentialists argue that while postmodernism

may seem formidable in theory, in practice it may to a great extent be ignored when presenting the evidence for the truth of the gospel. Dan Story, for example, concludes:

The majority of people on the street still view the world through modernist eyes. Even people who openly endorse postmodernism and argue for relativism do not live consistently with this philosophy—especially when it conflicts with *their* self-interests.

Although religious pluralism and moral relativism are quickly becoming ingrained in modern culture, the majority of people still think in terms of absolutes and accept the reality of logic and reason. These people need their intellectual obstacles to faith removed.<sup>23</sup>

## **The Defense of Theology**

For evidentialists, apologetics is a discipline that seeks to present the factual evidence or basis for the Christian faith in its every aspect. They join all apologists in seeing the nature of apologetics as dictated by the nature of the Christian faith, but they argue that this means that Christianity requires an evidential apologetic. They offer two reasons, broadly speaking, for this assertion.

First, they contend that since the Bible itself is an historical object, its content can only be properly evaluated when objective history is taken seriously. Montgomery quotes with approval George I. Mavrodes's statement, "Whenever the Bible forms a link in an epistemological chain, then sensory contact with the Bible must form the very next link."<sup>24</sup> The inductive method is the "only entrée to verifiable knowledge of the external world,"<sup>25</sup> and the Bible is part of that world. Moreover, the essential and distinctive truth claims of the Bible are

historical claims, assertions that certain events took place in the past. This simple fact forces inductive argument upon us.

Second, evidentialists contend that *apologetic arguments in Scripture are evidential*. Montgomery lists four types of these arguments: miracle (especially the Resurrection), fulfilled prophecy, inner experience or subjective immediacy, and natural theology (of an empirical kind).<sup>26</sup> In particular he points to the evidential use of the Resurrection in the Christian apologetic of the first-century church. The apostles argued for the truth of the Resurrection by appealing to known facts and eyewitness testimonies, and by correlating this empirical evidence with the Old Testament prophecies fulfilled by Christ's death and resurrection (for example, Acts 2:22-36; 26:26). On the basis of the apostolic testimony, those of us who did not personally witness the Resurrection ought nevertheless to believe it (John 20:24-29). In order to commend the apostolic testimony to people today, we must be prepared to give them credible reasons to accept that testimony.

Admittedly, an evidentialist apologetic cannot provide absolute proof or compel faith, but this, evidentialists argue, is as it should be. "Absolute proof of the truth of Christ's claims is available only in personal relationship with Him; but contemporary man has every right to expect us to offer solid reasons for making such a total commitment."<sup>27</sup> The apologetic task is not to construct a rational substitute for faith but to provide a factual ground for faith. Thus, although the facts cannot *compel* faith, they can leave people without a legitimate excuse for not coming to faith. Evidentialists recognize, as do all other apologists, that human beings in their sinfulness can reject the truth to which the facts point. But Montgomery warns, "If you reject Him it will not be because of a deficiency of evidence but because of a perversity of will."<sup>28</sup>

Evidentialist John A. Bloom expands on this idea that evidence does not compel faith by considering a number of perspectives on the question, “Why isn’t the evidence clearer?”<sup>29</sup> Bloom argues that “the God of the Bible is not seeking to make His presence compellingly obvious” because then human beings would not express their moral and spiritual attitudes freely. Furthermore, “because men may distort data to their seeming advantage, they will tend to obscure any evidence which hints that there is an authority or power greater than themselves, especially one which they cannot control and to which they should be subject.”<sup>30</sup>

Evidentialist apologetics seeks to correlate and interpret empirical facts to show that the Christian faith is true. In turn, evidentialists understand the task of theology to be that of building on the conclusion of the truth of Christianity by correlating and interpreting the facts of Scripture. Such theology itself has an apologetic function insofar as the theologian must critique theological systems that undermine the Christian truth claims by reinterpreting in corrupt forms the Christian message. Here the facts to which the evidentialist theologian appeals are the propositional statements of the Bible. This does not, from the evidentialist’s perspective, represent a shift in method. The apologist appeals to facts *about* and *from* the Bible to show that Christianity is *true*; the theologian appeals to facts *of* the Bible to show what Christianity *means*.

In a paper entitled “The Theologian’s Craft: A Discussion of Theory Formation and Theory Testing in Theology,”<sup>31</sup> Montgomery compares scientific and theological methodologies using Karl Popper’s work on model formation. The theologian, in this view, engages in forming and testing theories concerning the divine, and the source of revelational data for this kind of model formation is Scripture. These theological models must be repeatedly tested against the data of Scripture as interpreted through the application of a sound hermeneutic.

On the basis of this theological method, Montgomery critiques various non-Christian and sub-Christian teachings that deviate from historical Christianity. In the opening essay of *The Suicide of Christian Theology*, he traces the shift in Christian theology since the eighteenth century away from a revelatory base to current subjective uncertainty. After examining the influences of deism, naturalism, and humanism on early twentieth-century Protestant and Catholic modernism, he discusses Barth's attempt to restore Christian doctrine through a dialectic of yes and no and the subsequent developments in the theologies of Bultmann, Tillich, and the "death of God" movement. Montgomery then argues that "the only hope for a resurrected theology lies in a recovery of confidence in the historical Christ and in the Scriptures He stamped with approval as God's Word."<sup>32</sup> The "keystone" of this resurrected theology is "an unqualified acceptance of the resurrected Christ," whose reality is validated by the historical facts.<sup>33</sup>

The evidentialist insistence that theological models, as well as apologetic arguments, must be testable is not a mere abstraction. Evidentialists have demonstrated their willingness to reassess traditional theological models. Perhaps most notably, several leading evidentialists have argued that certain features of the classical view of God's nature as formulated by such theologians as Augustine and Thomas Aquinas need to be rethought or even abandoned. For example, Richard Swinburne contends that God exists everlastingly in time rather than in a timeless eternity.<sup>34</sup> He also holds that God is "omniscient" in the sense that He knows everything that it is logically possible to know—and that this qualification excludes future actions of free creatures, including human beings.<sup>35</sup> Clark Pinnock holds to essentially the same views.<sup>36</sup> William Lane Craig, whose apologetic approach is essentially classical but with strong evidentialist leanings, adopts a compromise or middle-ground position between classical theism

and the neoclassical theism of Swinburne and Pinnock. In his view, God was outside time before He created the world, but since the beginning of the universe (which was the beginning of time itself) God has existed in time. Furthermore, Craig argues that God can and does know all future acts of free creatures because God knows what each person would do in every possible world.<sup>37</sup>

There are few evidentialists in the Reformed or Calvinistic theological tradition (which does include many classical apologists as well as adherents of a Reformed apologetic). Most evidentialists are Arminian (a variety of evangelicalism that is non-predestinarian); this was true of Joseph Butler and is true of Pinnock and Craig. James Orr, a notable evidentialist from a century ago, was Reformed, and significantly his apologetic method in certain respects resembles the Reformed apologetic tradition. John Warwick Montgomery is neither Arminian nor Calvinist; he is, rather, a conservative Lutheran. Without minimizing the differences, this puts Montgomery somewhat closer to the Reformed tradition than most other contemporary evidentialists.

## **Critical Use of Philosophy**

Evidentialists generally disapprove of the kind of philosophical apologetics that seeks to construct a deductive system of proof for Christianity. This does not mean, however, that evidentialism is hostile to all philosophy. Indeed, in recent years some of the most influential evidentialists have been philosophers, notably Swinburne, profiled in chapter 8. Other philosophers who advocate an evidentialist apologetic include Francis Beckwith (a former student of Montgomery)<sup>38</sup> and Douglas Geivett.<sup>39</sup> In addition, J. P. Moreland and William Lane

Craig, two of the most influential contemporary evangelical apologists, are philosophers whose apologetic approach has affinities with both classical and evidentialist apologetics.

The difference between classical apologists and evidentialists may be identified from one perspective as the difference between two broad conceptions of the task of philosophy.<sup>40</sup> The **speculative** or **constructive** view of philosophy understands that task to be to construct a comprehensive view of knowledge, reality, and values. In this conception philosophy is a discipline of thought in its own right and yields knowledge not found in other disciplines. This view dominated Western philosophy for most of its history; it is the view of philosophy presupposed by the work of both Plato and Aristotle, and many if not most of the other great philosophers of the past. It fits naturally with the classical approach to apologetics, which has maintained a close relationship between apologetics and what is now known as philosophy of religion. Thomas Aquinas is the paradigm case of a Christian philosopher-apologist whose work utilized philosophy as a means to develop a comprehensive world-and-life view.

In the twentieth century a number of philosophers questioned this historic understanding of the task of philosophy. In its place they have contended for the analytical or critical conception of philosophy, according to which the task of philosophy is to clarify the meaning of knowledge claims and to assess the rationality of those claims. In this conception philosophy is, strictly speaking, a “second-order” discipline that does not yield knowledge of its own but simply examines and clarifies the knowledge claims of other, “first-order” disciplines. For most philosophers who advocate this view, the primary (if not the only) first-order disciplines are the sciences, including both the natural sciences (physics, chemistry, biology, etc.) and the human sciences (psychology, sociology, history, etc.).

Evidentialists generally reject the constructive view and embrace the analytical or critical view, for in their apologetic the sciences provide the evidence for the truth claims of Christianity. The role of philosophy for evidentialists can be viewed both negatively and positively. Negatively, they view philosophy as useful for critiquing anti-Christian presuppositions and philosophies that prejudice people against the factual case for Christianity. Positively, some evidentialists also use philosophy to assess the evidential support for the Christian position of the knowledge produced by the sciences.

Montgomery himself provides a clear example of the negative use. He believes that contemporary analytical philosophy's verification principle (that to be meaningful, a claim must be verifiable) makes an "inestimable contribution to epistemology." The implementation of this principle means that "vast numbers of apparently sensible truth-claims can be readily identified as unverifiable, and time and energy can thereby be saved for intellectual pursuits capable of yielding testable conclusions."<sup>41</sup> Rational arguments for the truth of a religion, including many of the traditional arguments of the classical apologetical kind, are inadequate because they fall short of true verification. He contends that instead apologetics must focus on verifiable truth claims. "Objective empirical evidence for Jesus Christ and his message is the only truly valid Christian apologetic possible, for it alone is subject to the canons of evidence employed in other fields of endeavor."<sup>42</sup>

Since the evidence for Christianity must come from first-order disciplines such as history and science, the main role of philosophy for the evidentialist is to expose and critique what Montgomery calls "bad philosophy." Evidentialists critique non-Christian worldviews and philosophies, not primarily by demonstrating logical incoherence (as in classical apologetic critiques), but by showing that these systems of thought are resistant to or incompatible with the

facts. Examples of such critiques can be found in *Christianity for the Tough-Minded*, a compendium that includes critiques by evidentialist apologists of a number of nontheistic positions in philosophy, science, ethics, religion, psychology, and literature.<sup>43</sup> These include the rationalistic humanism of Bertrand Russell, the evolutionary humanism of Julian Huxley, the agnosticism of Franz Kafka, and the objectivism of Ayn Rand, as well as existential psychology and fundamental Buddhism. Such critiques are designed to show how the Christian position makes better sense of the relevant scientific, moral, historical, and experiential data than the interpretations derived from alternate worldviews.

Although evidentialists commonly rely on philosophical reasoning to critique anti-Christian philosophies, some have used these same methods to mount the case for Christianity. Specifically, some evidentialist philosophers have employed modern philosophical analyses of inductive argument as tools for displaying the evidence for Christian truth claims.

Richard Swinburne employs a sophisticated formulation of probability theory (that he himself has further developed) in his apologetic for belief in God. He argues for the probability that God exists with the same criteria used in science to assess whether a particular hypothesis or theory is likely to be true, and identifies four such criteria. A good theory *has predictive power*: it leads us to expect certain things to occur which in fact do occur. Second, a good theory is simple – it does not needlessly multiply explanations. Swinburne has given much attention to arguing that simplicity is evidence of truth<sup>44</sup> and to defending the claim that God constitutes a simple explanation for everything.<sup>45</sup> Third, a good theory *fits our background knowledge* – it squares with things we already know. Fourth, a good theory *has explanatory power* – it explains things better than any rival theory. The more these four things are true of a theory, the more probable it is to correspond to reality.<sup>46</sup>

Swinburne argues that the theory that God exists meets these four criteria sufficiently to justify the conclusion that God probably does in fact exist. He seeks to make this case in a very formal way by defining the “probability” of a particular truth claim by way of a mathematically expressed theorem of confirmation theory known as **Bayes’s theorem**. This theorem uses the following definitions as its building blocks:

$P$  = the probability that something is true

$h$  = the hypothesis or theory

$e$  = the evidence (that is, phenomena or observations to be explained)

$k$  = general background knowledge of the world

From these definitions, the following complex terms are derived:

$P(h/k)$  = prior probability of  $h$  (its probability before the evidence is considered)

$P(e/k)$  = prior probability of  $e$  (probability of the evidence itself if we do not assume  $h$ )

$P(e/h.k)$  = probability of  $e$  if  $h$  is true, given  $k$  (the predictive power of  $h$ )

$P(h/e.k)$  = probability of  $h$  in view of both  $e$  and  $k$  (the probability of  $h$ )

For a comprehensive explanation such as the claim that God exists,  $P(h/k)$ , or the prior probability of  $h$ , will be in effect the simplicity of the claim. Bayes’s theorem runs as follows:

$$P(h/e.k) = P(e/h.k)/P(e/k) \times P(h/k)$$

Stated in layman’s terms, Bayes’s theorem holds that the more a truth claim can explain, the better it can explain things; and the simpler it can explain things, the more likely that truth claim is to be true. Evidentialists who use Bayes’s theorem do so in order to present an objective, quantifiable measure of the probability that a truth claim is true.

Although most evidentialists use a less formal approach than Swinburne’s, many agree with his use of the concept of explanatory power to give some rigor to the claim that the

Christian position is supported by the evidence. Consider, for example, the apologetic developed by Douglas Geivett, who favors a cumulative-case approach that “proceeds from the general to the particular” (93).<sup>47</sup> This should not be confused with *reasoning* from the general to the particular, which is deductive reasoning. Geivett is speaking of reasoning inductively, beginning “with very general considerations that require explanation” and proceeding to “more particular features of this world.” As the considerations become more specific and particular, the explanations or conclusions become correspondingly more specific and thus more complete (93-94). As a result, “the theistic conclusion comes to enjoy greater support as more and more features of reality are found to be best explained theistically. In this respect it is similar to the approaches of Mitchell and Swinburne” (95).

Geivett’s argument is not only a cumulative-case argument, it is an “inference to the best explanation.” As such it is based on premises that are in turn dependent “upon the inductive strength of various inferences.” Moreover, “this argument gets its force from considerations of the comparative explanatory power of alternate hypotheses” (95). Here Geivett’s position appears especially close to that of Swinburne.

The use of probability theory has enabled evidentialists to overcome certain arguments against the Christian faith that purport to show that Christian truth claims are inherently improbable. Francis Beckwith, for example, has urged that one must not use the concept of probability in such a way as to disallow any amount of evidence to establish the reality of a particular event. Even if an event is in and of itself less probable than other kinds of events, if there is sufficient evidence for the event in question it should be believed. Beckwith gives several examples. Reliable sources reported that on one occasion fifteen people all happened for different reasons to show up late to a church choir rehearsal, thus narrowly avoiding being in the

church when it was accidentally destroyed in an explosion. A royal flush is an extremely rare poker hand, but if several competent witnesses see a player get such a hand it should be believed. A woman might commit only one murder in her life, but her defense attorney cannot contend that her *not* committing murder is so commonplace in her life that her committing murder must be regarded as a priori unlikely. Beckwith therefore urges that probability not be applied to unusual specific events, such as miracles, in a way that overrides the actual evidence for those events.<sup>48</sup>

In Swinburne's terms, Beckwith's point amounts to saying that the prior probability of *h* is only one of several factors in determining the actual probability of *h*; one must also factor in the explanatory and predictive power of *h* and its simplicity as an explanation of the evidence. Thus, even though a miracle is a highly improbable type of event, if accepting the report of a miracle will explain it a great deal better and more simply than any other explanation, one has rational grounds for concluding that the miracle probably did occur.

## **Christianity Vindicated by Science**

Up until the eighteenth century, apologetics was modeled on philosophy, which was generally deductive in form. "Philosophy" until that time was a much broader term than it is now, and included the study of the natural world (what was called "natural philosophy"). In turn, the word "science" was understood in its common Latin sense as *scientia*, knowledge. As disciplines of study became more specialized, the sciences emerged as distinct branches of knowledge increasingly differentiated from philosophy by their inductive, empirical method. It

was natural, then, for apologists to begin modeling their apologetic after the increasingly successful disciplines of empirical science.

The technological revolutions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have made the coherence of the Christian worldview with modern science one of the most significant issues in Christian apologetics. A widespread disdain for and distrust of abstract reasoning in general and deductive philosophical argument in particular have brought the classical theistic arguments into disrepute. In place of these, Christian apologists have increasingly relied on empirical, scientific arguments for the existence of God and in defense of the biblical worldview. Such natural theologians as Joseph Butler and William Paley set the pattern for such arguments. For evidentialists, the traditional theistic arguments, if they are used at all, must be recast in empirical form and be used to build up a case for theism from the facts of nature or human experience. For example, in his *Systematic Theology* J. Oliver Buswell, Jr., drew on the “inductive probability reasonings” in Aquinas’s theistic arguments to develop a modern defense of theism.<sup>49</sup> Richard Swinburne has reformulated as inductive, probabilistic arguments the cosmological and teleological arguments, as well as the arguments for God from mind and morality—all of which, except for the teleological, were classically formulated as deductive arguments.<sup>50</sup>

Although Montgomery’s apologetic thrust is primarily historical, he also offers his own version of some of the theistic proofs. The fundamental argument for him is what Frederick C. Copleston called the argument from contingency. In essence, this states that existence cannot be accounted for without a meaningless infinite regress unless there is a being that contains within itself the reason for its existence, that is, a self-existent being. Montgomery, however, prefers a more concrete, empirical version of this argument. He uses the second law of thermodynamics to

illustrate the contingency argument, maintaining that the entire universe can be viewed as a closed system that, left to itself, would go to a state of maximum entropy (disorder).<sup>51</sup> Without divine intervention, this irreversible process will lead to the heat death of the universe at a finite time in the future. Thus, if the universe were uncreated and eternal, it would already have reached maximum entropy. Montgomery adds that “this *a posteriori* argument from contingency is empirically grounded in testable experience; it is neither a disguised form of the highly questionable ontological argument, which asserts *a priori* that God’s essence establishes his existence, nor an attempt at allegedly ‘synthetic *a priori*’ reasoning.”<sup>52</sup>

Other Christian apologists, including an increasing number trained in the sciences, agree with Montgomery’s approach of developing an inductive, evidential apologetic that appeals to scientific fact. Several of the essays in the Cornell Symposium volume *Evidence for Faith* represent this trend. Robert C. Newman, for example, in an article entitled “The Evidence of Cosmology,” argues that the astronomical evidence is such that “the universe is most naturally understood as created.” The theory that the universe is eternal (and therefore uncreated) is “controlled by other considerations than scientific data,” and for that reason is less probable. It should be noted that the same weakness applies, in Newman’s opinion, to the young-earth model of creationism that views the universe as only a few thousand years old. Both the eternal-universe model and the young-universe model begin with their presupposed doctrine and then “interpret the data to fit.”<sup>53</sup>

A similar position is taken by the old-earth creationist Hugh Ross, an astronomer turned evidentialist apologist. As head of Reasons to Believe,<sup>54</sup> a parachurch ministry focusing on scientific apologetics, Ross has written a number of books advocating a scientifically oriented evidentialism.<sup>55</sup> In his apologetic the cosmological and teleological arguments are expressed in

thoroughly scientific, rather than philosophical, terms. Ross argues that an apologetic that is not based firmly on the scientific as well as the biblical facts will not be effective in reaching educated non-Christians. He contends specifically that the young-earth form of creationism is so scientifically disreputable that its affirmation by many Christians discourages “a large segment of society from taking seriously the call to faith in Christ.”<sup>56</sup> Given that “no contradiction can exist between the words of the Bible and the facts of nature,” Ross concludes that any apparent conflicts between the two are due to misinterpretation of the Bible or the facts of nature, and that further research will resolve such apparent conflicts.<sup>57</sup>

In general, evidentialists tend to hold firmly to a realist view of science as a discipline that yields actual knowledge of the world corresponding to the way things really are. Unlike classical apologists, they tend to base arguments on scientific theories with great confidence. While they agree that science changes, they see its changes as primarily advances in knowledge. Thus evidentialists are rarely young-earth creationists; most hold to some form of old-earth creationism. They appeal primarily to the facts of nature to refute evolutionism on the scientists’ own terms, rather than questioning the reliability of the scientific enterprise.

## **History as the Medium of Revelation**

It is in the area of history where most evidentialists seek primarily to ground their apologetic.<sup>58</sup> Swinburne is only a partial exception to this generalization. While he gives scant attention in most of his books to the historical evidence for Christianity, this is because he regards himself as a philosopher and not an historian. However, he does hold that a positive assessment of the historicity of the biblical miracles would increase the probability of theism. He

also argues “that the testimony of many witnesses to experiences apparently of God makes the existence of God probable if it is not already on other evidence very improbable.”<sup>59</sup> But this is essentially an historical argument.

The most basic reason evidentialists ground their apologetic in history is because the revelation of God they are seeking to defend is essentially historical. History is the medium of revelation; our knowledge of God comes from his acts in history. Since the Christian faith stands or falls on its claim that God has acted in history, apologists must make their defense at that point. For evidentialists this historical, testable character sets Christianity apart from other religions and is its greatest strength, as Montgomery explains:

The historic Christian claim differs qualitatively from the claims of all other world religions at the epistemological point: on the issue of testability. Eastern faiths and Islam, to take familiar examples, ask the uncommitted seeker to discover their truth experientially: the faith-experience will be self-validating. . . . Christianity, on the other hand, declares that the truth of its absolute claims rests squarely on certain historical facts, open to ordinary investigation.<sup>60</sup>

The evidentialist appeal to historical facts should not be construed as naively expecting non-Christians to recognize the significance of the facts without resistance. Evidentialists emphasize that there is a subjective dimension to the interpretation of history. Specifically, they point out that persons holding implicitly or explicitly to philosophies of history that are inimical to the Christian worldview will not be open to the historical facts that verify that Christian worldview. They find it necessary, then, to subject such philosophies of history to critique, and to explicate a Christian philosophy of history. Swinburne’s defense of theism fits here: his

argument for the existence of God is concerned with showing not merely that there is a God but that this God providentially orders the world and history.<sup>61</sup>

On the other hand, evidentialists maintain that historical interpretation has an objective dimension as well, one presented by the facts that stubbornly refuse to fit into anti-Christian belief systems. The historical facts about Jesus Christ constitute the primary challenge to non-Christian philosophies of history, and these facts carry within themselves their own interpretation that the historian discovers, not imposes.

Evidentialists do recognize, then, that the religious beliefs and values of historians have a profound influence on their interpretation of historical events. In some cases what passes for “unbiased” history is “often no more than a mask covering presuppositions of a most gratuitous sort.”<sup>62</sup> The solution to this problem, according to Montgomery, is not to abandon one’s presuppositions, but to think about and be frank about them. History should be written from a definite point of view because “the most dangerous historians have not been those with definite convictions, but those who have been unaware of their convictions.”<sup>63</sup>

Montgomery rejects the claim of historical relativists that the historian’s own subjectivity defeats any attempt to obtain a genuinely objective view of the past.<sup>64</sup> He also rejects the claim of some neo-orthodox theologians, such as Rudolf Bultmann, that historical events have no meaning apart from the present spiritual experience of encounter with the Christ of faith. Montgomery argues that “if historical judgments cannot be anchored in the bedrock of objective reality, then the events which are the focus of those judgments become secondary and for all practical purposes useless.”<sup>65</sup> In short, if Christ has not been raised in historical fact, our faith in Christ as the risen Savior is in vain (1 Corinthians 15:12-19).

Montgomery also defends an objective, evidential approach to biblical history against the criticisms of other apologists who reject the notion of historical events as self-interpretive. For example, he takes issue with Ronald H. Nash's claim that "there is no necessary connection between any alleged fact and its interpretation."<sup>66</sup> In contrast he asserts, "The conviction that historical facts do carry their interpretations (i.e., that the facts in themselves provide adequate criteria for choosing among variant interpretations of them) is essential both to Christian and to general historiography."<sup>67</sup> Elsewhere he writes that "a Christian philosophy of history has to begin with the assumption that there are objective events which do indeed carry their interpretation with them. This is true not only of the events of biblical history but of the events of history in general."<sup>68</sup> If historical facts were not objectively true or knowledge of them was not possible, the apostles could not have proclaimed Christ's resurrection as a truth to be accepted by all people. After all, people whose worldview was inhospitable to such facts could simply dismiss the Christian historical claims as nonsense. The very fact that people's worldviews can and do change when they take seriously the factual claims of the gospel proves that there is an objective dimension to historical knowledge.

According to Montgomery, a Christian philosophy of history is needed if history is to be interpreted properly as to its ultimate significance. However, this Christian philosophy of history is not to be used as the basis on which the historical events of the New Testament are defended. Such an approach would be viciously circular. Rather, these principles of historiography are based on the verifiable reality of Jesus' death and resurrection and provide a guide for interpreting the rest of human history. In addition, the apologist must employ a Christian philosophy of history as a benchmark against which non-Christian presuppositions about history that distort or reject the gospel events can be exposed. That is, the evidentialist does not ask the

non-Christian to accept these historiographical principles, but he does ask the non-Christian not to assume dogmatically principles that are at odds with a Christian view of history (for example, an antisupernatural assumption). Instead, he asks the non-Christian to examine the historical evidence fairly and be open to the philosophical implications of that evidence. As the non-Christian does this, he will find that God has revealed himself in and through history, particularly in the unique events of Christ's incarnate life, death, and resurrection.

## **Experience Founded on Evidence**

Evidentialism recognizes the importance of experience in the Christian life. Christian faith is not merely an intellectual acceptance of facts about Christ, but is a personal experience of a relationship with Christ. But evidentialists generally hold that the Christian's experience is not self-validating. Robert Sabath, in a paper entitled "LSD and Religious Truth," makes the point with startling forcefulness:

It cannot be emphasized too strongly that every psychological by-product of Christianity can be reproduced by LSD and by almost every other religion, including a sense of meaning in life, integration of personality, increased sensitivity to others, greater self-acceptance, psychological relief from anxiety and guilt feelings, tranquility and inner harmony. . . . The mere fact that a psychological event has taken place in one's brain cannot establish the truth of any metaphysical assertion. The assertion "God exists" does not follow from the assertion "I had an experience of God" simply because experiences admit to radically different interpretations.<sup>69</sup>

The subjective experience of faith is for evidentialists a response to the objective revelation of God in his historical acts of redemption through Jesus Christ. Sabath continues:

If God exists—the kind of personal creator God most Christians and theists talk about—he must exist independent of my subjective experience of him; his existence must therefore be validated by a criterion other than my own private experience. The uniqueness of Christianity is that there is such a criterion in the personal invasion of God himself into the public world of our objective experience. Christian existential experience is rooted in objective, external works of God himself, fleshing out his life in space and time in the person of Jesus Christ and showing himself to be God by his resurrection from the dead.<sup>70</sup>

Whereas apologists of other traditions tend to be critical of the apostle Thomas's demand to see and touch the resurrected body of Jesus before he would believe, evidentialists are often more sympathetic. They suggest that Christ's appearance to Thomas shows that God is quite willing to provide empirical evidence for the truth of the gospel, as Clark Eugene Barshinger's statement in *Christianity for the Tough-minded* illustrates:

Christian believers have never been able to separate their religious experience from the positive assertions of Scripture regarding the nature and authority of Jesus Christ.

Doubting Thomas is the prime example. He refused belief until he saw the evidence of the resurrection. When this evidence was provided, the religious experience became existential truth and he responded, "My Lord and my God." The existential Christian experience rests in the revealed truth of God embodied in the resurrected Christ and the authoritative Scripture.<sup>71</sup>

The purpose for which apologists present non-Christians with evidence, according to evidentialists, is to bring them to the point where they have a credible basis for believing the gospel. But the subjective experience and assurance of its truth come from the Holy Spirit when a person responds to the evidence and comes to faith. According to Montgomery, the evidence brings nonbelievers to a point of decision in which they have good grounds for “trying” Christianity; it does not “force” anyone to believe.

The argument is intended, rather, to give solid objective ground for testing the Christian faith experientially. How is the test made? By confronting, with no more than “suspension of disbelief,” the Christ of the Scriptures; for “faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God” and (said Christ) “whoever has the will to do the will of God shall know whether my teaching comes from God or is merely my own” [Romans 10:17; John 7:17]. The Scriptural Gospel is ultimately self-attesting, but the honest inquirer needs objective grounds for trying it, since there are a welter of conflicting religious opinions and one can become psychologically jaded through indiscriminate trials of religious belief. Only the Christian world-view offers objective ground for testing it experientially; therefore Christ deserves to be given first opportunity to make His claims known to the human heart.<sup>72</sup>

## **For Further Study**

Montgomery, John Warwick. *The Shape of the Past: A Christian Response to Secular*

*Philosophies of History*. Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1962. Reprint 1975. Reviews the history of historiography and sets forth a Christian philosophy of history.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Where Is History Going? Essays in Support of the Historical Truth of the Christian Revelation*. Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1969. Follow-up volume to *Shape of the Past*, presenting an historical defense of the Christian claims about Jesus Christ and critiquing the philosophies of history of Barth, Tillich, and others.

\_\_\_\_\_, ed. *Evidence for Faith: Deciding the God Question*. Cornell Symposium on Evidential Apologetics 1986. Dallas: Probe Books, 1991; distributed by Word Publishing. A collection of evidentialist essays: Part One defends an evidentialist approach to apologetics; Parts Two and Three discuss scientific evidences from cosmology and biology; Part Five contains John E. Hare's article "The Argument from Experience" (253-73).

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Christian Evidences* (Chicago: Moody, 1953), 16-32.

<sup>2</sup>William Kingdon Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief," in *An Anthology of Atheism and Rationalism*, ed. Gordon Stein (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1980), 282. The article was first published in 1877 and soon thereafter in Clifford's *Lectures and Essays*, ed. Leslie Stephen and Frederick Pollock (London: Macmillan, 1879). It has been reprinted several times, for example, in *The Theory of Knowledge: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, ed. Louis P. Pojman (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1993).

<sup>3</sup>Dan Story, *Christianity on the Offense: Responding to the Beliefs and Assumptions of Spiritual Seekers* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998), 69.

<sup>4</sup>Montgomery, “The Theologian’s Craft: A Discussion of Theory Formation and Theory Testing in Theology,” in *Suicide of Christian Theology*, 274.

<sup>5</sup>Montgomery, *Faith Founded on Fact*, xxii-xxiii.

<sup>6</sup>Montgomery, “The Jury Returns: A Juridical Defense of Christianity,” in *Evidence for Faith*, 335; see our review of this essay in the preceding chapter.

<sup>7</sup>Montgomery, “The Death of the ‘Death of God,’” in *Suicide of Christian Theology*, 125.

<sup>8</sup>Montgomery, *Faith Founded on Fact*, 233.

<sup>9</sup>Montgomery, “Death of the ‘Death of God,’” in *Suicide of Christian Theology*, 122.

<sup>10</sup>Montgomery, “Clark’s Philosophy of History,” in *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark*, ed. Ronald H. Nash (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1968), 387.

<sup>11</sup>Montgomery, *Where Is History Going*, 137.

<sup>12</sup>Montgomery, *Shape of the Past*, 139.

<sup>13</sup>Montgomery, *History and Christianity*, 79.

<sup>14</sup>Montgomery, *Faith Founded on Fact*, 59.

<sup>15</sup>Montgomery, “Clark’s Philosophy of History,” in *Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark*, edited by Nash, 388.

<sup>16</sup>Montgomery, “How Muslims Do Apologetics,” in *Faith Founded on Fact*, 98.

<sup>17</sup>Francis Beckwith, *David Hume’s Argument against Miracles: A Critical Analysis* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1989), 122-23.

<sup>18</sup>See Norman Macbeth, *Darwin Retried: An Appeal to Reason* (Boston: Gambit, 1971); Phillip E. Johnson, *Darwin on Trial* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1991).

<sup>19</sup>Story, *Christianity on the Offense*, 66, emphasis in original.

<sup>20</sup>Montgomery, *Shape of the Past*, 141.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 266.

<sup>22</sup>Jim Leffel, “Our New Challenge: Postmodernism,” in *The Death of Truth*, ed. Dennis McCallum (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1996), 31, quoted in Story, *Christianity on the Offense*, 160.

<sup>23</sup>Story, *Christianity on the Offense*, 170.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 385. Mavrodes, it should be noted, is not an evidentialist.

<sup>25</sup>Batts, “Summary and Critique of the Historical Apologetic of John Warwick Montgomery,” 46.

<sup>26</sup>Montgomery, “Existence of God,” in *Sensible Christianity* (Santa Ana, Calif.: One Way Library, 1976), cassette tapes, vol. 2, tape 1.

<sup>27</sup>Montgomery, *Faith Founded on Fact*, 40.

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

<sup>29</sup>John A. Bloom, “Why Isn’t the Evidence Clearer?” in *Evidence for Faith*, 305-317.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 313.

<sup>31</sup>Montgomery, “The Theologian’s Craft,” in *Suicide of Christian Theology*, 267-313.

<sup>32</sup>Montgomery, “The Suicide of Christian Theology and a Modest Proposal for Its Resurrection,” in *Suicide of Christian Theology*, 37.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>34</sup>Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism*, 220-24; “God and Time,” in *Reasoned Faith*, ed. Eleanore Stump (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993), 204-222.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>36</sup>Clark H. Pinnock, “The Need for a Scriptural, and Therefore a Neo-Classical Theism,” in *Perspectives on Evangelical Theology*, Papers from the Thirtieth Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, edited by Kenneth S. Kantzer and Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 37-42; “God Limits His Knowledge,” in *Predestination and Free Will: Four Views*, ed. David Basinger and Randall Basinger (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1986), 141-62; “Between Classical and Process Theism,” in *Process Theology*, ed. Ronald H. Nash (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 313-27.

<sup>37</sup>See chapter 4, note 36.

<sup>38</sup>Beckwith has written extensively in defense of Christian ethics as well as on other issues of apologetic significance. His earliest apologetic book, *Baha’i* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1985), closely follows Montgomery’s form of evidentialism. More recent works reflect a more philosophically developed evidentialism. See *David Hume’s Argument Against Miracles*; and “History and Miracles,” in *In Defense of Miracles: A Comprehensive Case for God’s Action in History*, ed. R. Douglas Geivett and Gary R. Habermas (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1997), 86-98.

<sup>39</sup>See especially R. Douglas Geivett, *Evil and the Evidence for God: The Challenge of John Hick’s Theodicy*, afterword by John Hick (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993); “The Evidential Value of Miracles,” in *In Defense of Miracles*, 178-95.

<sup>40</sup>The distinction presented here is a fairly standard one, and seems to have been first articulated by the philosopher C. D. Broad. See, for example, Stanley M. Honer and Thomas C. Hunt, *Invitation to Philosophy: Issues and Options*, 4th ed. (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1982), 10-14;

William H. Halverson, *A Concise Introduction to Philosophy*, 3rd ed. (New York: Random House, 1976), 10-16; Geisler and Feinberg, *Introduction to Philosophy*, 14-17.

<sup>41</sup>Montgomery, “Clark’s Philosophy of History,” in *Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark*, edited by Nash, 100.

<sup>42</sup>Montgomery, *Faith Founded on Fact*, 98.

<sup>43</sup>John Warwick Montgomery, ed., *Christianity for the Tough-minded: Essays in Support of an Intellectually Defensible Religious Commitment* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1973).

<sup>44</sup>Swinburne defends this assertion in relation to science in *Simplicity as Evidence of Truth*, Aquinas Lectures (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1997).

<sup>45</sup>See especially Swinburne’s reply to Mackie on this point in an appendix to the revised edition of *The Existence of God*, 293-97.

<sup>46</sup>*Is There a God*, 25-26; *Existence of God*, 64-66.

<sup>47</sup>Parenthetical references in this and the next paragraph are taken from Geivett, *Evil and the Evidence for God*.

<sup>48</sup>Beckwith, *David Hume’s Argument against Miracles*, 33-34; “History and Miracles,” in *In Defense of Miracles*, edited by Geivett and Habermas, 92-93.

<sup>49</sup>J. Oliver Buswell, Jr., *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972), 1:72-101.

<sup>50</sup>Swinburne, *Existence of God*, especially chapters 7–9.

<sup>51</sup>Montgomery, *Christianity for the Tough-Minded*, 26-27; *Suicide of Christian Theology*, 256-58.

<sup>52</sup>Montgomery, *Christianity for the Tough-Minded*, 26.

<sup>53</sup>Robert C. Newman, “The Evidence of Cosmology,” in *Evidence for Faith*, 88.

<sup>54</sup>See the web site <http://reasons.org>.

<sup>55</sup>Hugh Ross, *The Fingerprint of God*, 3d ed. (New Kensington, Pa.: Whitaker House, 2000); *The Creator and the Cosmos: How the Latest Scientific Discoveries Reveal God*, 3d expanded ed. (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001); *The Genesis Question: Scientific Advances and the Accuracy of Genesis*, 2d expanded ed. (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001); *A Matter of Days: Resolving a Creation Controversy*, 2d ed. (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2004), first published in 1994 as *Creation and Time*; Fazale Rana and Hugh Ross, *Origins of Life: Biblical and Evolutionary Models Face Off* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2004); Fazale Rana with Hugh Ross, *Who Was Adam: A Creation Model Approach to the Origin of Man* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2005); see also Hugh Ross and Gleason L. Archer, “The Day-Age View,” and their replies to other viewpoints, in *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation*, ed. David G. Hagopian, Foreword by Norman L. Geisler (Mission Viejo, Calif.: Crux Press, 2001).

<sup>56</sup>Hugh Ross, *A Matter of Days*, 16.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>58</sup>See most recently Gary Habermas, “Evidential Apologetics,” in *Five Views on Apologetics*, edited by Cowan, 92-121, which emphasizes historical evidences. The essay by Paul D. Feinberg, “Cumulative Case Apologetics,” 148-72, presents a variant form of evidentialism that includes but de-emphasizes historical evidences.

<sup>59</sup>Swinburne, *Existence of God*, 291.

<sup>60</sup>Montgomery, “The Jury Returns,” in *Evidence for Faith*, 319.

<sup>61</sup>Swinburne, *Existence of God*, chapter 10; *Providence and the Problem of Evil* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), especially Part II.

<sup>62</sup>Montgomery, *Shape of the Past*, 41.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup>Montgomery, *Suicide of Christian Theology*, 367.

<sup>65</sup>Dennis Roy Hillman, “The Use of Basic Issues in Apologetics from Selected New Testament Apologies” (Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1979), 41.

<sup>66</sup>Ronald H. Nash, “Use and Abuse of History in Christian Apologetics,” *Christian Scholar’s Review* 1 (1971): 223.

<sup>67</sup>Montgomery, “Clark’s Philosophy of History,” 375.

<sup>68</sup>Montgomery, *Where Is History Going*, 203.

<sup>69</sup>Robert A. Sabath, “LSD and Religious Truth,” in *Christianity for the Tough-minded*, ed. Montgomery, 198-99.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>71</sup>Clark Eugene Barshinger, “Existential Psychology and Christian Faith,” in *Christianity for the Tough-minded*, ed. Montgomery, 171-72.

<sup>72</sup>Montgomery, *Shape of the Past*, 140.