M10A1 introduction to Tools

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MBS0010010021/11

Few books on Christian apologetics say anything about the tools of apologetics.

Until the 1950s a biblically knowledgeable Christian could reasonably well respond to critics. But from the 1050s the critics have organized, published magazines and books, started their own publishing companies, and even gained majority influence and control in many seminaries and universities. They developed techniques of propaganda, mind-manipulation, and debating. They became the Sadducee of our time as they debated Jesus. They promote methods to harness mass-movements and fuzzy logic to attack the Christian faith in a more sophisticated way.

Critics learned propaganda methods from the communists and developed specialists in the sciences, technology, and social sciences. The communists attacked Christians, whom they had persecuted and imprisoned as mostly old folks, preponderantly ‘women’, uneducated and feeble minded. Today Christians are attacked as out of step in a modern world and failing at critical thinking. Christians are portrayed as anti-science. Critics attack not only the reliability of the Bible but perhaps more so the personhood of the faithful believer. Critics attack our morality, saying we speak words of hate.

The Prometheus publishing house put out the book The Atheist Debater's Handbook in 1983 by B. C, Johnson. A kindle version of the book can be bought for $11.99 . The advertising blurb says …

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This handbook is an attempt to offer a concise set of rejoinders for use by atheists in their formal (and informal) debates with theists. Older, more traditional, arguments are included as well as original arguments. The result is a short book, yet one that contains an unrelenting presentation of argument and analysis.For some time now atheists have been in need of firm grounds upon which to base their position. This handbook offers them this foundation.

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Dr. Johnson C. Philip says in his book Top Seven Books That Could Have Destroyed My Christian Faith that this small handbook “is one of the most powerful books produced by atheists, and it can destroy the faith of many.” Even Dr. Philip, experienced in Christian apologetics, couldn’t “find an immediate answer to many of these writings.”

He reread the book, analyzed each set of logic, painstakingly identified the fallacy in each argument that seemed at first reading to be reasonable, and wrote in red ink the reasons to refute B.C. Johnson’s almost invisible false reasons for rejecting the Bible. The primary atheistic tool used in this handbook was argument through negation.

Overconfidence in a public setting could have blindsided Dr. Johnson himself. Dr. Johnson isn’t weak in the faith, is instead familiar with the Bible, as well as Biblical history and archeology. This book The Atheist Debater’s Handbook easily damages the young, nominal, or overconfident Christian believer.

Another book written to hone the skills of debate by attackers of the Bible is the Encyclopedia of Biblical Errancy, published somewhat more recently in 1995. This is now out of print, not even a Kindle version. This blurb says in part …

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McKinsey thinks the Bible is a deceptively inaccurate conglomeration of mythology and folklore masquerading as a valid picture of historical reality. In The Encyclopedia of Biblical Errancy, McKinsey strives to tell both the good and the bad of biblical writings … exposing the Bible's many errors, contradictions, and fallacies. Loaded with thousands of biblical citations, The Encyclopedia of Biblical Errancy vividly proves the Bible to be its own worst enemy.

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Some of these detractors of the Bible formerly were Christian. Others present themselves as if Christian, may even believe they are still Christian. But they work to convince others to believe the Bible contains errors or the history in the Bible is inaccurate. That the miracles of Jesus couldn’t have occurred. Ellen White speaks of the damage former Christian leaders can do.

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As the storm approaches, a large class who have professed faith in the third angel's message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, abandon their position and join the ranks of the opposition. By uniting with the world and partaking of its spirit, they have come to view matters in nearly the same light; and when the test is brought, they are prepared to choose the easy, popular side. Men of talent and pleasing address, who once rejoiced in the truth, employ their powers to deceive and mislead souls.P. 608 <https://m.egwwritings.org/en/book/74.1415>

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This lecture presents a sampling of tools we must understand as an apologist..

1. Analysis of Errors of Interpretation

All books must be understood in accordance with the culture and values in which it is written or set. The Bible is no different. Some of the Bible was written over 4000 years ago and culture and values have changed many times. The most recent scripture are more than 2000 years ago. We no longer live in a world governed by a Roman emperor speaking in the language of Greek and largely pagan in worship (although parts of the world today still worship pagan gods.)

We no longer live in a somewhat more recent world dominated by feudal allegiances and papal control, although the papacy survives today with a surprising influence on world affairs. We no longer live in a world governed by unelected kings. Our most respected monarch today is in fact a queen with mostly symbolic duties and is subservient to a democracy. Dictators today call themselves Presidents and stay in power by manipulating so-called popular elections. In fact, many Americans today fear the primary example of democracy in the world may be heading soon to an autocratic president willing to manipulate votes to return to power.

We must refrain from trying to impose contemporary moral values and calling Christian values hate speech because, for instance, marriage until very recently has been heterosexual. Christians inherit our moral values from scripture. We can respect individuals who live according to today’s recent cultural changes without choosing to personally conform to these perhaps short lived changed values. We can’t reasonably condemn a previous multigenerational culture just because it doesn’t conform to contemporary humanistic human centered culture.

No culture since Israel, I feel safe to say, had inherited perpetual possession of ancestral property. We would not recognize the obligation to marry our brother’s widow to ensure property rights. I don’t entirely understand this provision but it served God’s purpose. Parts of contemporary culture seek a more balanced distribution of wealth. Perpetual property rights was God’s plan for his people Israel to maintain a sufficient distribution of wealth.

1. Analysis of Scripture Twisting

Scripture twisting resembles what you say about analysis of errors, differing that scripture twisting is not naive as the other but ‘intends’ to mislead.

1. Analyzing Bible Difficulties

Cain married his sister, but wouldn’t that be incest? The Bible does condemn incest when God instructed the people of Israel. But of course Cain had to have married either a sister or a niece. God created humans perfect and healthy. The first couples children had no opportunity for marriage but to marry a sister. Only after many generations did mankind’s weakened genetic systems make it dangerous genetically for closely related couples to bear children without danger of problem births.

Then there’s the question about Jesus lying in the grave three days and three nights. “To us, three days and three nights generally means 72 hours, but we must understand the Bible historically and culturally. For the Jewish mind, this could mean any part of the first day, all of the second day, and any part of the third day. This is obvious by comparing Esther 4:16 and 5:1. Esther mentioned fasting for three days and nights and said that she would then go into the king, which she did, but 5:1 tells us clearly that it was on the third day that she went into the king, not after three days or on the fourth. This simply illustrates the way the Jews reckoned time.” <https://bible.org/question/were-three-days-and-three-nights-jesus-was-grave-full-72-hours> Biblical timing and culture comes to our rescue. That’s not to say cultural explanations will necessarily change minds. It remains a personal choice what to believe. But at the historical time no one misunderstood. It’s our thinking that brings to mind the seeming conflict.

1. Analysis of Scientific Information

Few of us are highly scientifically literate. I didn’t recognize any examples under this tool and expect I’ll see more on it in future studies.

1. Analyzing fallacies of Logic
2. Analysis of Propaganda Techniques
3. Analysis of Mind Manipulation Techniques

We don’t appreciate propaganda and mind manipulation. Politically we have what both sides may call fake news. We’re dealing with half truths and outright lying. These techniques the apologist will not choose to copy. I didn’t find examples here either, so I assume this is mostly a listing of what to expect from the anti-Bible detractor. We’ll expect to learn later how to counter such techniques.

The key is that we must learn to recognize propaganda and mind manipulation attempts.

1. Analysis of Debating Techniques

Caution. Don’t take debates lightly. The winner of a debate is generally the more skilled debater. Not necessarily the one with better facts and the truth. Paul tells of debating at the altar to the unknown God. Interestingly we never see him approach preaching like this again. He possibly because debating at best scores a win when what Paul wanted was converts to belief in Jesus. Most it seems mocked him, but a few heard, two of them named. Acts 17:32-34

1. Analysis And Formulation of Leading Questions

Deceptive leading questions can unfairly box the opponent into a corner. Much like the tic tac toe game usually goes the the person with the first turn, or so my experience has been.

In summary of these tools: Opponents have developed improved skills against Christian beliefs. While I think little is to be gained in formal debates, in order to win in even the personal group discussions/debates we must hone our skills to match the growing skills of opponents.

All attempts to disavow the Bible depend upon dishonesty: they sidetrack, build stories upon false presumptions, and generally cheat the honesty of logical reasoning. “Worse, they do this in such a subtle and convincing manner that the average Christian is not able to spot the catch.” -lecture

The apologist must not only spot the deception, he must clearly expose the trick in the critic's flawed argument. Unless this exposure, shall we say, embarrasses or at least throws the critic off guard of his carefully constructed deception and the apologist take control, the audience follows skill, not truly logical reason. The defender loses when he appears unprepared.

I have seen Christian apologists lose their cool and get angry when outflanked by error. The critic came prepared and remained calm. Of course, the critic had contrived and instigated the encounter. Yet it was embarrassing to see the seminary professors lose control of their emotions. The critic’s calm won *that day*. I was 21 years old then.

The author of this lecture points out that sometimes the professing Christian has a divided heart and may even enjoy seeing the Christian defense crumble. We each have doubts that we try to lay aside. The apologist must display confidence and use the tools of apology in **calm** assurance. He loses with a cocky, careless assumption that he knows his Bible. He may well know the Bible, Ephesians 6:11 “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” In other words, BE PREPARED!

When the apologist uses the tools to attack the critic at the root level the audience will begin to see the critic’s flaws. The critic may go on to his next point but the audience may well recognize the apologists’ strategy and see ahead where it is going. This is especially the case when refuting Bible difficulties. There are only 15 categories and after the apologist identifies these the audience can join him in this categorization. They can recognize this systematic nature in this organized counterattack. And the critic in time recognizes the futility of continued examples of Bible difficulties when even the audience knows how to categorize them.

There are ten tools for apologists to learn. A bit more challenging are the ten or more categories attached to each of these tools. Even more challenging are the subcategories within each category. The lecturer compares this to the processes a doctor must learn to diagnose and treat illnesses. He somewhat minimizes the enormity of the doctor’s cumulative challenge, I feel. I’d rejoin that the doctor has four years of study beyond pre-Med and a year of internship. Not to mention the three to five years learning during intensive residencies. Then again, I have a number of years where I’ve studied and taught Bible classes in church. So I may have much of the pre-Med equivalent, I would expect or at least hope.

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1. How this module helped your studies

We will find ourselves defending Bible truths while standing alone. In more formal cases I think we should have science professions standing with ministers and theologians. We won’t be fully equipped to represent all the facets of truth in front of critics who focus on destroying Christian faith. We individually work in many different careers while ministers pastor congregations. Few will be single focus apologists.

2. What new lessons you learned.

In the first paragraph I learned that Bible critics think it’s fail to use propaganda and mind-manipulation techniques. The harness majority views against Christians. Everyone knows… attempts to drown the Bible believer into oblivion.

Americans once united against the abuses of communism. Now we adopt their crippling abusive language and thinking. Today Christians are attacked as out of step in a modern world.

Christians are accused of hateful words by liberal Christians and unbelievers.

Humanism has always dominated the world. Sodom welcomed the release resulting from Abraham’s 400 men. The people respected Abraham’s refusal to accept plunder as reward. The may have respected Lot’s witness. But the citizens of Sodom didn’t renew their hearts as God might have hoped. Not even Lot’s sons-in-law with their families escaped the city at Lot’s and the angels’ pleading. If even these families had been found faithful, the city might have been saved. But only four attempted to obey the angels’ warning and only three escaped. Humanism is a heavy weight against Bible believing faith.

3. Your critical evaluation on the topic. WE mean what is the shortcoming you see in the text, your suggestions for improvement.

4. How does this lesson help you?

I haven’t yet bought it yet, but The Atheist Debater's Handbook by B. C, Johnson sounds like a good introduction into arguments used against the Bible believer. I did read Dr. Johnson C. Philip’s book Top Seven Books That Could Have Destroyed My Christian Faith. Parts of it are more Hindu than western related, but western youth fall into similar doubts.

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Date: 12-23-2021