



# What Place, then, for Rational Apologetics?

.....  
RICHARD BRIAN DAVIS AND W. PAUL FRANKS  
.....

**FOR THE PAST THIRTY YEARS** and more, J.P. Moreland has tenaciously defended the idea that advancing apologetic arguments on behalf of the truth of Christianity is essential to the health and vitality of the cause of Christ. In countless articles, books, sermons, interviews, lectures, and debates, J.P. has taught and embodied the (perhaps initially) unexpected truth that there is no conflict between faith and reason, between what is known based on the bible, and what reason tells us after carefully deliberating upon the extra-biblical evidence. Indeed, he has had the audacity to claim that apologetics is actually a “New Testament ministry.”<sup>1</sup> Thus, as followers of Jesus, we’re *obliged* to engage in it.

J.P.’s strong advocacy in this area has fanned into a flame the wake-up call originally issued to an intellectually slumbering Church by the apologetic giants of the last generation (Francis Schaeffer, Josh McDowell, and others). We are all the better for it. Apologetics organizations, radio shows, conferences, websites, and blogs literally abound. In many ways, things have never been better in the world of apologetics. And yet there is little denying the fact that the predominant outlook and trajectory of the coming generation of evangelicals is decidedly anti-intellectual. Titles with highly relational themes such as *Blue Like Jazz* and *Love Wins* are instantly snapped up by young evangelicals, becoming bestsellers virtually overnight.

We are not prophets (nor even the sons of prophets), but it seems clear to us that the apologetic torch J.P. has carried throughout his ministry—and which he has passed to us—might well be extinguished in a future evangelical subculture that scorns the very notion of rational, truth-based apologetics. No doubt we will be told that such an approach to engaging non-believers is intolerant, irrelevant, and non-relational. It advances itself by making objective truth claims, as opposed to participating in “conversations” where the aim is merely to appreciate one another, minimize our differences, and enjoy the process.

In this chapter, we shall attempt to show that J.P.’s understanding of apologetics is beautifully positioned (going forward) to counter resistance to a rationally defensible Christianity—resistance arising from the mistaken idea that any rational defense will fail to support or even undermine *relationship*. We’ll look first at the complaint that since rational apologetics doesn’t prove the God of Christianity, it falls short of delivering what matters most—a personal agent worthy of worship and relationship. We’ll then consider a relatively recent charge that the use of reason and argument in evangelistic contexts is relationally futile. Since people aren’t looking for arguments, and logic is an arbitrary human invention, we should present Christianity to others as an irrational faith story.

### **PURPOSE DRIVEN APOLOGETICS**

According to J.P., there are four reasons we should engage in rational apologetics.<sup>2</sup> *First*, it is a biblical command (Jude 3; 1 Pet. 3:15) for which we have pristine examples in the ministries of Jesus and Paul. We should obey the command and follow the examples. Since, in particular, “Paul reasoned with unbelievers and gave evidence for the gospel,”<sup>3</sup> so should we. *Secondly*, apologetics serves to remove impediments to faith “and thus aid[s] unbelievers in embracing the gospel.”<sup>4</sup> And of course that is a good thing. *Third*, it strengthens believers by (i) instilling in them the conviction that their faith is true and reasonable, and (ii) fostering spiritual growth by filling out their Christian worldview, thereby enabling them to better see God at work in His two books: the Bible and the book of nature. And then *finally*, apologetics contributes “to health in the culture at large.”<sup>5</sup> It promotes the idea that Christianity can be *argued for* with publicly accessible facts. It can’t be culturally quarantined as a stream of emotive, cognitively meaningless nonsense.

Now what’s truly striking about this fourfold purpose is just how relational it

is. It speaks of the relation of the believer to himself (his own spiritual life), the believer to the unbeliever, and the believer to the larger culture. And the role of apologetics in each case (as J.P. sees it) is to help people become rightly related to the Ultimate Person—God Himself. So at first glance this worry about apologetics being anti-relational seems perplexing. If anything, the exact opposite seems to be true. J.P.-style apologetics is fully and completely relational. Wherein, then, lies the problem?

### ARE “JUST-ADEQUATE” CAUSES INADEQUATE?

In his book *The Evidence for God*, Paul Moser argues that the principle chore of natural theology is to establish the existence of God understood as a “personal agent who is worthy of worship and is thus morally perfect and hence perfectly loving toward all persons.”<sup>6</sup> According to Moser, even if rational apologetics can succeed in establishing that there is a God, it fails to say very much about Him. At best, God is posited as the best explanation for certain visible features of the universe (e.g., fine-tuning). However, all such arguments, says Moser, give us only a cause “just adequate” to yield those features. These “‘just-adequate’ causes, however, clearly fall short of establishing or confirming the moral character of a personal agent worthy of worship.”<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps so; but even if so, it doesn’t obviously follow that “just-adequate” apologetics is a dead end in bringing non-believers into relational contact with the Christian God. Just consider, for example, Paul’s oft-quoted words in Romans:

<sup>18</sup>For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, <sup>19</sup>because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. <sup>20</sup>For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse (1:18–20 NASB).

What we have here, quite obviously, is a “just-adequate” cause posited to explain a specific feature of the visible world. We might set out the argument as follows:

- (1) There is a visible world of things [*The Existence Thesis*].
- (2) The visible world and the things in it have the property of being made [*The Property Thesis*].

Thus

- (3) There is a being (God) with the invisible attributes (e.g., eternal power and a divine nature) necessary for creating the visible world and the things in it [*The Adequate Cause Thesis*].

And what Paul is saying, if we have him right, is that “the truth” suppressed—namely, (3)—is (i) *propositional* rather than personal in nature (it’s a truth *about* God), (ii) *powerful* because it takes a concerted effort to hold it down, and (iii) *perspicuous* because it exposes the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. To suppress this (true) proposition, we are told, is to exchange “the truth about God for a lie” (v. 25). Moreover, not only *can* this truth be known, it *is* known—and this for the simple reason that God has “shown it” to everyone. No wonder, then, that the ungodly have to *suppress* (3) by an act of will. It’s because we’re *not just dealing with truth*; it’s a commodity much more powerful than that. It’s *knowledge* about God.

There is a vast difference between truth and knowledge. Truth is when you believe something that corresponds with the facts. Knowledge, at least as J.P. sees it, is much more. It involves believing what is true *based on sufficient evidence*.<sup>8</sup> This seems to be Paul’s view as well. Notice how very careful he is to distinguish these epistemic commodities. What marks off “the truth” about God (v. 18) from what is “known about God” (v. 19) is that the latter involves God’s *showing* or *making evident* “the truth” about Himself. God Himself is the evidence provider. Consequently, the content of (3) is “evident to them” and “clearly seen.” This is high definition revelation.

### “Seeing” Invisible Attributes

Now the thing to see here is that everyone *knows* that God exists. There are no real atheists, only suppressors. The purpose of “just-adequate” apologetics, therefore, cannot be to move a non-believer from a state of ignorance to knowledge. So what *is* its purpose? Note first that the invisible attributes are said to be perceived “through” created things. What does that mean? How shall we understand Paul here?

According to Alvin Plantinga, there is the suggestion (implicitly in Paul, but explicitly in Calvin) that God has designed us in such a way that “there is a sort of instinct, a natural human tendency, a disposition, a *nisus* to form beliefs about God under a variety of conditions and in a variety of situations.”<sup>9</sup> The created

world is presented to us, and we perceive it. And then because of how God has engineered us, that circumstance produces in us theistic belief without inference:

These circumstances, we might say, trigger the disposition to form the beliefs in question; they form the occasion on which those beliefs arise. Under these circumstances, we develop or form theistic beliefs—or, rather, these beliefs are formed in us; in the typical case we don't consciously choose to have those beliefs. Instead, we find ourselves with them.<sup>10</sup>

Now of course, there is a vast difference between *having a belief caused or triggered in us* versus *being shown that a belief is true*. For Plantinga, we are the passive recipients of theistic belief. Our cognitive contribution to the process of acquiring theistic belief is nil. We don't have to grasp anything, reflect on evidence, or exercise any intellectual virtue. Our belief producing mechanisms, if working properly, take care of everything—all without the hint of inference.

But isn't there a problem here? The Apostle doesn't say we are *given* the knowledge of God. He says we are *shown* it, but not directly. It is evident *through* something else. This suggests that Plantinga has misread Paul. The cognitive relation between ungodly knower and known divine attribute is not, as Plantinga thinks, the two-termed *understands* relation ( $x$  understands  $y$ ). No doubt, on J.P.'s ontology, such a relation exists. It's just not what Paul has in mind in Romans 1. There he speaks of God's eternal power and divine nature being *understood through* visible things: a three-termed relation ( $x$  understands  $y$  through  $z$ ) which is quite different. And his point is this: God does show us the truth of (3); however, He does this indirectly—by way of (1) and (2). Here, an inference is needed. But it's *our* inference; *we* (and not God) draw the conclusion at (3)—and do that freely. We all do.

### Suppressing God

In most areas, if we fail to attend properly to what we know, we'll be mistaken; we might fail a test, or make some incorrect measurements when building a deck. We're mistaken, but we wouldn't say we were guilty of any moral wrong doing. Not so with our natural knowledge of God. It is obligation conferring. We must *honor* God and *thank* him, if we at once admit (3): "For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened" (Rom. 1:21).

At this point in Paul's argument, the non-believer only knows there is a "just-adequate" God; he doesn't yet know this is the Christian God. He may never know that. Nevertheless, he recognizes that he is under obligation to Him; otherwise, what would be the point of suppressing? If God has created everything, He owns everything, in which case we can't do with things (say, our own bodies) what we please. The knowledge of God spoils our efforts at using created things to satisfy *our own* desires on *our own* terms. Thus Thomas Nagel opines

I want atheism to be true and am made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers. It isn't just that I don't believe in God and, naturally, hope that I'm right in my belief. It's that I hope there is no God! I don't want there to be a God; I don't want the universe to be like that.<sup>11</sup>

To avoid being dethroned, therefore, the flesh suppresses (3). It strips the world and the things in it (e.g., other persons) of their creation properties and purposes, supplying to them instead (with the help of the world system and its architect) carnal meanings. But there is a price for this kind of suppression: it ends (so we think) in a violation of one or more of our rational obligations.

For example, it is scarcely rational to deny (1): *The Existence Thesis*. For that would be to affirm *Illusionism* — the thesis that the world lacks extra-mental existence. Surely that is rationally impermissible on the available evidence.<sup>12</sup> What about (2): *The Property Thesis*? Can we not deny that the things mentioned in (1) are *made things*? Not reasonably and not if what Paul has in mind are such things as the heavens, the earth, and the like. For quite obviously, these things are not self-existent; they don't exist by a necessity in their own nature.<sup>13</sup> To deny this is ultimately to affirm *Spinozism*: that the material universe (taken as the entire collection of concrete, physical things) is a logically necessary being whose non-existence is contradictory. That is a *huge* metaphysical pill to swallow, and enormously less rational than its denial.

But if so, then surely we will agree that the universe is *contingent*; and if contingent, then caused by something (i) *eternal* — since whatever caused the universe "must be something outside the natural world itself,"<sup>14</sup> and thus not a contingent thing, but instead self-existent and so eternal; and (ii) *powerful* — because it made the cosmos and everything in it. Again, we can evade this conclusion at a price: all we have to do is affirm *Inexplicability* — that there needn't be a cause, a reason, or an explanation for why a thing that doesn't have to exist *actually does*.<sup>15</sup> As J.P.

rightly notes, this seems unthinkable.<sup>16</sup>

The upshot is that those who opt for the likes of *Illusionism*, *Spinozism*, or *Inexplicability* are indeed able to avoid Paul's *Adequate Cause Thesis*, but at a substantial price, thereby suggesting Nagel-like suppression. The job of the Christian apologist is to bring such individuals back from the brink: "My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins" (James 5:19–20). Therein lies the motivation for rational apologetics. Showing the unbeliever the extreme lengths to which he has gone to avoid relating to God on His terms can serve as a wake-up call, helping him to locate the real problem (rebellion) and its only solution (repentance). In short, the "just-adequate" apologetic doesn't fall short of relationship; it *advances* it.

### **ABSURD APOLOGETICS?**

A very different complaint against rational apologetics appears in John Wilkinson's recent "A Defense of Skepticism."<sup>17</sup> Wilkinson proposes a "new take on apologetics," one in which we can "be comfortable in our own irrational skin. . . . Illogical. . . . Unreasonable. . . . Absurd."<sup>18</sup> We must confess, an irrational, illogical faith doesn't make our skin do anything but crawl. But what we fail to understand, says Wilkinson, is that neither faith nor reason claims to be logical; they're both on the "same uncertain ground." Hence there's no need to worry that Christianity is illogical and can't be defended. The same thing is true of reason.

We seem to forget logic was not discovered in the universe somewhere. It is not The Force. Reason and logic are products of creation, the software our brains use to make sense of things here on this earth. We invented things like science, math and time. . . . Our "logic" is just a way of feeling our way through this world. In the end, it is a story just like any other. . . . In reality, reason and faith are both rooted in story.<sup>19</sup>

We invented logic, science, math, and time? As philosophers, we're naturally curious how Wilkinson arrived at this spectacular conclusion. Let's start by accentuating the positive. We do think science is the result of human creative activity. Science, after all, is the *study* of the natural world; it involves crafting hypotheses, carrying out experiments, acquiring confirming/disconfirming evidence, and the like. These are things *we* do.<sup>20</sup> But what science studies—namely, the hard and heavy world of planet and stars—we haven't had a hand in creating at all.

Or have we? Consider Wilkinson’s claim that we have invented *time*. It’s difficult to take this seriously, especially if time is a feature of the external world. We’re quite happy to agree, of course, that we have invented *time pieces* (as Paley says, watches require watchmakers). But time *itself*? “Time is something that comes from us,” says Wilkinson, “not from somewhere out there. We created it.”<sup>21</sup> We did this when “a long time ago someone attempted to standardize the passage of time and called the smallest unit a ‘second’.”<sup>22</sup> Since we decided what seconds and minutes are, we are in fact the authors of time. But this is deeply confused. What we did was merely to *call* those periods of time a “second” and a “minute.” And we could just as well have called them something else—say, a “parsec” and a “codec”—in which case there would have been 60 parsecs in a codec. But it’s obviously a grand mistake to think that we brought about those temporal periods by affixing labels to them.

On the other hand, swimming against the tide, is the German philosopher, Immanuel Kant (d. 1804). He thinks of time as merely a *form* the mind imposes on raw, unstructured sensation; things aren’t really *in time* so much as we *represent them to ourselves* as being so. Wilkinson sees the connection between his view and Kant’s,<sup>23</sup> but fails to recognize that (by similar reasoning) Kant pays the same compliment to *existence, space, object, property, cause, and effect*. All of these are just structured ways the mind processes reality. Reality—whatever it is; you can’t know on his view—doesn’t contain any of these things. Rather, we human beings play the role of God, constructing the world of objects and their properties in space and time. Obviously, no proper Christian can believe this, though we must say it is a tremendous money saving device. Why spend billions of dollars firing the Hubble Space Telescope “into” space, when space isn’t “out there” to begin with? Nothing could be more foolish. (It goes without saying that there aren’t many Kantians at NASA.)

### **DISMANTLING CHRISTIANITY BY INVENTION**

No matter how you look at it, this bald assertion about our inventing time is in trouble. Well, what about mathematics and logic? Did we invent those too? Here things go rapidly downhill. For as J.P. observes, this postmodern line of thinking implies that “the basic laws of logic are Western constructions, and in no way are they to be taken as universally valid laws of reality itself.”<sup>24</sup> Everything becomes a matter of sheer convention. We see three major problems for this line of thinking



### The Status Problem

Laws of logic and mathematics are paradigms of necessary truths: propositions that are true and could not have been false. Here are a few examples:

- (4)  $7+5=12$ ;
- (5) A is not non-A (*law of noncontradiction*);
- (6) If  $p$  implies  $q$  and  $p$  is true, then  $q$  is true (*modus ponens*).

According to Wilkinson, none of these propositions has the status of a *law*—something that holds universally and as a matter of necessity. In fact, on his view, they all have less status than the law of gravity, which we are quite sure he doesn't think we invented. You can't change *that* law, but the "laws" of logic and mathematics are all subject to revision. Like the rule that says, "Don't lick your knife while eating lunch with the Queen," these "laws" could have been quite different if that's what we had decided. To deny them isn't contradictory; it's simply unconventional.

If this is what Wilkinson is thinking, he has undoubtedly confused *sentences* with the *propositions* they express. Perhaps it's true, as he says, that "We have a numbering system based on 10 'digits' (literally 'fingers') because we have 10 fingers."<sup>25</sup> But all that shows is that the system of characters and symbols we use for expressing mathematical truths is arrived at by convention. It doesn't show that the propositional *truths* expressed by means of those symbols are in any way dependent on us. The proposition expressed by the sentence " $7+5=12$ " was around (and true) long before we human beings happened on the scene.

Why is this important? Well, take (5) on our list—the law of noncontradiction (LNC). And now suppose it's just a convention. Is that really all that bad? Well yes, actually, it is. It means that there is no *real* difference between  $p$  and not- $p$ ; both could be true at the same time and in the same way. In other words, to affirm " $p$  and not- $p$ " merely flouts convention; it's not contradictory, though, because there are no contradictions. Here is an illustration. In 2 Corinthians 10:5, Paul reports:

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (NIV).

Here Paul did the truly impossible. Think about it: on Wilkinson's view, you really can't demolish any argument designed to undercut the knowledge of God.

To do *that* you would need to contradict something about the argument—either one of its premises or its logical form. Even worse, if LNC doesn't hold—and hold necessarily—then there isn't any real difference between a pretension and a non-pretension, an idea that precludes knowledge of God and one that doesn't, a thought that obeys Christ and another that does not.

Wilkinson says that Paul “agreed with skeptics that faith is irrational,”<sup>26</sup> and in Corinth showed us a better way: “I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). But you see, on Wilkinson's view, there can be no difference between knowing Christ and failing to know Christ (!)—hence no difference between being saved or not, between heaven or hell—because there is no real difference between  $p$  and not- $p$ . Ironically, then, it doesn't matter whether we tell reason's story, as he calls it, or faith's story. He prefers the latter. But there can be nothing wrong with telling reason's story instead. Without LNC, it's all the same.

(As an aside: Please don't ask us what “faith's story” is. We cannot tell you. What we do know is that while postmodern Christians do their best to avoid putting the definite article “the” in front of “faith,” Jude exhorts us to contend—not for faith—but rather “*the* faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” [Jude 3]. That we can tell you about.)

### **The Scope and Self-Referential Problems**

There's two ways to turn off your bedside light. One is to reach over and flick the switch. The other is to have the power company shut down the grid for your entire area. That will certainly take care of your problem, but it will also wreak havoc with everyone else's lighting. In effect, that is what Wilkinson has done. In response to a few attacks on the rationality of theism, he moves immediately to a denial of reason and logic altogether. However, because the scope of his denial of logic is universal, it takes out everything in its path, including Wilkinson's own position.

Notice, first, that if Wilkinson is right, no valid, truth-preserving argument can ever (or has ever) been given. A valid argument is one in which it isn't possible for the premises to be true and the conclusion false. Modus ponens—(6) above—is one of many argument forms (logical laws) that ensure validity. On Wilkinson's view, modus ponens is conventional, not a law of logic (there are none), and therefore not a valid argument form. Hence, we can't use “laws” of

logic to extend our knowledge. No one can — not scientists, mathematicians, historians, psychologists, or theologians. In fact, theology is impossible; we can't deduce things from Scripture (since there are no valid argument forms), nor can we bring our exegetical findings into coherence (since LNC isn't necessary).

But then what are we to make of Wilkinson's own arguments? (Yes, he propounds a few himself.) Here's a list of the more obvious ones:

- Most people don't like arguments; arguments don't bring people to faith; *therefore*, arguing for Christianity is a problem.
- Reason and logic are human creations; *therefore*, reason doesn't encompass the existence of God.
- Paul admits that the gospel is foolishness to the Greeks; *therefore*, Paul believed that faith is irrational.

What we can't figure out is why Wilkinson would include these arguments in his article in the first place. As he says, "People are hungry for something, but not arguments," and he himself is averse to the sort of "ideational Ping-Pong" they engender.<sup>27</sup> It certainly seems as though he is attempting to convince his reader of something, and further that these arguments are his means of doing that.

But why should we be persuaded? Even if the premises of these arguments are true, there are no truth-preserving logical laws that would prevent truth from "leaking out" by the time we reached his conclusion. In other words, Wilkinson's denial of logic undercuts the very argument(s) he uses to deny reason and logic. It's a completely self-refuting position. He can't persuade anyone that he is right, or demonstrate that those who disagree are wrong. All he can do is tell us about his impulses to accept or reject the various claims he makes. But suppose what is in fact the case: we have different impulses. What then? Even if we find ourselves with an impulse to embrace his "premises," why *ought* we to embrace his "conclusions" if we lack the relevant impulse? We can't see that Wilkinson has anything like an adequate answer here. And even if we *had* the impulse to accept his "conclusions," why *should* we obey it? As C. S. Lewis once asked:

why ought we to obey instinct? Is there another instinct of a higher order directing us to do so, and a third of a still higher order directing us to obey *it*? — an infinite regress of instincts?<sup>28</sup>

The answer, of course, is that there isn't. The only way to terminate an infinite regress of impulses is with something that isn't an impulse, preference, or attraction—that is, a *reason* that underwrites the fact that we *ought* to believe these conclusions having once believed the premises. And we're afraid nothing less than a law of logic or rational thought will do.

In the end, reason and logic aren't things that should threaten us as Christians. Indeed, they can and must be cultivated.<sup>29</sup> As even the hymn writer Isaac Watts (d. 1748) points out,

It is the cultivation of our reason by which we are better enabled to distinguish good from evil, as well as truth from falsehood. . . . It is by this means we discover our duty to God and our fellow-creatures; by this arrive at the knowledge of natural religion, and learn to confirm our faith in divine revelation, as well as to understand what is revealed. Our wisdom, prudence, and piety, our present conduct and our future hope, are all influenced by the use of rational powers in the search after truth.<sup>30</sup>

It's probably not a bad idea either to remind ourselves just who it was who first said "Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD" (Isa. 1:18). What a tragedy if, in flirting with "the basic principles of this world" (Col. 2:8 NIV), we succumb to the hollow postmodern temptation to so revile reason—"the glory of human nature"<sup>31</sup>—and make the Lord's gracious invitation impossible.

By way of conclusion then: rational apologetics, as J.P. thinks of it, is a *helping* ministry; it is designed to move people towards a relationship with God. If "just-adequate" cause arguments fall short of proving a personal agent worthy of worship, perhaps that needn't trouble us, not if their purpose is actually to expose suppression and draw out the need for personal repentance. What should trouble us however—and deeply so—is the suggestion that we ought to be doing *irrational* apologetics to reach our lost world. For that spells the demise of the faith the Great Apostle boldly proclaimed as "true and reasonable" (Acts 26:25 NIV).

### Notes

---

1. J. P. Moreland, *Love Your God with All Your Mind: The Role of Reason in the Life of the Soul*, 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2012), 20.
2. J. P. Moreland, *Scaling the Secular City: A Defense of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 11–12.
3. *Ibid.*, 12.

4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Paul Moser, *The Evidence for God: Religious Knowledge Reexamined* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 152, emphasis added.
7. Ibid.
8. J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 74. See also *Love Your God With All Your Mind*, 56, 58.
9. Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 188.
10. Ibid., 190.
11. Thomas Nagel, *The Last Word* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 131.
12. For J.P., a belief *P* is rationally impermissible just in case, in light of the evidence, believing not-*P* or suspending judgment on *P* is more warranted than believing *P*. See *Scaling the Secular City*, 13.
13. Fans of the *kalam* argument will wonder why we haven't appealed to the property of *having had a beginning* in connection with (2). The reason is simple: the things Paul has in mind—the things in which God's "eternal power" has been seen "ever since" the world's creation—are not such that we have observed their beginnings. No human being (not even Adam!) ever did see the sun, moon, or stars come into existence—let alone the entire physical universe. Indeed, as J.P. notes, it wasn't until the late 1920s that we had *any* scientific evidence for a temporally finite universe. See *Scaling the Secular City*, 33.
14. See J.P. Moreland, *The God Question* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2009), 66.
15. This is not the place to present (and rebut) all the escape clauses to *The Property Thesis*, but see Samuel Clarke, *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*, ed. Ezio Vailati (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
16. Compare J.P.: "If something is contingent, then there has to be some reason or cause as to why it exists as opposed to not existing" (*The God Question*, 65). This principle, he observes, is both "commonsensical" and "obviously true" (ibid., 65, 66).
17. John Wilkinson, "A Defense of Skepticism," *Relevant: The Magazine on Faith, Culture, and Intentional Living*, September 8, 2011. <http://www.relevantmagazine.com/god/deeper-walk/features/26699-a-defense-of-skepticism>.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid. See also John Wilkinson, *No Argument for God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 36–39.
20. For further details, see J.P.'s eclectic model of scientific theory formation, experimentation, and testing in *Christianity and the Nature of Science: A Philosophical Investigation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), chap. 2.
21. Wilkinson, *No Argument for God*, 38.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.

24. J.P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations*, 145.
25. Wilkinson, “A Defense of Skepticism.”
26. Ibid.
27. Wilkinson, *No Argument for God*, 42.
28. C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (London: Macmillan, 1944), 48.
29. See J.P.’s important suggestions on this score in the section “How to Develop a Mature Christian Mind” in *Love Your God With All Your Mind*, chaps. 4–5.
30. Isaac Watts, *Logic: The Right Use of Reason in the Inquiry After Truth* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1996), 2.
31. Ibid., 1.