



28700 Christian Apologetics

Final Examination

Spring 2022

You may use your handwritten class notes—including notes on lectures and notes from the assigned readings—and a Bible without study notes. No textbooks or other resources may be used.

There is no time limit; however, once you open this document, you must complete the examination in its entirety without stopping.

You may handwrite your responses, scan your responses, and upload a digital scan of your responses in PDF. Or, you may type your responses and upload your finished responses as a DOC file.

You must include an affirmation that no resources were used other than your handwritten notes from this class and a Bible.

QUESTION 1. APOLOGETICS DEFINITION

5 points, one sentence

Provide the definition of “apologetics” that was provided in class.

QUESTION 2. APOLOGETICS METHODS

5 points, at least five paragraphs

Which of the following four options is *most* compatible with Scripture? Which of the following is *least* compatible with Scripture?

- (1) Classical apologetics,
- (2) Evidential apologetics
- (3) Transcendental apologetics
- (4) Van Tilian presuppositionalism

Summarize each approach, based on your lecture notes; then, evaluate each one, making an argument for which of these approaches is *most* and *least* compatible with Scripture.

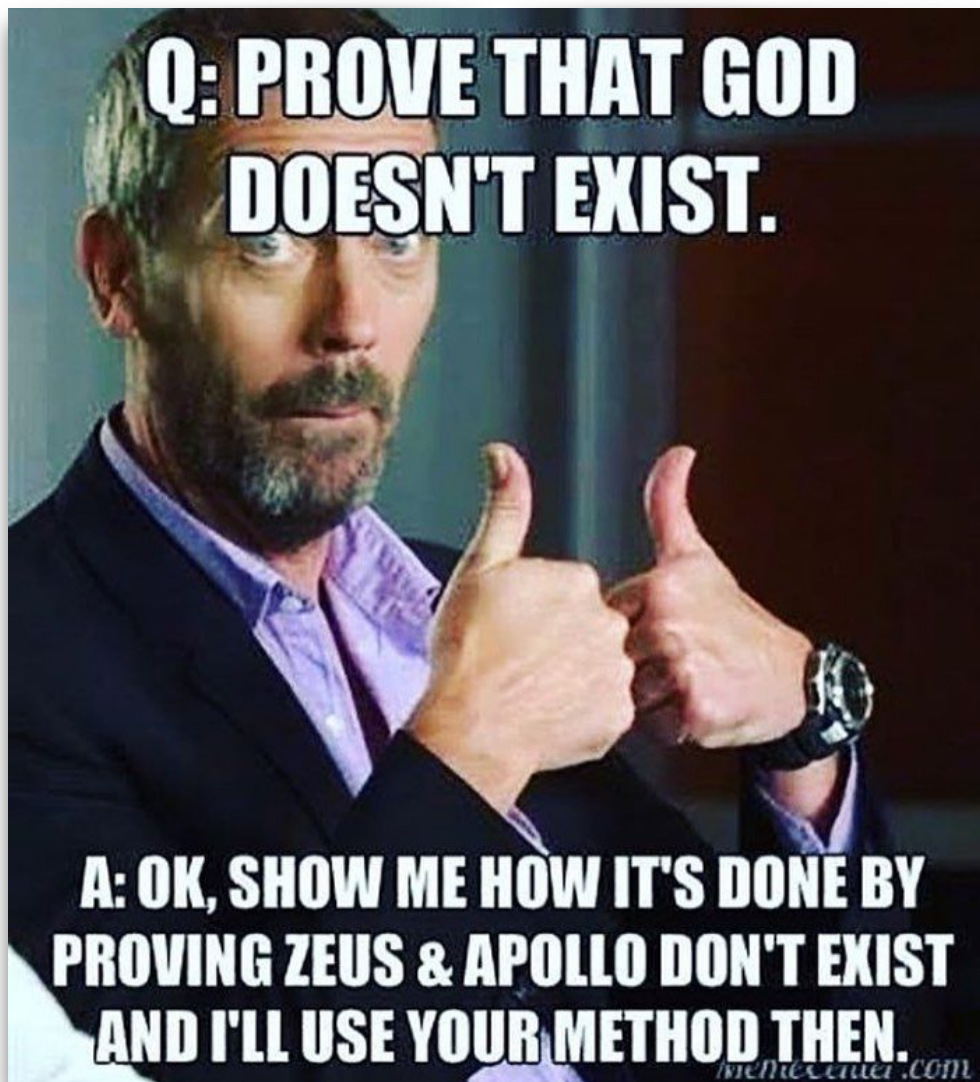
QUESTIONS 3, 4, and 5. SHORT ESSAYS

5 points each, at least five paragraphs each

FOR QUESTIONS 3, 4, AND 5, CHOOSE AND ANSWER THREE OF THE FOLLOWING FIVE PROMPTS.

PROMPT 1: WHAT DO YOU MEME YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN GOD?

Identify and summarize the logical fallacy in the meme below. Then, provide an argument in response to this meme that provides evidence for the existence of God. Your argument may be a classical argument, an evidential argument, or a transcendental argument.



PROMPT 2: PAPA HET AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

When James Hetfield was sixteen years old, cancer took his mother's life. Because his mother was a devout Christian Scientist, she refused medical treatments that might have saved her life. Later, as the lead vocalist and rhythm guitarist of Metallica, Hetfield wrote these words in the song "The God That Failed":

*I see faith in your eyes
Never you hear the discouraging lies
I hear faith in your cries
Broken is the promise, betrayal,
The healing hand held back by the deepened nail
Follow the God that failed*

When Hetfield wrote these words, his perception seems to have been that, because his mother was not healed ("healing hand held back"), God must have betrayed her ("broken is the promise"), if there is an all-powerful God. His underlying assumption appears to have been that, if God could have healed his mother, God should have done so.

Drawing from the lectures on the problems of evil, engage carefully with the pain that James Hetfield expresses here. Your response must take into account not only a response to the *logical* and *evidential* problems of evil but also gentle engagement with the realities of his *existential suffering*. Your response should demonstrate familiarity with Alvin Plantinga's arguments as presented in class, as well as the lecture on how to respond to existential suffering.



PROMPT 3: THERE IS NO STAR WARS IN A GODLESS COSMOS

Many of humanity's greatest stories include a hero whose sacrifice and sufferings are beautiful and redemptive. In *Star Wars: Episode VI: Return of the Jedi*, the torments of Anakin Skywalker culminate in suffering and sacrifice that bring balance to the Force. Perhaps most clearly, in *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*, the sacrifice of Jyn Erso is presented not merely as redemptive but as beautiful.

According to philosopher Anthony O'Hear, however, a purely Darwinian explanation of beauty cannot account for stories in which suffering is beautiful and redeemable. Viewing suffering in this way does not, after all, contribute positively to human survival or reproduction. According to O'Hear,

To show suffering as beautiful or as ultimately redeemable is to show the world as not ultimately alien, and ourselves as not necessarily alienated. It would also show that our constitution, physical and rational, sensual and reflective, is of some value in revealing the essence of the world. But, how could we think of an aesthetic justification of experience, that really was a justification and not just a momentary narcotic, unless our aesthetic experience was sustained by a divine will revealed in the universe, and particularly in our experience of it as beautiful? It is precisely at this point that many or even most will draw back. Aesthetic experience seems to produce the harmony between us and the world that would have to point to a religious resolution were it not to be an illusion. ... This is a dilemma I cannot solve or tackle head on.

Develop a detailed positive regressive transcendental argument for the truth of the gospel, beginning with the universal human pattern of narratives which “show suffering as beautiful or as ultimately redeemable.” Your notes from the lectures on transcendental arguments will be helpful in responding to this prompt.



PROMPT 4: A MARVEL-OUS ARGUMENT AGAINST ATHEISM

The director of *The Avengers* and *Avengers: Age of Ultron* is an atheist who spoke these words in a 2013 interview with *Entertainment Weekly*:

I have no hope. ... My stories do have hope. ... If I wrote what I really think, I would be so sad all the time. We create to fill a gap—not just to avoid the idea of dying, it's to fill some particular gap in ourselves. ... So I write things where people will lay down their lives for each other.

Drawing from the lectures on transcendental apologetics, develop a *negative regressive transcendental argument against naturalism*, based on this film director's incapacity to live consistently within the constraints of his own belief system.

In making this negative transcendental argument, your essay should clearly demonstrate the unlivability of the director's belief system. Your notes from *The History of Apologetics* on Francis Schaeffer and Charles Taylor may be helpful as well, depending on how you develop your argument.



PROMPT 5: REASONING IN CIRCLES?

Suppose that someone says to you, “You only believe that the Bible is true because the Bible claims that it’s true. That’s circular reasoning!”

Develop a gracious and reasonable response to this accusation.

Class notes on the four approaches to knowing the Bible is true will be essential as you develop your response: (1) evidentialist, (2) verificationist, (3) classical Reformed, and (4) Van Tilian Reformed. Notes from *Why Should I Trust the Bible?* may also be helpful.

Depending on which apologetics method you perceive to be most compatible with Scripture, your response might focus on external evidences, on the resurrection of Jesus, on the witness of the Holy Spirit, on the self-authentication of Scripture, or on some combination of these factors.

