

# **Logic And Fallacies Of Logic**

## **Analyzing The Fallacies Of Logic Used Against The Christian Faith**

**Dr. Johnson C. Philip & Dr. Saneesh Cherian**  
(Revised and expanded By Paul Edward)

### **Chapter 1**

#### **Logic And Fallacies Of Logic** (An Introduction)

The great advances made by science and technology and the vast amount of knowledge accumulating every day is a direct result of logical thinking. Logic is that branch of learning that tells how human experiences and speculations are to be evaluated.

Logic lays fairly strict guidelines to evaluate the processes by which knowledge is obtained. Further, it helps one in evaluating this knowledge itself. As the author of Hebrews writes: "But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (Heb 5:14) In this we see that one of the great purposes of logic is to help us distinguish the good from the bad.

Superstition is knowledge deduced or obtained without logic, and speculation is deduction made without proof. Both of these methods are like castles built on the sea shore. All it takes is one wave of logic to wash them away, yet people use these flimsy methods all the time to support their positions or to justify their behaviors. In Job 38:2, God soundly rebukes Job for engaging in speculation concerning Job's circumstances. God thunders from heaven, "Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" Because these methods are flimsy, those who use them often resort to tricks to support their claims. Quite often proofs in favour of a viewpoint are collected arbitrarily, while proofs against it are overlooked. The study is not systematic in any acceptable way.

On the other hand, science is knowledge obtained by an objective combination of logic and repetitive experiments. As Isaiah wrote: "For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little." (Isa 28:10) This verse shows us how logical thinking is systematic and sequential. True logical arguments build upward or outward from a solid foundation, with each step (called a premise) connected to another. Compare this to superstition or speculation, which is often, random and disconnected.

Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 10:16 – "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves." This verse shows us why a reasonable study and appreciation of logic is necessary for any level of success in Christian Apologetics. There are wolves among us. Men and women who would pervert the truth for their own wicked ends and use any and all means to lead people astray. To combat these wolves, there are two important reasons that the Christian needs to study logic. First, a study of logic helps the apologist to think and present his position objectively and accurately. Second, a large number of rational objections brought up against the Bible and the Christian faith stem from logically faulty deductions.

Deduction is a tricky matter, especially when faulty deductions are the weapon used by the other side. Unless an apologist has at least some acquaintance with the correct procedures of deduction and unless he or she is familiar with fallacies of deduction the apologist will have a difficult time answering questions raised by the shrewd critic. In all probability, an unprepared apologist will waste time on a non-issue, frustrating the sincere inquirer and

losing a strong case.

It is quite common these days to witness Christians rising up to answer the critics but only exposing their own inabilities and frustrations. Many times the objections raised by the critics are simply dumb, but the lack of preparation on the Christian's side prompts him to face the criticisms with equally ignorant answers. At the same time, many of the more sincere inquirers are frustrated by all this. They know that the objection doesn't have any substance, but at the same time they perceive that the answer proposed by the unprepared person is equally ridiculous. This only adds to their agony.

An apologist who has done his or her homework well, however, will be in a position to analyze the objections, place them into their appropriate categories of logical fallacies, and then intelligently and systematically disprove the opponent's argument. This approach is fast, reliable and -- most important -- convincing to every honest inquirer.

### **Logic And Other Sciences**

All branches of learning can be divided into two groups: analytical and normative (rule laying). Analytical sciences deal only with describing and analyzing information. Normative sciences, however, provide the basic norms and tools that are necessary for reliable analysis and conclusions.

Physical sciences like Physics, Chemistry and Botany and sociological sciences like Psychology, sociology, and history etc. are analytical sciences. On the other hand, logic and mathematics are normative sciences. The first category of information needs the second one for validating and establishing truth.

Consider the widely publicized model of the atom. Atoms are physical realities while the atomic model is an invisible mathematical model that tries to represent actual atoms. The model in itself is only a description of the way an atom might be made of. One needs logic both to develop the model as well as to deduce how close it might be to the physical atom.

Or consider the proverbial story of Newton and the falling apple. Apples have always been falling and everyone accepted it till that time as a fact of nature. But it is the application of logical thinking that made Newton deduce what might be happening.

This means that Logic is that branch of learning that deals with inductions and deductions in every investigation. Hence Logic can even be called "the science of sciences". Obviously, no one can ignore the study of logic if he is serious about defending the Christian faith.

### **Deductive/Inductive Logic**

Deduction and induction are the two basic approaches used in Logic to arrive at valid conclusions. In deduction one arrives at particular statements from general statements. Induction on the other hand starts from particulars and advances to general conclusions. Both approaches are equally valid and important for sciences. For the apologist practicing in the modern world, however, deductive logic is needed more frequently than the inductive counterpart.

A large number of technical terms are required to give a complete introduction to deductive logic, but in this discussion we will restrict ourselves to few words very important for the

apologist. The first two terms are: PREMISES and DEDUCTION.

Premises are the informative statements on the basis of which conclusions (or deductions) are made. In the correct kind of deductive reasoning, the conclusions follow necessarily from the information (Premises) that is given.

For example :

**Premise 1: If Rover is a dog, then Rover is an animal.**

**Premise 2: Rover is a dog.**

-----  
**Deduction: We deduce that Rover is an animal.**

The above deduction is not only correct, but it also follows necessarily from the two premises given. It should be noted, however, that the process of deduction doesn't say anything about the validity/truth of the premises themselves. The premises must be validated BEFORE they are used for any deduction because if the premises are invalid, the deductions that necessarily follow will also be invalid.

An example of invalid deduction arising out of one or more faulty premises is illustrated below:

**Premise 1- All dogs have four legs.**

**Premise 2- The tail shall be counted as a leg.**

-----  
**Deduction - All dogs have five legs.**

The deduction is theoretically correct, but not practically true because the second premise is incorrect. Calling a tail a leg does not make it one in real life!

Making valid deductions is not easy even if the given premises are correct. For example :

**Premise 1: If Rover is a dog, then Rover is an animal.**

**Premise 2: Rover is not a dog.**

-----  
**Deduction: Therefore Rover is not an animal.**

The above deduction is wrong because dogs are not the only animals. Rover could be a lion, cow, deer or even a man. This would make the premises right but the deduction wrong.

To make a deduction right and true to facts a number of conditions have to be satisfied: the premises must be true, the exact relations between the premises must be known, and correct principles of deduction should be used.

Critics who would like to challenge the reliability of the Bible often use wrong or unrelated premises to arrive at faulty deductions. These deductions are then presented as exhibits to discredit the Scriptures. What's needed in such cases is to expose the faulty premises because then the wrong deductions will automatically be discredited.

Some of the common statements with errors of deduction are :

**Premise 1: Jephthah offered his daughter as a sacrifice.**

**Premise 2: The Israelites offered sacrifices regularly.**

-----  
**Deduction: Therefore, Israelites offered their daughters as sacrifice regularly.**

**Premise: God is Love**

-----  
**Deduction: Therefore, Love is God.**

**Premise 1: Obscene books contain descriptions of man-woman relationship**

**Premise 2: Songs of Solomon contains descriptions of man-women relationship.**

-----  
**Deduction: Therefore, Songs of Solomon is an obscene book.**

**Premise: Scientists did not find God on their visit to space**

-----  
**Deduction: Therefore, God does not exist.**

You will immediately perceive that all the deductions above are wrong, even if you are not able at this stage to present an exact analysis. You will, however, very soon be able to do it.

Many of the objections brought up against the Bible are as straightforward as the four examples above. These are only very simple, representative cases. The actual arguments often are much subtler, with one false premise built upon many other false premises and assumptions. This means that most of the times this would require a painstaking analysis on the part of the apologist, and it is expected that you are willing to pay this cost that's necessary to attain excellence in Christian Apologetics.

Many who question the Bible do so because of their ignorance or incomplete knowledge, but not all critics are incompetent. Many of them are highly learned scholars who are driven by a compulsive obsession to attack the Bible. Many of them are thoroughly equipped for the task, and they attack the Christian faith ruthlessly. They become formidable enemies of faith when they combine their scholarship with false deductions, loaded words, and propaganda techniques. They devour the faith of many vulnerable (and not so vulnerable) believers, and they can be countered only if the apologist is willing to discipline himself to face the challenge.

The case of Songs of Solomon cited before has been a favorite argument for the critics. So much so that they have even been able to convince many believers that this book is out of place in the Bible. This is highly regrettable because it rests upon false premises. It is true that both pornographic literature as well as Songs of Solomon contain descriptions of man-women relationship, but this is not sufficient ground to indict the Bible. The premises used by the critic are too few to arrive at a meaningful deduction.

At the outset itself it should be made clear that large number of medical textbooks contain for greater and far more intimate and explicit details of such relationship. Most of them also contain a liberal amount explicit photographs related to the subject. Yet none in his sound mind would label these books as pornographic. Similarly, Songs of Solomon has been written for a specific purpose, and not to manipulate carnal passions.

The purpose of pornographic literature is to stimulate lust in the reader while the purpose of medical books is scientific instruction. Similarly the purpose of Songs of Solomon is to teach the joys of right-man right-woman relationship. The addition of this premise makes a lot of difference in the deduction imposed by the critic.

An effective way in which errors of deduction have been combined with propaganda techniques can be seen in the famous speech of Bertrand Russell titled, "Why I Am Not A Christian". Almost all proofs advanced by him against the existence of God contain carefully chosen errors of logic coupled with manipulative speech. There is no substance in these arguments, yet people are influenced due to the well-placed logical fallacies.

Further, instead of disproving the existence of God, in this speech he come very close to the opposite conclusion -- that is, accepting the existence of God. What's more, in this speech (now, a widely circulated essay), he does not address the main issue at all ! Nowhere does he explain why he is not a Christian -- except to imply that he doesn't like Christianity ! Yet people think that in this essay he refutes the historical basis of Christianity. This is the power of the propaganda techniques used by rationalists and atheists.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Errors And Fallacies Of Deduction -- I**

**Making correct deductions from given premises depends upon many factors. If any of these necessary factors is missing, then in all probability the deduction will be wrong. Such erroneous conclusions are often called "Fallacies Of Deduction". Fallacies have been collected, studied, analyzed, and classified into many categories. An acquaintance with these groups will help you to spot errors and explain them authoritatively.**

It must be stressed once again that it is not the science of Logic that gives rise to these fallacies, but rather it is the misuse or careless use of Logic that causes error. Thankfully, the science of Logic itself provides the tools necessary to detect and analyze fallacies.

In this presentation of fallacies our aim is not to turn you into expert Logicians, but into capable apologists. Consequently the attempt here is not to present fallacies in exhaustive detail. Rather, we have selected only the most frequently encountered fallacies. Once a person masters these, he will be able to spot fallacies even if they fall outside these categories.

Errors of deduction can be divided into several categories, discussed in this chapter and the following ones:

### **Errors Of Interpretation**

**1-Errors Of Deduction (Errors Of Conversion-Obversion):** Many times one has to convert statements from one form to another. Strict rules governing such conversions are there, but if they are ignored errors of deduction or conversion-obversion happen. Let us consider the well known statement, "Every man is mortal". Now if this is to be converted into a sentence that stresses not the "man" part but the "mortal" part, what will the new form be ? The natural tendency is to say, "Every mortal is a man", but that is obviously wrong.

Every mortal need not be a man. It could be an animal. The correct form is, "some mortals are men".

In the same way from "Every Israelite crossed the sea" one doesn't deduce that "Everyone

who crossed the sea was an Israelite". Rather, the correct deduction would look like, "some of the people who crossed the sea were Israelites". Of course this "some" can be modified into "many" or "most" depending upon additional information, but such modification will first require the basic form of the deduction to be correct.

The conversion of "God is Love" into "Love is God" can also be placed into this category.

**2- Errors Due To Ambiguity (Amphiboly):** Plenty of words are required to construct sentences. Words are of many kinds -- general or particular, broad or narrow, technical or non technical. Each one has a place and occasion for use.

If a sentence is constructed using ambiguous words, the meaning will be susceptible to error. This is called error due to ambiguity. While it is an irritant in common life, it is a powerful tool in the hands of those who would like to manipulate people -- politicians, propagandists, fortune-tellers, or rationalists /atheists.

Look at the following statements: "At the age of twenty five my father shared the gospel with me". It is ambiguous whether the father or the son was twenty five years old when the incident took place. Or, "If you want to know all about hell, come next Sunday to our church".

The two ways into which these sentences lend themselves for interpretation introduces the error of ambiguity.

When the Bible is translated into different languages, this kind of difficulty arises frequently because no translator can check for all possible errors or all possible implications of a sentence. Further, no two languages convey the same meaning identically. Greek vocabulary has cases, tenses, voices, moods, and other factors that confer a high level of exactness that is not available in many languages. Consequently many translations might show errors of ambiguity here and there.

The famous quote, "thou are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church" (Matthew 16:18) comes into this category. It is difficult to translate this sentence with the same implications as found in Greek, and has therefore been misquoted by people to establish Peter's apostolic superiority.

**3-Fallacy of Accent:** Some languages are so strict in their classification (parsing) of words that word-order or other manipulations in sentences do not make much difference in meaning. Greek and Sanskrit fall into this category. On the other hand, word-order is very important in languages like English or Hindi for example:

**You can go  
Can you go**

use the same three words, but the word-order has changed the meaning radically. Grammar alone is not sufficient for meaning determination at many occasions in this kind of languages. This handicap can many times create havoc with meaning in these languages.

A good number of statements in such languages can be distorted by shifting the emphasis to a wrong word. For example, Lord Jesus commands His followers to love their neighbour. Thus whether it is by stressing a wrong word, wrong phrase, or whether it is by quoting out of context, the shift in meaning produced is called the error of accent. This kind of error is

quite common among those who misquote the Bible for attacking it.

### **Chapter 3** **Errors And Fallacies Of Deduction -- 2** **Formal Fallacies (Fallacies Of Form)**

Formal fallacies, or errors of form, are another type within the fallacies of deduction, and occur when the laws of logical sentence construction are overlooked. Some of them are:

**1-The Fallacy of Four Terms:** In deductive logic one starts with the given premises and arrives at conclusions or logical deductions. In the simplest type of deduction, one starts with two related premises and arrives at a single conclusion. This combination is usually called a syllogism. For example.

**All men are sinners**

**I am a man**

-----  
**Therefore I am a sinner**

The above set of three statements is a syllogism and in such simple cases the premises are called the major premises and the minor premises. These two premises contain three important constituents: major term, minor term, and the middle term. These three terms and their relationship must conform to certain rules of logic. Every violation of these rules will give rise to errors of logic.

The fallacy of four term occurs when four terms occur instead of the permitted three. For example, look at the following premises:

**All men are sinners.**

**All angels are spirits.**

The above statements contain four terms (men, sinners, angels, and spirits) but there is no common middle term between the premises. No valid deduction is possible from such syllogisms.

The example given above does not look very threatening because even a child can see that they cannot be used to obtain a valid deduction. However, there is a variation of this fallacy of four terms that is of great interest to apologists. In this fallacy, the syllogism apparently contains only three terms as demanded by logic. However, it really has four terms due to a catch: the middle term is used with two **different** meanings in the two premises. For example,

**The judge looked into the case**

**Boxes are a type of case**

-----  
**The judge looked into a box**

The conclusion is false because the middle term "case" has two different meanings here. In the first premise it means a court-case while in the second premise it refers to container to put something in. Therefore even though there are only three terms here, it is actually a case of four-term fallacy because the middle term has been used with two different meanings. The same type of error can be seen when the major or minor terms have more than one meaning in the given context.



Examples related to Bible abound, but the classic case is the story of the woman who refused to believe that the Israelites carried the "ark" [of covenant] with them because nobody could carry "Noah's ark" on their shoulders. The argument goes something like this:

**Noah built a giant ark  
Israelites carried the ark through the wilderness**

---

**Israelites carried Noah's ark through the wilderness**

Another common example is, Evolution is change

**We see change everywhere**

---

**We see evolution everywhere**

Even though change is seen everywhere, this is drastically different from the "change" that is demanded by proponents of evolution. Change in the universe always produces degeneration whereas evolution is supposed to be a self-building change. Thus the word "change" has been used with two different meanings here, giving rise to the fallacy of four terms in support of evolution.

**2-Error of undistributed Middle:** The middle-term is very important for arriving at deductions because it is this term that establishes the connection between the two given premises. For deduction to work properly, the given middle term must be common to both of the given premises in a meaningful way.

If the given middle-term does not satisfy this condition, then the first premise will have the first half of the middle term while the second premise will contain the second half of the middle term, and the deduction will turn out to be ridiculous. For example.

**All dogs have four legs  
All tables have four legs**

---

**Therefore all dogs are tables**

The conclusion is not only false but also ridiculous. The correct way of presenting it would be:

**All dogs have four legs  
Rover is a dog**

---

**Rover has four legs**

and,

**All tables have four legs  
This is my table**



-----  
**My table has four legs**

Further, a person who understands the rules of deduction and distribution of the middle term might make a move adventurous deduction and safely conclude; All dogs have four legs

**All tables have four legs**  
**All dogs have four legs**

-----  
**Therefore all dogs and tables have four legs**

**3-Error due to illicit major:** Not only should the middle term be distributed, the major term of the major premise should also be distributed properly. If the major term is stated in way that it cannot be connected or related to other terms, then the "distribution" is improper. For example.

**Every cat is a mammal**  
**A dog is not a cat**

-----  
**A dog is not a mammal**

Or,

**Every man is a sinner**  
**A Woman is not a man**

-----  
**A woman is not a sinner**

The conclusion is obviously false. The proper way of stating the case can be illustrated in two stages:

**Every man is a sinner.**  
**Every woman is a sinner**

-----  
**Every man and woman is a sinner**

and,

**Every man and woman is a sinner**  
**A woman is not a man**

-----  
**A woman is not a man, but she is a sinner**

**4-Error due to illicit minor:** Just as the major term should be distributed properly in the major premises, the minor term should also be properly distributed in the minor premises. The error produced by non distribution is seen in:

**Every generous person is liked by the poor**  
**Every generous person is meek**

---

**Every meek person is liked by the poor**

The conclusion is obviously false because every meek person need not be generous. The correct way of stating the case would go something like this:

**Every generous person is meek**  
**Not every meek person is generous**

---

**Some meek persons are generous**

and,

**Every generous person is liked by the poor**  
**Some meek persons are generous**

---

**Some meek persons are liked by the poor**

The following are some spiritual examples of the same fallacy:

**Every Christian is a child of God**  
**Every Christian is an ambassador**

---

**Every ambassador is a child of God**

**The Bible is the inspired Word of God**  
**The Bible contains the speeches of men, animals, spirits, and God**

---

**The speeches of men, animals, spirits, and God in Bible are the inspired Word of God**

**5-Fallacy arising out of two negative premises:** Negative premises are a very important constituent of human language, and accurate deductions would not have been possible in many cases if they did not exist. However, negative premises in themselves may not always furnish sufficient information to make a meaningful deduction.

Therefore it is a rule of syllogism that it is not possible to arrive at a meaningful deduction from two negative premises. Whenever a deduction is made from such premises, the conclusion is bound to be erroneous. For example,

**Anger is not good**  
**Treachery is not anger**

---

**Therefore treachery is good**

Error of this type is seen when people use negatives to attack statements of the Bible. A large number of objections brought up against persons or events falls into this category. (These objections are usually based upon history/archaeology). The typical argument goes something like this,

- 1. (I do not believe what Luke has recorded).**
- 2. Politarches mentioned in the book of Acts are not found mentioned outside the Bible**

---

**"Politarches" is a term that does not exist outside the Bible**

The first premise above is shown in brackets because even though it is the first and the major premise upon which the critics base their arguments, they do not mention it openly or explicitly. Acknowledgment to the existence of this premise comes out very rarely only from them. But whether they acknowledge its existence or not, it is always there as a negative premise.

The second premise, as it is almost always presented, is also negative. Thus the deduction is bound to be erroneous. The difficulty is compounded by the critic's assertion that the second premise is the major premise -- which it is not.

In fact the above objection has been raised against Dr. Luke by many critics, The term "politarch" was not found in archaeological records for a very long time, but eventually it was found in some inscription vindicating Dr. Luke and illustrating the fallacy of arguing from two negative premises.

Similar arguments have been raised about almost all historical narratives of the Bible. Once a person understands the logical fallacy of such arguments, he can cut the critic to the proper size.

**6-Fallacy arising out of two particular premises:** Premises can embrace a wide area or just a narrow field. However, for obtaining a meaningful deduction it is essential that the given premises meet each other at some point. Therefore, according to the rules of syllogism, it is not possible to arrive at a valuable deduction from particular statements (that are so narrow that they do not meet each other). If this is done, the deduction will be false. For example,

**Some radio broadcasts are false propaganda**  
**Some radio broadcasts are educational**

---

**Some educational broadcasts are false propaganda**

The deduction is wrong. For it to be right or valid, at least one of the premises must be universal. For example,

**All radio broadcasts contain some error**  
**Some radio broadcasts are educational**

---

**All educational broadcasts contain some error**

**7-Fallacy arising out of denying the antecedent:** Many hypothetical statements will have two parts: the antecedent (precedent) and the consequent. The fulfillment of the consequent depends upon the fulfillment of the precedent. In such cases, the precedent should not be denied because this would give rise to erroneous deduction. For example,

**If it rains, she will not take a bath**

**It did not rain**

---

**She took a bath.**

The conclusion cannot be sustained, and therefore the deduction is invalid. This is because the major premise (the precedent) does not indicate that she will surely take a bath in the absence of rain. For a valid deduction, another premise and another set of syllogism is necessary. This will be :

**If it rains, she will not take a bath**

**It did not rain.**

---

**No deduction.**

and,

**If it does not rain, she will take a bath**

**It did not rain.**

---

**She took a bath.**

In this, and many other cases, the information usually given might not be sufficient for valid deduction. The best course in such cases would be to seek additional information, not jumping into erroneous conclusions from improper premises.

**8-Fallacy arising out of affirming the consequent:** In hypothetical statements that have a precedent as well as a consequent, the consequent depends upon the precedent but not necessarily the other way round. Thus any deduction made when the consequence is denied is bound to be false. For example,

**If it rains, she will not take a bath**

**She did not take a bath**

---

**It rained**

The conclusion is invalid because it doesn't say that not taking of a bath would take place only when it rains. In fact she might decide not to take bath even when it is not raining. Thus not taking of bath does not guarantee that it did not rain.

This one is used a lot against the Christian faith, and people easily fall in for it. For example,

**If God exists, people should be happy (they should not suffer)**

**People are not happy (they suffer)**

---

**God does not exist**

The consequent depends upon the precedent, but not necessarily the other way round.

**9-Fallacies arising out of improper disjunction:** Many premises contain more than one possibility. Sometimes only one of them is true while at other times both of them might be true. The way in which the premise is stated should make this clear. Many times people use disjunctive statements so that one possibility seems to exclude the other, even though both should have been given equal weight. If the premises themselves are wrong, the conclusion is bound to be wrong. For example,

**Either the driver or the conductor is accountable to the owner  
The conductor is accountable to the owner**

---

**The driver is not accountable to the owner.**

The conclusion is not valid in most cases because both the driver as well as the conductor in a bus are accountable to the owners. The error arises not due to faulty deduction, but due to improperly stated premises. In this case the "either" should be replaced with "both" to make the premises right.

**10-Material Fallacies:** Even if a given syllogism satisfies all the rules of logic, the conclusion will still be wrong if the premises contain error about the subject matter being discussed. These are called material fallacies. For example,

**Every dog has four legs  
The tail shall also be counted as a leg**

---

**Therefore every dog has a total of five legs.**

The above deduction necessarily follows from the given premises, yet it is wrong because the second premise is erroneous. Calling a tail a leg does not make it a leg !

This kind of argument is very common among those who like to criticize the Bible. Many of them first establish a false premise, then obtain a false deduction, and then use this deduction to attack the Bible. For example.

**Paul could not have written the epistles  
The computer doesn't indicate that Paul wrote the Epistles**

---

**The computer indicates that Paul DID NOT write the Epistles.**

The argument above has been brought up by many, but it contains material fallacy because neither of the premises have been established.

A recent one, from a book attacking the morality of the Bible has an argument that can be expressed as:

**Cain got married  
Eve was the only woman on earth at that time**

---

**Cain married his own mother**

The book then goes on to attack the Bible by claiming that it teaches incest.

Two other types of material fallacies are also common. They are called FALLACY OF

PRESUMPTION and FALLACY OF EQUIVOCATION.

**Fallacy Of Presumption:** What is being deduced should necessarily follow from the components of the syllogism. If a deduction has been made that does not automatically follow from the premises, then the person making the deduction has presumed something additional also as true. This kind of a material fallacy is called Fallacy of presumption.

Fallacies of presumption are widespread, and many times it is difficult to discover them because people who make these assumptions do not readily reveal them. Almost everyone who has camped against the Bible or the Christian faith has based a good amount of their arguments upon presumptions that are not obvious or visible to others. Also, many of them have successfully played upon the presumptions which are widespread against the Christian faith and thought. For example.

**The fundamentalists believe in fiat creation  
(Fundamentalists are narrow-minded bigots)**

---

**The fundamentalists believe in fiat creation  
because they are narrow-minded bigots.**

The premise shown in parenthesis is usually not stated publicly, but its presence is assumed by the attacker. Most of the rationalists use arguments in such a manner that their listeners unconsciously supply this presumption without even being aware of what they are doing. This way everyone listening to them is convinced that a logical discussion of the topic has yielded conclusions against the Bible. In reality it is not logic but the illogical presumption that has influenced people to make a deduction against the Bible.

**Fallacy Of Equivocation:** Words can be used in many ways. For example, some words are so broad and general in nature that they are capable of being stretched. On using them, the conclusion is bound to be misleading. This kind of usage is a great tool of attack in the hands of those people who would like to discredit the Christian faith. They usually start with the well-known meaning of the "broad" word, and eventually switch over to that meaning which brings them benefit. This is fallacy of equivocation. For example,

**Change is the rule of nature  
Moral standards are changing everywhere**

---

**Changing moral standards are the rule**

The conclusion is false because even though change is seen everywhere, these natural changes are different from the contrived change that is seen in the moral realm. Natural changes takes place because they are the rule of nature, but not so with contrived change. The fact that they have to be contrived shows that they are not natural.

**Chapter 4**  
**Errors And Fallacies Of Deduction -- 3**  
Fallacies Of Multiple Meaning

Deduction can run into grave error when meaning of words used are not maintained consistently. clever debaters frequently use this kind of verbal manipulation, the major categories of which are:

**1. Errors due to ambiguous terms:** Words can be of many types, and not all of them

are suitable for use in syllogisms. For logical deduction the terms used should be specific in their meaning and interpretation. If the words used have multiple meanings, or if their meaning is ambiguous, then the deduction will tend to be wrong.

Words like star, art, junction, fix, sickness, etc. tend to have many meanings. Unqualified use of these words is likely to give rise to errors of deduction.

Statements which use ambiguous terms, or terms with multiple meanings, will not be sufficiently clear for meaningful deduction. The major term, the minor term, as well as the middle term should be free of this error before a correct conclusion can be obtained.

**2. Fallacy arising out of figure of speech:** Figures of speech are a necessary part of any living language. Almost all people use words in a non-literal way, but here we are not referring to that kind of use. Rather, our reference is to different words which originate from one and the same root. Also, some words have the same form, but different meanings (homonyms).

The use of different words coming from the same root, and the use of homonyms, cause quite a lot of confusion in deduction. This is called fallacy arising out of figures of speech. Consider the following example:

**Question: Did you eat the "whole"...**

**Answer: How could I ever eat the "hole".....!**

**3. Fallacy of composition:** Many times an event affects one or more persons in a group. Or, a particular action/principle might be found that affects individuals. If these kinds of things are then extrapolated to the whole group without justification, the result would be false. This is called the fallacy of composition. For example,

**A cannot eat the whole food**

**B cannot eat the whole food**

**C cannot eat the whole food**

-----  
**A, B, and C together cannot eat the whole food.**

Even to a casual listener it is obvious that this conclusion need not be true. Yet this kind of fallacy is often called upon to attack Christians. For example,

**A is a Christian, but is a very bad character.**

**B is a Christian, but is a very bad character.**

-----  
**All Christians are bad characters.**

This is a common way of attack from those who would like to oppose Christians. When this fallacy is repeated frequently, many start thinking that it is true.

Various shades of this argument is frequently directed against Christianity and the Christian faith. This is what's done by rationalists and humanists throughout the world. The same is the way the Christian community in India has been discredited through movies. Indian movies often depict Christians as the worst people in society (drunkards, things,



murderers, immoral and owners of gambling/prostitution dens). Consequently, most Indians believe the Christians are the dirt of the society.

**4. Fallacy of Division:** This is the exact opposite of the fallacy of composition. When something that is applicable only to a group (or entity) as a whole is applied wrongly to individual members of that group this kind of fallacy arises. For example,

**No one can read the whole Bible in a day  
Proverbs is a part of the Bible**

-----  
**Therefore none can read Proverbs in a day**

Obviously the deduction is false

**5 Fallacy of accident:** Many times the meaning of a certain statement might apply only in a general way. At other times a particular statement might be valid in a particular way. But if the general statement is applied to particulars, or if the particular statement is applied in a general way, the fallacy of accident takes place. For example,

**Indians are religious  
Rajan is an Indian**

-----  
**Rajan is religious.**

The above conclusion need not be correct because its method of deduction is faulty. While Indians in general are religious, every Indian need not be religious. Further, the major premise does not imply this about each and every individual. The same error, but in the opposite way is seen in the following example.

**A typist must be efficient in his job  
My office employs a large number of typists**

-----  
**All typists in my office are efficient.**

The conclusion need not be correct because the major premise does not indicate that all typists in a given office are surely going to be efficient. Going from particular to general is seen frequently in erroneous philosophies and generalizations:

**Avoiding work is good when one is sick  
Therefore avoiding work is good always**

**Albert Einstein demonstrated that time is relative  
Therefore Einstein demonstrated that everything is relative  
Therefore there are no absolutes !**

**6 Fallacy of dilemma:** We have already seen that the major and minor premises must have some definite connection with each other. But if the terms in the major premises are

not connected with each other, and when the minor premise is not properly connected with the major premise, no meaningful deduction is possible.

If a person is forced to make a deduction from premises that are not properly connected, this forced deduction will in all probability be wrong. This kind of error is called the fallacy of dilemma.

## **Chapter 5** **Errors And Fallacies Of Deduction -- 4** **Fallacies Of Concept**

Proving or disproving of a given statement through logical deduction has to take a clear-cut and non ambiguous path. Certain basic principles guide and control this procedure, and anything that violates this procedure destroys the process of deduction. The results arrived in such a manner will be wrong due to the fallacies of concept. These fallacies can be divided into the following groups :

**1. The error of circular reasoning (Petition Principii):** Every syllogism has certain component statements in it, and a logical deduction has to come out of them. But before this deduction can be true, the components of the syllogism (i.e., the premises) themselves must be true.

The deduction obtained from the syllogism cannot be obtained to establish the reliability or unreliability of the premises themselves ! Their truth should be established independent of the deduction, even before the deduction is ever attempted.

If a deduction is used to establish the truth of the given premises, the logician is in error. This is called the error of circular reasoning. It is quite common both in radical theology as well as in evolutionary/humanistic thinking. For example:

**Miracles are impossible and therefore the Bible is false.**

**The Bible is false because miracles have been shown to be false.**

**The earth is billions of years old, because evolution demands long ages.**

**Evolution must be true because the earth is billions of years old.**

**Rock music must be good because everybody like it.**

**Everybody likes rock music because if is good.**

**2. Fallacy of multiple questions:** An interrogation might require a whole chain of questions, but each question in this chain must ask one and only one question. It should be possible for the questioned person to respond with a YES or NO answer. If the YES or NO answer results in unsaid or wrong implications, the interrogator has (in all probability) hidden other questions or statements in his simple-looking question. Thus by choosing the YES or NO answer, the person is forced to imply statements that may or may not be true. This is called the fallacy of multiple questions. It is a powerful tool in the hands of interrogators and mind manipulators.

**"Have you stopped beating your wife" or " are you drunk today"** are questions of this kind, when put to people who don't indulge in these activities. Whether the responder answers yes or no, the additional implication cannot be denied -- that he is a wife-beater or drunkard. In logical deduction, the correct way of deduction, the correct way of deducing

would be:

**Do you beat your wife ?  
If yes, have you stopped beating her ?**

**Do you drink ?  
If so, are you drunk today ?**

In the fallacious questions mentioned above, the first question of the syllogism is hidden so cleverly that irrespective of the response, the first question is answered in the affirmative. This is a deceptive method of putting one's prejudiced statements in the mouth of another person. It is seen at work in all kinds of loaded statements and is an effective weapon to neutralize someone who does not understand the trick. The following are some examples :

**Don't you know that science has disproved the existence of God !  
Don't you know that science has disproved the Bible !  
Do you still believe in the Bible ?  
Are you still with that religious crowd ?**

Like the light-weight judo expert who is able to unbalance and throw away his heavy opponent, the fallacy of multiple questions can throw most people off balance. The injury can be serious. The best intellectual strategy is to counter the question with a powerful question.

When someone says, "Don't you know that science has disproved the existence of God" it is best not to say "No that's wrong". The protest will take you to a weak defensive position instead of a powerful offensive ! The best would be to ask, "Is that so ? Then please tell me what experiment of science has disproved God". This will not only put your adversary on the defensive, but will also expose the logical fallacy of his stand.

**3. Fallacy of sidetracking (Ignoratio Elenchi):** When the subject matter being discussed is complex, or when it relates to a subject that involves emotions of the listeners/readers, it is easy to sidetrack them knowingly or unknowingly. The clever debater manipulates their emotions and ends up discussing an issue that is not at all part of the story. Yet the listener is so much absorbed in the story that they never notice this deviation. This is called the fallacy of sidetracking, and many a person makes his living out of it !

The masses (or the mob) are not known for objective and logical thinking on important issues. Consequently, sidetracking has become a widely used trick to cheat people. People who practice this trick have even developed their own fool-proof methods, and five of them are given below.

**A-The Fallacy Of Argument By Accusation (Argumentum Ad Hominem):** In a particular argument one's opponent might have the stronger and correct points, yet many a times one might be able to discover some weakness or abnormality in his character that can be played up and magnified in front of the masses.

Interestingly, the attack is directed against a person and not against the issues that he is discussing, yet one gets definite results out of this manipulation. Once the opponent is discredited by playing up the emotions of the masses, his position is weakened. This is because the masses are not interested in a logical discussion of the issues involved.

Whenever the relation of Bible and science is discussed, the opponents suppress the real issues. They immediately bring up nasty stories about how the organized religion opposed science. The whole debate becomes charged with emotions, and many jump to conclusions against the Bible without entering into a logical investigation of the matter. This is the reason why people who oppose the Bible in a debate have to be reminded repeatedly to stick to facts.

***B-The Fallacy Of Argument By Mob Emotions (Argumentum Ad Populum):*** Emotion is a strong force, and in the hands of a skilled speaker or writer it becomes a destructively powerful tool. Such a person can incite the mob to forget reality, to behave in any way that this person desires. It is common to see this kind of persons manipulating the emotions of people, instead of sticking to facts in the debate.

Human emotions span a wide spectrum -- from self pity to strong hatred, and from sadness up to uncontrolled ecstasy. Anyone who disregards reason and logic to manipulate human emotions is trying to win his case by appealing to the fallacy of mob emotions.

***C-The Fallacy Of Argument By Exploiting The Ignorance Of Listeners (Argumentum Ad Ignorantiam):*** Whenever there is a public controversy, a good number of people get interested in the debate. Many of them even jump into the argument. However very few of them might have sufficient knowledge or background in the subject to understand the issues involved. Consequently, a good debater can exploit their ignorance to his advantage and win the debate without even presenting his case.

A large number of arguments in politics, morality, population-control, modern music, and similar subjects move along this line. People who campaign for destruction always know more than the average person, and he effectively wins his case even though his argument is nothing except a logical fallacy.

***D-The Fallacy Of Argument By Appealing To The Opinion Of Famous People. (Argumentum Ad Verecundium):*** Humans are born hero worshipers. They soon discover that some people have been able to do things which they have not been able to do, and immediately start respecting the achievers. Knowingly or unknowingly this respect very soon changes into admiration or even deep reverence. When this revered person issues a statement, the followers accept it as God's word.

The respect given to people of education, achievement, or position is often exploited by people who try to quote them as authorities. Due to the respect commanded by these men, their word is used as an authoritative statement without consideration to whether they are competent to issue statements on the subject under consideration. Further, almost none of the followers stop to evaluate the logic behind such statements. To them the authority of the person issuing the proclamation is sufficient proof. This kind of argument is a fallacy of logic.

The opinion of authorities in different fields do have certain legitimate value, but when the proper boundaries are not followed the argument becomes a fallacy. It becomes a fallacy because a person's opinion need not be right merely because he enjoys a position of respect or authority. More serious than this, the method of logic does not depend upon the opinions of people. Rather, it depends upon facts and their mutual interrelation. Therefore all arguments and deductions must ultimately be based upon facts and not upon what people say.

***E-The Fallacy Of Argument By Threatening (Argumentum Ad Baculum):*** Logic requires that all arguments be settled by following the rules of deduction and induction. However, when some writers and speakers see that this approach is not working in their

favour, they resort to the use of brute force to win their case. This is not logic, but argument by threatening. The results will obviously be false.

The force used to win arguments might be actual or potential, and the nature of force might be social or even physical. Resorting to such force might bring an apparent victory, but the actual argument has not been won or settled using logic. On the contrary, this kind of activity, in the arena of logical discussion, is an acknowledgment that the argument is weak or baseless and that's why it requires something other than reason and logic to win the case. It is an acknowledgment of failure.

Summary (The Fallacy Of Sidetracking): The fallacy of sidetracking is an important tool in the hands of those who oppose truth. They have developed at least five powerful variants of this fallacy. All of these fallacies are used liberally by those who oppose the Bible in the Bible/Science and Creation/Evolution discussion.

Use of sidetracking is a good evidence that the opponent lacks evidence to favour him. Logic can be used to expose and tear his argument to pieces.

## **Chapter 6** **Fallacies Of Induction**

The logical processes of both **deduction** as well as **induction** are necessary to gain a better understanding of things around us. Both of these processes have definite methods of working, and fallacies arise when either of these is used improperly. The fallacies arising out of faulty induction can be divided into four categories :

**1-Fallacies Due To Faulty Language.**

**2-Fallacies Due To Faulty Observation.**

**3-Fallacies Due To Faulty Logic.**

**4-Fallacies Due To Human Nature.**

Each one of the above needs to be studied in detail, as is done below:

### **Fallacies Due To Faulty Language**

A good amount of ambiguity and uncertainty is found in the language used commonly for conversation. In spite of this handicap people are able to communicate sufficiently well with each other because their day to day experience helps them to see through the flexibilities of language. However, this kind of flexibility and ambiguity is not allowed in language used for logical deduction and induction.

For proper and valid logic-related activity, the statements used should be non-ambiguous, precise, and capable of only one interpretation. When a person does not adhere to these requirements, his arguments produce several kinds of fallacies. Some of these fallacies, connected to faulty language are :

**1. Fallacy due to multiple meaning:** Multiple meaning for the same word is a strength as well as weakness of human languages. It is a strength when a few words help a person to communicate a variety of meanings. It becomes a weakness when a person wants to express himself accurately and without the possibility of distortion or multiple meanings.

Logic deals with accurate conclusions and communications. Therefore one should choose as

precise a vocabulary as possible. Words that admit multiple meanings, and that require a whole lot of context to express a particular meaning, should find no place in discourses of logic. Yet people at times pick up unsuitable words -- words that have multiple meanings, and where it is difficult to determine the precise meaning implied. The errors introduced by the use of such words is called fallacy of multiple meaning.

The use of "change" as a synonym for "evolution" is one example. The use of "education" for "indoctrination" and the use of "imagination" for "fantasy" are examples of the fallacy of multiple meaning.

Radical scholars, proponents of evolution, and pushers of all kinds of deviant views are experts at using this fallacy to confuse and enslave people.

**2. Fallacy due to undefined terms:** Many commonly used words are never defined, but people still use them because they can "guess" the meaning. But such words might develop a great "spread" in meaning, so that two persons might mean entirely different things when they use the same word.

When commonly used but undefined terms are used in an argument, the fallacy of undefined terms can come up. Take the word "miracle" for example. In a debate a person might be using this word to denote the achievements of science/technology like giant dams, remote controlled aeroplanes, space travel or super computers. Another person might be using the same word to denote things like the changing of water into wine, walking on water, and resurrection of the dead. As long as the two sides do not make their definitions clear, the debate will go on endlessly without a meaningful conclusion.

Undefined words might hide under them connotations that are unexamined, and that are not substantiated, yet that exert a certain influence upon people. Since the hidden connotation is not examined or verified for truth, the argument goes into wrong directions and erroneous conclusions. This kind of terms block the process of effective reasoning, and give rise to broad creeds that have no logical basis behind them.

Words like democracy, culture, secular, prohibition (of liquor), discipline, etc. are some examples in this category. These words mean different things to different people, and therefore each one argues from his or here premise, never reaching a definite conclusion.

Among Christians words like fundamentalist, evangelical, inerrancy, creationist, and rational, etc. fall into this category. The term "evangelical" has been stretched so much in the present generation that people standing at the two extremities of this group would not even recognize each other. Therefore, for any discussion to bear fruit, the intended meaning of these terms must be made clear before beginning the discussion.

**3. Fallacies due to figurative language:** People use figurative language quite often to create special effects or to give a special emphasis. Brave persons are often compared with lions, the glory of persons is compared with sun, and the sweetness of speech is compared with honey.

Figurative speech takes numerous forms, some of them obvious and some very subtle. If figurative speech and its type is not recognized, the sentence containing it will be liable to misinterpretation. This type of misinterpretation leads to many fallacies, and the field of Bible-interpretation is no exception.

"Four corners" of the earth are mentioned many times in the Bible. "Pillars" of the earth are

mentioned when discussing the earth's stability. When the nature and actions of God are mentioned, terms related to human nature and actions are used to describe them. All of this is figurative speech, and their non-literal or figurative nature must be understood or acknowledged before any right kind of conclusion can be made.

### **Fallacies Due To Faulty Observation**

A correct observation of things and phenomena is necessary before one can make a correct inference. Further, these observations have to be as comprehensive and complete as possible so as to minimize or exclude wrong conclusions.

Non-observation of crucial facts, and even mal-observation of correct facts, leads to faulty and false conclusions. Human prejudices, preconceptions, tendencies to observe only what is favourable, to ignore what is hostile, and similar biases make many of the reported observations less than complete or reliable.

Good/bad signs and omens, superstitions, and unfounded fears are common examples of faulty observation. The same is the reason for confusing a twisted rope with a snake and a flying bedsheet on a clothesline with a demon.

A large number of quotations from Bible produced by rationalists come under this category of faulty observations. Most of their quotes are incomplete, and many of their observations are hasty.

A good example is the criticism of a famous atheist that the Bible condones immorality because it says that David was, "uncovering himself today in the eyes of the maids of his servants, as one of the base fellows shamelessly uncovers himself". (II Samuel 6 : 20). The author, however, fails to point out that these were the words of a contemptuous woman (his wife Michal), who "despised him in her heart" because he danced in public. Obviously, the comments of a person who was not objective were not going to be accurate.

What's more, the historical portion of the same narrative says that "David was wearing a linen ephod" (II Samuel 6 : 14). Ephod was a special piece of garment, meant specifically to cover nakedness, and not to uncover it, contrary to what Michal said in her despising tones !

### **Fallacies Due To Faulty Reasoning**

Logic deals with accurate reasoning, and a good number of examples have been included in this series. However, real-life cases are not all that simple or straight forward. Therefore, the difficulty of practical cases coupled with the possibility of error at every stage of reasoning gives rise to errors that can be called, Fallacies Due To Faulty Reasoning. Two widespread fallacies of this group are as follows :

**1. Fallacies of hypothesis:** An important task of induction is to discover causes and their effects. Most of the times the discovery of cause/effect phenomena on a strict scientific basis is a difficult task. Consequently many people knowingly or unknowingly abandon the strict objective approach and stoop down to hasty generalizations. Almost all such generalizations tend to be wrong.



A limited number of carelessly made generalizations turn out to be right, but this is more due to accident and less due to the process of logic. Since the purpose of logic is not to discover truth through accidents, this method is invalid.

When two events follow each other closely, then many people conclude (without sufficient investigation) that the first event was the cause and second the effect. Consider the example of a superstitious mother. If someone pays a good compliment about the good health of her child, and if the child falls sick or starts weeping after that, she immediately finds a cause-and-effect relation there. She feels that this person's "evil" eye, tongue or feeling has caused the sickness. Such people do not consider contrary evidence, because once logic is despised, error has to be defended.

Einstein's Theory of Relativity has been used by many a teacher to propagate false generalizations. It is common to hear teachers of social sciences and humanities saying that Einstein proved that everything in the Universe, including social and ethical values, are relative. Thus generalization is false because what Einstein proposed relates only to matter and energy, and not to anything else.

When false causes are proposed to explain an unrelated phenomena, and when false generalizations are made, the conclusions are wrong due to false reasoning, and is called fallacy of Hypothesis.

**2. Fallacies due to hasty generalization:** In the previous category we discussed the fallacy of "improper" generalization. In such cases the foundation is some well known truth or theory, but the generalization is false. There is another type of generalization that is more widespread, and also more erroneous.

When sufficient proof is not available in support of a cherished hypothesis, or when proof is difficult to obtain, people who are eager to come to a conclusion hastily advance a generalization from the incomplete data available. Such conclusions do not depend upon proper examination of a sufficient amount of data, but rather upon opinions, prejudices and circumstantial evidence. This is the fallacy of hasty generalization.

Logic demands that no inference be made before sufficient and compelling evidence is available.

## **Fallacies Due To Human Nature**

Man is supposed to be objective and rational in his thinking, but things doesn't always happen this way. On the contrary, many ideas and concepts have such a power to influence and subdue the minds of men in such way that they find it difficult to break free from the subtle influence of these erroneous ideas.

Logic demands that inferences be based only upon principles of Logic Every non-logical influence is to be rejected to safeguard truth. However, many influences are so subtle and powerful that many times they colour the interpretations and inferences of even the most learned thinkers. Some of the most common influences are as follows :

**1 - The influence of tribe.**

**2 - The influence of nature.**

**3 - The influence of the market-place.**

## 4 - The influence of popular ideas.

Let us look at each one in detail:

**1- The influence of tribe:** Here the word "tribe" refers to any closely knit or closely identifying group. It is easier for any idea to make home within a given group than across groups. The group identity and mutual acceptance help easy mass acceptance or rejection of ideas.

At times certain false ideas become widespread and popular in almost every group of people, and almost everyone in that group presupposes or accepts this idea as "the given". All evaluations are influenced by these presuppositions. Consequently the evaluations, judgments, and inferences made under these influences will be biased and prejudiced. The process of logic will be distorted, and the conclusions arrived at will be false.

People who belong to the "liberal" (or, more appropriately, the radical) wing of theology are a good example of this. Their conclusions are so heavily influenced by the beliefs of their "tribe" that most of them are not willing to listen seriously to people of differing inclinations. Many of them even refuse to consider scholars having a different viewpoint as men of learning, even if they are competent scholars. The influence of tribe is strong enough to deny the scholarship of others on non scholarly basis.

**2. Influence of nature:** In addition to the subtle influence of his tribe, every person has his own subtle ideas and fancies that influence his judgments. The educational background, the type of friends, and the type of books that one reads, all influence one's perspective. This makes some people narrow-minded, others conservative, and still others radical in their outlook.

Some people perceive only the bad and disappointing points, while others have a more mature perception. Very few people are able to break away from the prejudices of their individual perspective to view all the sides of a given problem.

A logically sound inference is not possible without breaking away from one's personal biases. This is the reason why researched papers and monographs are first scrutinized or critiqued by other experts before publication.

**3. Influence of the market-place:** All words have primary meanings: the meanings found in dictionaries. However, language is such a dynamic entity that phrases and words can be used to imply or communicate non standard meanings.

When inappropriate words, or words with wrong implications tagged to them, are used to describe people, things, or ideas, a lot of confusion and misunderstanding results. In such a subjective environment, some widely used terms might even represent things that do not exist or are false.

Wrong or improper terms, when used mindlessly and repeatedly, confuse the issues instead of clarifying them. This is known as the influence of the market place, and this is the root cause of many logical fallacies.

An interesting example of this fallacy is seen in almost every popular Christian/Non-Christian religious dialogue. Most people who indulge in such a

communication are not trained for the task. They don't have even the remotest idea about "presuppositions". Consequently, they naively assume that the meaning attached to theological terms by the Christian marketplace are identical with the meanings attached to these words by, say, the Hindu marketplace.

However, the meaning and purpose attached by different religions to words like sin, salvation, after-life, justification, grace, saviour, and righteousness, etc. are radically different from each other. Therefore, whenever people belonging to different religions discuss theological subjects, the vocabulary they use might be the same, but the meaning each one attaches to these words is different. Each one interprets the vocabulary (and consequently, the statements) according to the influence of the "market-place" around him. Thus inter-religious dialogues continue endlessly without arriving at any meaningful conclusion. This is one example of error of logic due to the influence of market place.

The error cited above can be eliminated only if each party defines the theological words before they use them. This has been done in Christian/Hindu dialogues by many who practice what is called "presuppositional apologetics". Not surprisingly, this kind of apologetics results in definite conclusions.

**4. Influence of popular ideas:** It has been noted throughout history that different ideas and opinions catch the fancy of different people. These ideas differ from society to society and generation to generation, and they influence almost everyone in a given population. These ideas might originate from religious leaders, philosophers, propagandists, or even from the scientific community, but what is distinguishing about them is the near total control that they exert upon the thinking of people. Since they subject all their evaluations for truth to these opinions, many fallacies and considerable error are introduced in the resulting inferences.

For example, in the middle ages the Aristotelian philosophy and a number of extreme religious (non Biblical) ideas dominated the minds of men. Consequently they rejected several scientific discoveries because these did not adjust well with these popular ideas. Today the hypothesis of mega-evolution and related hypotheses have taken the same place. Secular humanism has gained wide popularity. Most people judge even issues of life and death with these hypotheses firmly established at the back of their minds, and end up compromising the process of logic.

The present views about the worthlessness of human fetus can be traced to the influence of evolution. At the same time, the psychological deification of man can be traced to the influence of humanism.

The influences of tribes, nature, market place, and popular ideas are very much obvious in much of the present-day writings critical of the Bible and the Christian faith. Any work that counters these critics without first exposing their biases, prejudices, and presuppositions will only result in an endless series of inconclusive charges and countercharges. However, if the biases are exposed first, it becomes easy to demonstrate that the critic is not expounding the results of researches. Rather, he is using research as a pretext to project his presuppositions as his conclusions ! This is a fallacy of logic.

### **Conclusion !!**

**I**nduction and deduction are powerful tools of logical reasoning. All logical reasoning must be governed by rules of induction and deduction. This is not easy because of the variety of rules, the complexity of everyday problems, and man's perpetual desire to come to a quick conclusions. Consequently, many popular inferences are rendered wrong and even

ridiculous.

When people attack the Bible and the Christian faith, a good number of them are so prejudiced that an objective, logical, analysis is rendered impossible. In fact most of them start with the assumption that they must demonstrate that the Bible is indeed full of errors, and this only makes the matters worse. This bias encourages them to overlook even the most basic principles of logic. But the rules of logic are so clear and penetrating that anyone with a good background in logic can analyze them and expose their errors and biases.

Interestingly, a few persons among these critics have a good background in formal logic. Instead of using this knowledge to provide an objective analysis, they use their knowledge of logic only to confuse and throw people off the track. It is much more difficult to take this group to task, compared to the uninitiated, because their knowledge of logic makes their presentation deceptively subtle. Only a very good acquaintance with logic and much reading/analysis of this type of writings will make the apologist competent for the task.

A statement, writing, or lecture of a critic might contain more than one fallacy of logic. At times many of these fallacies might be mingled with each other in such a way that separating them one from another might become nearly impossible. The problem might be complicated further because of a limitation of logic -- the classification of errors cannot be made strictly exclusive, nor can they be made exhaustive.

This implies that the apologist must always expect some overlap, and also an element of surprise when he meets for the first time, a category of error that he had not studied before.

An overlap of errors makes the task of the apologist tough, but strengthens his thesis. He can demonstrate that the critic's argument suffers from multiple errors of logic. At the same time the apologist's previous background in logic and apologetics will help him not only to oppose new categories of fallacies, but also to detect the precise reasons why this argument depends upon a fallacy of logic.

Logic is not an easy subject for most people. Many who aspire to become apologists will surely discover this. However, a mastery of fallacies of logic will make them accurate expositors of Christian evidences. In fact no apologist will ever be able to rise above ambiguity without mastering certain minimum syllabus of logic. Thus even if a candidate for apologetics finds logic uninteresting, he must discipline himself to study it. Very soon he will get interested, and once he starts applying it to combat the errors of critics he will admit that now there is no turning back.

### **Reference And Comments:**

1. An integration of errors of logic and the methods of propaganda to win over people effectively against the Christian faith can be seen in, Bertrand Russel, Why I Am Not A Christian (and other essays on religion and related subjects), Simon And Schuster, New York, 1957, 267pp.
2. You will be able to observe numerous errors of logic if you read any publication of rationalists/atheists, provided you are armed with the information given in the present writing.
3. Almost any school or college textbook on logic will give you a broad overview of the subject. They will not relate the subject to the Christian faith, but the background that you can gain from them is invaluable.

4. A lot of universities offer logic as part of their philosophy courses. Checking with bookshops selling college level textbooks might bring up a lot of easily understandable and reasonably priced books.
  5. The more advanced books are not necessary for a beginner in apologetics. Consult them only after gaining some background first.
- 

Some students might find this appendix a bit difficult. However, we encourage them to read it till they can grasp the summary of it -- The Mentor

Appendix 1

## God and Logic

*Gordon H. Clark*

(One time Chairman of the Dept. of Philosophy, Butler University)

In thinking about God, Calvinists almost immediately repeat the Shorter Catechism and say, "God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable." Perhaps we do not pause to clarify our ideas of spirit, but hurry on to the attributes of "wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." But pause: Spirit, Wisdom, Truth. Psalm 31:5 addresses God as "O Lord God of truth." John 17:3 says, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God...." 1 John 5:6 says, "the Spirit is truth." Such verses as these indicate that God is a rational, thinking being whose thought exhibits the structure of Aristotelian logic.

If anyone objects to Aristotelian logic in this connection--and presumably he does not want to replace it with the Boolean-Russellian symbolic logic--let him ask and answer whether it is true for God that if all dogs have teeth, some dogs--spaniels--have teeth? Do those who contrast this "merely human logic" with a divine logic mean that for God all dogs may have teeth while spaniels do not? Similarly, with "merely human" arithmetic: two plus two is four for man, but is it eleven for God? Ever since St. Bernard distrusted Abelard, it has been a mark of piety in some quarters to disparage "mere human reason"; and at the present time existentialistic, neo-orthodox authors object to "straight-line" inference and insist that faith must "curb" logic. Thus they not only refuse to make logic an axiom, but reserve the right to repudiate it. In opposition to the latter view, the following argument will continue to insist on the necessity of logic; and with respect to the contention that Scripture cannot be axiomatic because logic must be, it will be necessary to spell out in greater detail the meaning of Scriptural revelation.

Now, since in this context verbal revelation is a revelation from God, the discussion will begin with the relation between God and logic. Afterward will come the relation between logic and the Scripture. And finally the discussion will turn to logic in man.

## Logic and God

It will be best to begin by calling attention to some of the characteristics the Scriptures attribute to God. Nothing startling is involved in remarking that God is omniscient. This is a commonplace of Christian theology. But, further, God is eternally omniscient. He has not learned his knowledge. And since God exists of himself, independent of everything else, indeed the Creator of everything else, he must himself be the source of his own knowledge. This important point has had a history.

At the beginning of the Christian era, Philo, the Jewish scholar of Alexandria, made an adjustment in Platonic philosophy to bring it into accord with the theology of the Old Testament. Plato had based his system on three original, independent principles: the World of Ideas, the Demiurge, and chaotic space. Although the three were equally eternal and independent of each other, the Demiurge fashioned chaotic space into this visible world by using the Ideas as his model. Hence in Plato the World of Ideas is not only independent of but even in a sense superior to the maker of heaven and earth. He is morally obligated, and in fact willingly submits, to the Ideas of justice, man, equality, and number.

Philo, however, says, "God has been ranked according to the one and the unit; or rather even the unit has been ranked according to the one God, for all number, like time, is younger than the cosmos, while God is older than the cosmos and its creator."

This means that God is the source and determiner of all truth. Christians generally, even uneducated Christians, understand that water, milk, alcohol, and gasoline freeze at different temperatures because God created them that way. God could have made an intoxicating fluid freeze at zero Fahrenheit and he could have made the cow's product freeze at forty. But he decided otherwise. Therefore behind the act of creation there is an eternal decree. It was God's eternal purpose to have such liquids, and therefore we can say that the particularities of nature were determined before there was any nature.

Similarly in all other varieties of truth, God must be accounted sovereign. It is his decree that makes one proposition true and another false. Whether the proposition be physical, psychological, moral, or theological, it is God who made it that way. A proposition is true because God thinks it so.

Perhaps for a certain formal completeness, a sample of Scriptural documentation might be appropriate. Psalm 147:5 says, "God is our Lord, and of great power; his understanding is infinite." If we cannot strictly conclude from this verse that God's power is the origin of his understanding, at least there is no doubt that omniscience is asserted. 1 Samuel 2:3 says "the Lord is a God of knowledge." Ephesians 1:8 speaks of God's wisdom and prudence. In Romans 16:27 we have the phrase, "God only wise," and in 1 Timothy 1:17 the similar phrase, "the only wise God."

Further references and an excellent exposition of them may be found in Stephen Charnock, *The Existence and Attributes of God*, chapters VIII and IX. From this distinguished author a few lines must be included here.

God knows himself because his knowledge with his will is the cause of all other things; ... he is the first truth, and therefore is the first object of his understanding.... As he is all knowledge, so he hath in himself the most excellent object of knowledge.... No object is so intelligible to God as God is to himself... for his understanding is his essence, himself. God knows his own decree and will, and therefore must know all things.... God must know what he hath decreed to come to pass.... God must know because he willed them ... he therefore knows them because he knows what he willed. The knowledge of God cannot arise from the things themselves, for then the knowledge of God would have a cause without him.... As God sees things possible in the glass of his own power, so he sees things future in the glass of his own will.

A great deal of Charnock's material has as its purpose the listing of the objects of God's knowledge. Here, however, the quotations were made to point out that God's knowledge depends on his will and on nothing external to him. Thus we may repeat with Philo that God is not to be ranked under the idea of unity, or of goodness, or of truth; but rather unity,

goodness, and truth are to be ranked under the decree of God.

## Logic Is God

It is to be hoped that these remarks on the relation between God and truth will be seen as pertinent to the discussion of logic. In any case, the subject of logic can be more clearly introduced by one more Scriptural reference. The well-known prologue to John's Gospel may be paraphrased, "In the beginning was Logic, and Logic was with God, and Logic was God.... In logic was life and the life was the light of men."

This paraphrase--in fact, this translation--may not only sound strange to devout ears, it may even sound obnoxious and offensive. But the shock only measures the devout person's distance from the language and thought of the Greek New Testament. Why it is offensive to call Christ Logic, when it does not offend to call him a word, is hard to explain. But such is often the case. Even Augustine, because he insisted that God is truth, has been subjected to the anti-intellectualistic accusation of "reducing" God to a proposition. At any rate, the strong intellectualism of the word Logos is seen in its several possible translations: to wit, computation, (financial) accounts, esteem, proportion and (mathematical) ratio, explanation, theory or argument, principle or law, reason, formula, debate, narrative, speech, deliberation, discussion, oracle, sentence, and wisdom.

Any translation of John 1:1 that obscures this emphasis on mind or reason is a bad translation. And if anyone complains that the idea of ratio or debate obscures the personality of the second person of the Trinity, he should alter his concept of personality. In the beginning, then, was Logic.

That Logic is the light of men is a proposition that could well introduce the section after next on the relation of logic to man. But the thought that Logic is God will bring us to the conclusion of the present section. Not only do the followers of St. Bernard entertain suspicions about logic, but even more systematic theologians are wary of any proposal that would make an abstract principle superior to God. The present argument, in consonance with both Philo and Charnock, does not do so. The law of contradiction is not to be taken as an axiom prior to or independent of God. The law is God thinking.

For this reason also the law of contradiction is not subsequent to God. If one should say that logic is dependent on God's thinking, it is dependent only in the sense that it is the characteristic of God's thinking. It is not subsequent temporally, for God is eternal and there was never a time when God existed without thinking logically. One must not suppose that God's will existed as an inert substance before he willed to think.

As there is no temporal priority, so also there is no logical or analytical priority. Not only was Logic the beginning, but Logic was God. If this unusual translation of John's Prologue still disturbs someone, he might yet allow that God is his thinking. God is not a passive or potential substratum; he is actuality or activity. This is the philosophical terminology to express the Biblical idea that God is a living God. Hence logic is to be considered as the activity of God's willing.

Although Aristotle's theology is no better (and perhaps worse) than his epistemology, he used a phrase to describe God, which, with a slight change, may prove helpful. He defined God as "thought-thinking-thought." Aristotle developed the meaning of this phrase so as to deny divine omniscience. But if we are clear that the thought which thought thinks includes thought about a world to be created-in Aristotle God has no knowledge of things inferior to him--the Aristotelian definition of God as "thought-thinking-thought" may help us to



understand that logic, the law of contradiction, is neither prior to nor subsequent to God's activity.

This conclusion may disturb some analytical thinkers. They may wish to separate logic and God. Doing so, they would complain that the present construction merges two axioms into one. And if two, one of them must be prior; in which case we would have to accept God without logic, or logic without God; and the other one afterward. But this is not the presupposition here proposed. God and logic are one and the same first principle, for John wrote that Logic was God.

At the moment this much must suffice to indicate the relation of God to logic. We now pass to what at the beginning seemed to be the more pertinent question of logic and Scripture.

## **Logic and Scripture**

There is a minor misunderstanding that can easily be disposed of before discussing the relation of logic to the Scriptures. Someone with a lively historical sense might wonder why Scripture and revelation are equated, when God's direct speech to Moses, Samuel, and the prophets is even more clearly revelation.

This observation became possible simply because of previous brevity. Of course God's speech to Moses was revelation, in fact, revelation par excellence, if you wish. But we are not Moses. Therefore, if the problem is to explain how we know in this age, one cannot use the personal experience of Moses. Today we have the Scripture. As the Westminster Confession says, "It pleased the Lord ... to reveal himself ... and afterwards ... to commit the same wholly unto writing, which maketh the holy scripture to be most necessary, those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased." What God said to Moses is written in the Bible; the words are identical; the revelation is the same.

In this may be anticipated the relation of logic to the Scripture. First of all, Scripture, the written words of the Bible, is the mind of God. What is said in Scripture is God's thought.

In contemporary religious polemics, the Biblical view of the Bible, the historic position of the Reformation, or--what is the same thing--the doctrine of plenary and verbal inspiration is castigated as Bibliolatry. The liberals accuse the Lutherans and Calvinists of worshipping a book instead of worshipping God. Apparently they think that we genuflect to the Bible on the pulpit, and they deride us for kissing the ring of a paper pope.

This caricature stems from their materialistic turn of mind--a materialism that may not be apparent in other discussions--but which comes to the surface when they direct their fire against fundamentalism. They think of the Bible as a material book with paper contents and a leather binding. That the contents are the thoughts of God, expressed in God's own words, is a position to which they are so invincibly antagonistic that they cannot even admit it to be the position of a fundamentalist.

Nevertheless we maintain that the Bible expresses the mind of God. Conceptually it is the mind of God, or, more accurately, a part of God's mind. For this reason the Apostle Paul, referring to the revelation given him, and in fact given to the Corinthians through him, is able to say, "We have the mind of Christ." Also in Philippians 2:5 he exhorts them, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." To the same purpose is his modest claim in 1 Corinthians 7:40, "I think also that I have the Spirit of God."

The Bible, then, is the mind or thought of God. It is not a physical fetish, like a crucifix. And

I doubt that there has ever been even one hillbilly fundamentalist ignorant enough to pray to a black book with red edges. Similarly, the charge that the Bible is a paper pope misses the mark for the same reason. The Bible consists of thoughts, not paper; and the thoughts are the thoughts of the omniscient, infallible God, not those of Innocent III.

On this basis--that is, on the basis that Scripture is the mind of God--the relation to logic can easily be made clear. As might be expected, if God has spoken, he has spoken logically. The Scripture therefore should and does exhibit logical organization.

For example, Romans 4:2 is an enthymematic hypothetical destructive syllogism. Romans 5:13 is a hypothetical constructive syllogism. 1 Corinthians 15:15-18 is a sorites. Obviously, examples of standard logical forms such as these could be listed at great length.

There is, of course, much in Scripture that is not syllogistic. The historical sections are largely narrative; yet every declarative sentence is a logical unit. These sentences are truths; as such they are objects of knowledge. Each of them has, or perhaps we should say, each of them is a predicate attached to a subject. Only so can they convey meaning.

Even in the single words themselves, as is most clearly seen in the cases of nouns and verbs, logic is embedded. If Scripture says, David was King of Israel, it does not mean that David was president of Babylon; and surely it does not mean that Churchill was prime minister of China. That is to say, the words *David*, *King*, and *Israel* have definite meanings.

The old libel that Scripture is a wax nose and that interpretation is infinitely elastic is clearly wrong. If there were no limits to interpretation, we might interpret the libel itself as an acceptance of verbal and plenary inspiration. But since the libel cannot be so interpreted, neither can the Virgin Birth be interpreted as a myth nor the Resurrection as a symbol of spring. No doubt there are some things hard to be understood which the unlearned wrest to their own destruction, but the difficulties are no greater than those found in Aristotle or Plotinus, and against these philosophers no such libel is ever directed. Furthermore, only some things are hard. For the rest, Protestants have insisted on the perspicuity of Scripture.

Nor need we waste time repeating Aristotle's explanation of ambiguous words. The fact that a word must mean one thing and not its contradictory is the evidence of the law of contradiction in all rational language.

This exhibition of the logic embedded in Scripture explains why Scripture rather than the law of contradiction is selected as the axiom. Should we assume merely the law of contradiction, we would be no better off than Kant was. His notion that knowledge requires *a priori* categories deserves great respect. Once for all, in a positive way--the complement of Hume's negative and unintentional way--Kant demonstrated the necessity of axioms, presuppositions, or *a priori* equipment. But this *sine qua non* is not sufficient to produce knowledge. Therefore the law of contradiction as such and by itself is not made the axiom of this argument.

For a similar reason, God as distinct from Scripture is not made the axiom of this argument. Undoubtedly this twist will seem strange to many theologians. It will seem particularly strange after the previous emphasis on the mind of God as the origin of all truth. Must not God be the axiom? For example, the first article of the Augsburg Confession gives the doctrine of God, and the doctrine of the Scripture hardly appears anywhere in the whole document. In the French Confession of 1559, the first article is on God; the Scripture is discussed in the next five. The Belgic Confession has the same order. The Scotch Confession of 1560 begins with God and gets to the Scripture only in article nineteen. The Thirty-Nine Articles begin with the Trinity, and Scripture comes in articles six and following.

If God is sovereign, it seems very reasonable to put him first in the system.

But several other creeds, and especially the Westminster Confession, state the doctrine of Scripture at the very start. The explanation is quite simple: our knowledge of God comes from the Bible. We may assert that every proposition is true because God thinks it so, and we may follow Charnock in all his great detail, but the whole is based on Scripture. Suppose this were not so. Then "God" as an axiom, apart from Scripture, is just a name. We must specify which God. The best known system in which "God" was made the axiom is Spinoza's. For him all theorems are deduced from *Deus sive Natura*. But it is the *Natura* that identifies Spinoza's God. Different gods might be made axioms of other systems. Hence the important thing is not to presuppose God, but to define the mind of the God presupposed. Therefore the Scripture is offered here as the axiom. This gives definiteness and content, without which axioms are useless.

Thus it is that God, Scripture, and logic are tied together. The Pietists should not complain that emphasis on logic is a deification of an abstraction, or of human reason divorced from God. Emphasis on logic is strictly in accord with John's Prologue and is nothing other than a recognition of the nature of God.

Does it not seem peculiar, in this connection, that a theologian can be so greatly attached to the doctrine of the Atonement, or a Pietist to the idea of sanctification, which nonetheless is explained only in some parts of Scripture, and yet be hostile to or suspicious of rationality and logic which every verse of Scripture exhibits?

## Logic in Man

With this understanding of God's mind, the next step is the creation of man in God's image. The nonrational animals were not created in his image; but God breathed his spirit into the earthly form, and Adam became a type of soul superior to the animals.

To be precise, one should not speak of the image of God in man. Man is not something in which somewhere God's image can be found along with other things. Man is the image. This, of course, does not refer to man's body. The body is an instrument or tool man uses. He himself is God's breath, the spirit God breathed into the clay, the mind, the thinking ego. Therefore, man is rational in the likeness of God's rationality. His mind is structured as Aristotelian logic described it. That is why we believe that spaniels have teeth.

In addition to the well-known verses in chapter one, Genesis 5:1 and 9:6 both repeat the idea. 1 Corinthians 11:7 says, "man ... is the image and glory of God." See also Colossians 3:10 and James 3:9. Other verses, not so explicit, nonetheless add to our information. Compare Hebrews 1:3, Hebrews 2:6-8, and Psalm 8. But the conclusive consideration is that throughout the Bible as a whole the rational God gives man an intelligible message.

It is strange that anyone who thinks he is a Christian should deprecate logic. Such a person does not of course intend to deprecate the mind of God; but he thinks that logic in man is sinful, even more sinful than other parts of man's fallen nature. This, however, makes no sense. The law of contradiction cannot be sinful. Quite the contrary, it is our violations of the law of contradiction that are sinful. Yet the strictures which some devotional writers place on "merely human" logic are amazing. Can such pious stupidity really mean that a syllogism which is valid for us is invalid for God? If two plus two is four in our arithmetic, does God have a different arithmetic in which two and two makes three or perhaps five?

The fact that the Son of God is God's reason--for Christ is the wisdom of God as well as

the power of God--plus the fact that the image in man is so-called "human reason," suffices to show that this so-called "human reason" is not so much human as divine.

Of course, the Scripture says that God's thoughts are not our thoughts and his ways are not our ways. But is it good exegesis to say that this means his logic, his arithmetic, his truth are not ours? If this were so, what would the consequences be? It would mean not only that our additions and subtractions are all wrong, but also that all our thoughts--in history as well as in arithmetic--are all wrong. If for example, we think that David was King of Israel, and God's thoughts are not ours, then it follows that God does not think David was King of Israel. David in God's mind was perchance prime minister of Babylon.

To avoid this irrationalism, which of course is a denial of the divine image, we must insist that truth is the same for God and man. Naturally, we may not know the truth about some matters. But if we know anything at all, what we must know must be identical with what God knows. God knows all truth, and unless we know something God knows, our ideas are untrue. It is absolutely essential therefore to insist that there is an area of coincidence between God's mind and our mind.

## Logic and Language

This point brings us to the central issue of language. Language did not develop from, nor was its purpose restricted to, the physical needs of earthly life. God gave Adam a mind to understand the divine law, and he gave him language to enable him to speak to God. From the beginning, language was intended for worship. In the *Te Deum*, by means of language, and in spite of the fact that it is sung to music, we pay "metaphysical compliments" to God. The debate about the adequacy of language to express the truth of God is a false issue. Words are mere symbols or signs. Any sign would be adequate. The real issue is: Does a man have the idea to symbolize? If he can think of God, then he can use the sound *God*, *Deus Theos*, or *Elohim*. The word makes no difference, and the sign is ipso facto literal and adequate.

The Christian view is that God created Adam as a rational mind. The structure of Adam's mind was the same as God's. God thinks that asserting the consequent is a fallacy; and Adam's mind was formed on the principles of identity and contradiction. This Christian view of God, man, and language does not fit into any empirical philosophy. It is rather a type of *a priori* rationalism. Man's mind is not initially a blank. It is structured. In fact, an unstructured blank is no mind at all. Nor could any such sheet of white paper extract any universal law of logic from finite experience. No universal and necessary proposition can be deduced from sensory observation. Universality and necessity can only be *a priori*.

This is not to say that all truth can be deduced from logic alone. The seventeenth-century rationalists gave themselves an impossible task. Even if the ontological argument be valid, it is impossible to deduce *Cur Deus Homo*, the Trinity, or the final resurrection. The axioms to which the *a priori* forms of logic must be applied are the propositions God revealed to Adam and the later prophets.

## Conclusion

Logic is irreplaceable. It is not an arbitrary tautology, a useful framework among others. Various systems of cataloging books in libraries are possible, and several are equally convenient. They are all arbitrary. History can be designated by 800 as easily as by 400.

But there is no substitute for the law of contradiction. If dog is the equivalent of not-dog, and if  $2 = 3 = 4$ , not only do zoology and mathematics disappear, Victor Hugo and Johann Wolfgang Goethe also disappear. These two men are particularly appropriate examples, for they are both, especially Goethe, romanticists. Even so, without logic, Goethe could not have attacked the logic of John's Gospel (I, 1224-1237).

Geschrieben steht: "Im anfang war das Wort!" Hier stock

ich schon! Wer hilft mir weiter fort?

Mir hilft der Geist! Auf einmal seh' ich Rath und schreib'

getrost: "Im Anfang war die Thai!"

But Goethe can express his rejection of the divine Logos of John 1:1, and express his acceptance of romantic experience, only by using the logic he despises.

To repeat, even if it seems wearisome: Logic is fixed, universal, necessary, and irreplaceable. Irrationality contradicts the Biblical teaching from beginning to end. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is not insane. God is a rational being, the architecture of whose mind is logic.

*Against The World. The Trinity Review, 1978-1988.* [God And Logic, Gordon H. Clark, pg. 52-56] John W. Robbins, Editor. The Trinity Foundation, P.O. Box 68, Unicoi, Tennessee 37692.

## About The Author

**Dr. Johnson C. Philip** is a Christian Apologist based in Ernakulam. He received the degree of Th.D. in Apologetics in 1984 and Ph.D. in Physics (Quantum Chromodynamics) in 1991. So far he has authored more than 2000 popular articles and research papers and more than 50 books in the fields of physics, communication, apologetics, and theology. This includes many Indian "firsts" like a Systematic Theology and a 4-volume Bible Encyclopaedia, both in the Malayalam language.

He is a voting member of numerous professional societies including: Creation Research Society, American Scientific Affiliation, The Society Of Christian Philosophers, Indian Physics Association, etc. He is a founder and life member of the Indian Association Of Physics Teachers.

Appendix - I

Creative Commons: <http://www.answers.org>

### "Can God create a stone so heavy that He cannot move it?"

By John Baskette, ©Copyright 1994 by John Baskette.

That old objection to the doctrine of the omnipotence of God was raised recently on USENET in the newsgroup soc.religion.christian. USENET is an enormous collection of electronic discussion groups distributed as "network news" through a world wide computer network known as the internet. Many of you may not be familiar with computer networks and bulletin boards, and I won't be explaining about them here, but I will say, the on-line debates in these newsgroups between atheists and believers of all types are quite lively and often informative.

The Christians in that newsgroup answered the objection very well. To speak of an almighty God creating an object that He cannot lift is to posit a logically contradictory state of affairs. It is a variation on the old question, "What happens when an immovable object (the stone) meets an irresistible force (God)?" The answer is that both an irresistible force and an immovable object cannot exist together in the same universe without creating a logical contradiction. If reason is valid then to speak of the two in the same sentence is to speak nonsense. Similarly, it is nonsense to speak of God creating a stone that he cannot lift.

Another equally valid answer offered in the newsgroup is that God cannot do anything whatsoever. God can only do what is logically possible.

These answers did not satisfy the objectors. Their retort was to accuse the Christians of equivocating. "You admit that there are things that God cannot do, therefore you are admitting that God is not really omnipotent! You have only proved the case against the self-contradictory and self-stultifying Christian conception of God."

At this point I entered the fray to point out that the definition of omnipotence has never meant what the objectors say it meant. The historical understanding of omnipotence never meant that God can do anything whatsoever. The objection is at best a misunderstanding, and at worst, merely an intellectually dishonest straw man argument.

My response did not go unchallenged. Here is what one poster (David) asked:

However, I gather from the discussions that, in spite of the logical contradictions involved, many people are arguing that god is omnipotent in the all-inclusive sense you wish to avoid.

Also, just how would you properly define this 'historical sense' of omnipotent? The paragraph above just says that it is not really omnipotence as defined in all the dictionaries. How, precisely, should it be defined?

Here was my response:

My earlier post pointed out that the historical sense of terms such as omnipotence were never construed to be an all-inclusive anything at all which, if true, renders mute the various objections to Christian teaching based on various logical paradoxes.

To demonstrate my point further and to answer David's question, I will give various definitions of omnipotence as found in various theologians. First, however, I would like to point out that the Oxford English Dictionary (if not some of the less authoritative available dictionaries) does recognize a specifically Christian and theological use of the term.

Here are three definitions given in *The Compact Edition Of The Oxford English Dictionary, Complete Text Reproduced Micrographically, Volume I A-O*, Oxford University Press:

Omnipotent,

1. Strictly said of God (or of a deity) or His attributes: Almighty or infinite in power.

2. gen. All-powerful; having full or absolute power or authority; having unlimited or very great power, force, or influence; exceedingly strong or mighty. b. humourously. Capable of anything; unparalleled; utter, arrant; huge, 'mighty'.
3. absol. or as sb. An omnipotent being; spec. (with the) the Almighty God.

The first definition is the one used in Christian theology. It is not the same as "Capable of anything".

Infinite should be thought of in terms of the primary dictionary definition of "subject to no limitation or external determination". I'll give an explanation of the Infinity of God from Berkhoff shortly, but in order to illuminate the concept of "Power", I would like to first quote from *\_A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion, Volume One\_* by James Oliver Buswell, Jr., Ph. D.; a professor of Systematic Theology at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis.

On pages 63-63 he explains omnipotence this way:

"There are indeed certain problems with reference to the meaning of Omnipotence which need to be considered. In the first place, omnipotence does not mean that God can do anything, but it means that He can do with power anything that power can do. He has all the power that is or could be."

"Can God make two plus two equal six? This is a question which is frequently asked by skeptics and by children. We reply by asking how much power it would take to bring about this result. The absurdity of the question is not too difficult to see. Would the power of a ton of dynamite make two plus two equal six? Or the power of an atom bomb? Or of a hydrogen bomb? When these questions are asked it is readily seen that the truth of the multiplication tables is not in the realm of power. Power has nothing to do with it. When we assert that God is omnipotent, we are talking about power. In the discussion of the infinite, eternal, and unchangeable truth of God we shall show that truth is of the very essence of His character but not in the realm of power; and we shall consider those Scriptures which plainly declare that 'it is impossible for God to lie' (Heb. 6:18)"

Most of the "paradoxes" commit this same basic error. Even those that seem to deal with "power" such as "Can God create an immovable stone" are actually asking if God can bring about a logically contradictory state of affairs. The answer is no, but it does not show that God does not have infinite power or that God cannot do with power anything that power can do. Power cannot bring into being a contradictory state of affairs.

Some understanding of the Infinity of God would be helpful at this point. From *\_Systematic Theology\_* by L. Berkhoff, (revised version 1941, reprinted 1979 by Wm. B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids), pp. 59-60"

"C. The Infinity of God. The infinity of God is that perfection of God by which He is free from all limitations. In ascribing it to God we deny that there are or can be any limitations to the divine Being or attributes. It implies that He is in no way limited by the universe, by this space-time world, or confined to the



universe. It does not involve His identity with the sum-total of existing things, nor does it exclude the co-existence of derived and finite things, to which He bears relation. The infinity of God must be conceived as intensive rather than extensive, and should not be confused with boundless extension, as if God were spread out through the entire universe, one part here, and another there, for God has not body and therefore no extension. Neither should it be regarded as a merely negative concept, though it is perfectly true that we cannot form a positive idea of it. It is a reality in God fully comprehended only by Him. We distinguish various aspects of God's Infinity. 1. His Absolute Perfection. This is the infinity of the Divine Being considered in itself. It should not be understood in a quantitative, but in a qualitative sense: it qualifies all the communicable attributes of God. Infinite power is not an absolute quantum, but an exhaustless potency of power;..."

With a definition like that, you may think that Berkhoff by saying that God is "free from all limitations" means that God can do anything at all. Yet even Berkhoff says on p. 80:

"In that sense we can speak of the *potentia absoluta*, or absolute power, of God. This position must be maintained over against those who, like Schleiermacher and Strauss, hold that God's power is limited to that which He actually accomplishes. But in our assertion of the absolute power of God it is necessary to guard against misconceptions. The Bible teaches us on the one hand that the power of God extends beyond that which is actually realized, Gen. 18:14; Jer. 32:27; Zech. 8:6; Matt. 3:9; 26:53. We cannot say, therefore, that what God does not bring to realization, is not possible for Him. But on the other hand it also indicates that there are many things which God cannot do. He can neither lie, sin, change, nor deny Himself, Num. 23:19; I Sam. 15:29; II Tim. 2:13; Heb. 6:18; Jas. 1:13,17. There is no absolute power in Him that is divorced from His perfections, and in virtue of which He can do all kinds of things which are inherently contradictory."

When we speak of "no limitations" we are talking about rational categories or limitations within a rational category. Within the realm of power, we mean that God can do anything that it is logically possible for power to do. I.e., There is no limit on which powers in the category of "powers" that God can exercise. The category of powers, however, is itself restricted to the realm of things that are logically possible. This is why we are justified in using the "omni" prefix while maintaining that God cannot do anything whatsoever.

That is why even Berkhoff, while maintaining a "no limits" definition of infinite says, "There is no absolute power in Him that is divorced from His perfections". I.e., he supports the idea that there are rational restrictions on the category of "powers" when he says that there is no power of a certain kind.

Here is a definition for omnipotence as given in *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology*, edited by Alan Richardson and John Bowden, 1983, Westminster Press, Philadelphia, in an article by Brian Hebblethwaite who is in turn quoting from "A.Kenny, *The God of the Philosophers*, 1979:

"A more satisfactory definition has been provided by A. Kenny: omnipotence is 'the possession of all logically possible powers which it is logically possible for a being with the attributes of God to possess.'"

Here is a definition given in *Christian Theology, Systematic and Biblical*, arranged and compiled by Emery H. Bancroft, D.D., Late professor of Bible Doctrine and Systematic Theology at the Baptist Bible Seminary, Johnson City, New York, revised edition, 1925, on p. 68:

"C. Omnipotence. By this we mean the power of God to do all things which are objects of power, whether with or without the use of means, Gen. 17:1.

NOTE He performs natural wonders, Gen 1:1-3; Isa 44:24; Heb. 1:3; Spiritual wonders, II Cor. 4:6; Eph. 1:19; Eph. 3:20. He has power to create new things, Matt. 3:9; Rom. 4:17; after his own pleasure; Psa. 115:3; Eph. 1:11. There is nothing impossible to Him: Gen. 18:14; Matt. 19:26.

1. Omnipotence does not imply power to do that which is not an object of power; as, for example, that which is self-contradictory or contradictory to the nature of God.

NOTE Self-contradictory things are not included in the exercise of God's omnipotence.- such as the making of a past event to have not occurred (hence the uselessness of praying: "May it be that much good was done"); drawing a shorter than straight line between two given points; putting two separate mountains together without a valley between them. Things contradictory to the nature of God; for God to lie, to sin, to die. To do such things would not imply power, but impotence. God has all the power that is consistent with infinite perfection - all power to do what is worthy of Himself."

So far I have quoted only Protestants. Here is a Roman Catholic author. From *The Voice from the Whirlwind, The problem of Evil and the Modern World* by Stephen j. Vicchio, professor of philosophy at the College of Notre Dame in Baltimore, Maryland, Christian Classics, Inc., Westminster, Maryland.

(BTW - this is a terrific book on the "problem of evil", it is essentially his Phd dissertation put out in book form.)

On p. 47, after quoting from Frederick Ferre's *Basic Modern Philosophy of Religion*, Vicchio writes:

"Ferre rightly suggests that when we say that God is omnipotent, philosophers, as well as the common man, may mean by the term one of two things. Either (a) an omnipotent being is one who can do absolutely anything, or (b) an

omnipotent being is one who can do anything that is logically possible. For reasons that will become apparent later, we must also offer a third formulation of God's omnipotence: (c) an omnipotent being is one who can do anything that is logically possible and is consistent with his other attributes."

Vicchio goes on to examine each of these definitions in turn. Definition (a) which is what has been used in postings to raise objections to the existence of the Christian God, Vicchio finds used in the writings of Descartes, but not in the writings of Christian theologians such as St. Thomas Aquinas.

This leads to one of the main points of my earlier brief posting. The historical definition or understanding of omnipotence has always recognized the problems inherent in definition (a) which is why it is not the definition used by the church historically. It maybe that some Christians have held and tried to defend such a definition (such as Descartes), but for the most part, this definition is imposed on Christianity by those who wish to refute Christian conceptions by raising various objections. The objections (whether by intention or ignorance) are straw man arguments.

The definition of omnipotence like that of (b) or (c) which limits omnipotence to the category of things logically possible is the definition used by the church historically. My earlier quote from Augustine indicated as much. Here it is again, from my abridged version of *\_The City of God\_*, an abridged Version from the Translation by Gerald G. Walsh, S.J.; Demetrius B. Zema, S.J.; Grace Monahan, O.S.U.; and Daniel J. Honan on p. 109 which quotes from Augustine's book 5, chapter 10:

"We do not put the life of God and the foreknowledge of God under any necessity when we say that God must live an eternal life and must know all things. Neither do we lessen his power when we say He cannot die or be deceived. This is the kind of inability which, if removed, would make God less powerful than He is. God is rightly called omnipotent, even though He is unable to die and be deceived. We call Him omnipotent [here is the definition you did not acknowledge from the earlier post David!] because He does whatever He wills to do and suffers nothing that He does not will to suffer. He would not, of course be omnipotent, if He had to suffer anything against His will. It is precisely because He is omnipotent that for Him some things are impossible."

Aquinas has a similar conception of omnipotence. On p. 163-164 of *\_Summa Theologica\_*, Volume I, ques. 15 ans. 3, (Mcgraw Hill, New York, 1963, Aquinas says:

"Whatever implies being and nonbeing simultaneously is incompatible with the absolute possibility which falls under divine omnipotence. Such a contradiction is not subject to it, not from any impotence in God, but because it simply does not have the nature of being feasible or possible. Whatever, then, does not involve a contradiction is in the realm of the possible with respect to which God is omnipotent. Whatever involves a contradiction is not within the scope of omnipotence because it cannot qualify for possibility. Better, however, to say that it cannot be done, rather than God cannot do it."

An excellent old Puritan work is The Existence and Attributes of God by Stephen Charnock (1628-1680). I read a small portion of a 1979 reprint of this work published by Klock & Klock Christian Publishers of Minneapolis. He defines omnipotence in terms of God having infinite power, yet he too gives a lengthy consideration to things that are impossible for God to do.

My point is that when Christians respond to various objections to the various "omni-xxx"s of God in a way that appears to lessen the particular "omni" in question, they are not equivocating, conceding or redefining terms at all. They are only explaining what is the historic Christian teaching as found in all branches of the faith.