

How to give the reason for your faith

Timothy Project

Student Manual

Timothy Project

Project Coordinator

Dr. John Barry Dyer

Pedagogical Team

Marivete Zanoni Kunz

Tereza Jesus Medeiros

Claudeci Costa Nobre

Leonardo Araújo

Manual prepared by

Dr John Barry Dyer

HOW TO GIVE THE REASON FOR YOUR FAITH

1. AGNOSTICISM: What it is; how to refute it	4
2. RACIONALISM: What it is; how to refute it	8
3. ATHEISM: What it is; how to refute it	11
4. THEISM: What it is; theistic arguments	15
5. NATURAL LAWS AND THE SUPERNATURAL	19
6. THE HISTORICAL RELIABILITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT	24
7. THE DIVINITY AND AUTHORITY OF JESUS CHRIST	30
8. THE INSPIRATION AND AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE	34

Source: N. L. Geisler, Christian Apologetics.

LESSON

1

AGNOSTICISM

Theme text: “He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him” (John 1.10).

I WHAT IS AGNOSTICISM?

- According to agnosticism, it is not possible to know God or to have knowledge of him.
- The agnostic doesn't deny the existence of God, rather that person denies the possibility of knowing him.
- Agnosticism is based philosophically on the teaching of Immanuel Kant and David Hume of the 18th century.

Hume argues that if it isn't possible to quantify or establish something as concrete fact or reality, then it doesn't deserve to be contemplated (David Hume, Investigation Concerning Human Understanding). He affirms that all knowledge is derived from the senses or human experience, having been subjected to reasoning, in order to verify whether there exist connections between diverse experiences, with the aim of making sense of them.

Therefore, for the agnostic, it is not possible to establish a connection between things that exist and the God who created them. Such things are beyond the scope of human competence. In other words, human beings are unable to establish a connection between the existence of the world and the existence of God.

Respond: Why does the philosopher, David Hume, think that it is impossible to know God?

II

HOW TO REFUTE AGNOSTICISM

1. When confronting the agnostic, it is correct that human beings cannot know God completely, since we are all finite beings with finite knowledge. The apostle Paul underlines this point: “Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known” (1 Corinthians 13.12). It is right to say that we cannot know God, not even in part, without the help of God, or without the self revelation of himself to us. The apostle John affirms: “No-one has ever seen God, but God the One and only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known” (John 1.18).
2. The agnostic questions the concept of time. Did the world come to exist in time, or before time existed? We are dealing with the inability of expressing certain things or ideas, simply because our language is inadequate for such a task.

The infinite or eternal cannot be thought of as successive periods of time, as in the case of agnosticism. It is better to say that history, and the world itself, began at the beginning of time. Before this, only eternity existed.

In order to argue (as does the agnostic) that time always existed is problematic. And this, because it begs the question: “When did time begin, and what existed before time”? The regression is infinite. So we end up exactly where we began and the question remains unanswered.

There is only one answer. Everything that is finite (including time and space) has a beginning and, in order to begin, there needs to be a pre-existing cause. This cause is God.

All philosophical arguments are based on presupposition or dogmatism, exactly what the agnostic is at pains to oppose. Every philosophical position requires an attitude of faith, whether to affirm belief or not. Philosophical arguments raise questions concerning the Christian faith, but are not able to offer answers, only more questions.

The answers that the Christian is able to offer, in the presence of unbelievers, are grounded in biblical reasoning and daily experience: God, who is unknown to many, is the One who reveals himself to us, as he comes in search of the lost and those who are far from him (Luke 15.4). Only the God of the Bible does this.

Respond: How can the believer know God?
