

## **Lesson 4**

### **Worldview Features**

Based on Lecture 2 of

Greg L. Bahnsen's *Basic Training for Defending the Faith*

**“The heavens are telling of the glory of God;**

**And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.**

**Day to day pours forth speech,**

**And night to night reveals knowledge.**

**(Psalm 19:1–2)**

In our first study of Dr. Bahnsen's lecture on worldviews, we analyzed the basic concept of a worldview. We noted that everyone has a worldview, that they are founded on elementary presuppositions, and that they are essential for helping us to function in the world. The reason he sets forth the worldview idea early in his series is that his method of defending the faith is a worldview-level apologetic. He avoids piecemeal analysis of isolated facts and challenges the unbeliever's whole worldview with the Christian's worldview.

Now that we are well aware of the meaning and necessity of a worldview, let us consider the key issues with which every worldview must reckon.

## I. Central Concerns

Dr. Bahnsen introduces three fundamental matters all worldviews must be able to handle. Technically speaking, they are metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics. Though these involve complex philosophical issues, they are ultimately very practical matters that we can simplify and apply to our everyday situations and use in our apologetic encounters with unbelievers. In *Always Ready*, Dr. Bahnsen introduces the matter:

When we talk to unbelievers about their views—especially their worldviews—we should be especially sensitive to hear or discern what their controlling assumptions are about the nature of reality (metaphysics), about the nature of knowledge (epistemology), and about what is right or wrong in human behavior (ethics).

Although not everyone thinks clearly and specifically about such matters in the abstract (according to underlying principles), and although not everyone will be able openly and explicitly to state what his operating assumptions are, nevertheless *everybody* utilizes some basic perspective regarding reality, knowledge and conduct. As we say, everybody “does” philosophy, but not everybody does it well—not everybody reflects self-consciously about such matters and seeks a cogent and consistent outlook.<sup>1</sup>

Let us consider each of these three worldview building blocks.

---

<sup>1</sup>Greg L. Bahnsen, *Always Ready: Directions for Defending the Faith*, ed. Robert R. Booth (Atlanta: American Vision, 1996),

## **Metaphysics**

The word “metaphysics” is derived from the Latin word *metaphysica*, which is based on the compound of two Greek words: *meta* (“after, beyond”) and *physika* (“physics, nature”). It literally means “beyond the physical,” that is, beyond the physical world of sense perception. Dr. Bahnsen provides a helpful, succinct definition of “metaphysics”: “The study of the ultimate nature of reality, the origin, structure, and nature of what is real.”

Metaphysics informs us what the world is like and what man’s place is in that world. It looks behind the external world of sense experience, seeking to discern what *accounts for* the physical world. Obviously then, metaphysics is an extremely important consideration for any worldview, in that it deals with the question of the nature and structure of reality. Metaphysics asks such questions as:

- What *is it* to exist? What sorts of things exist?
- What is the nature of man? Is he free? Good? An animal?
- What is the nature of the Universe? Is it objectively real? Or is it simply appearance?
- Does God exist? What is his nature? What is God’s relation to the Universe?
- Is there change or development? How do things change? How is development possible? What is history?

- What is the character of the laws or concepts that govern reality? Are they changing? Universal? What are the limits of possibility?

Metaphysicians seek to understand the world as a whole. They attempt to discover and apply fundamental principles necessary for systematizing and explaining the way in which we look at, operate in, and relate to the world around us. Whether the average person is even aware of metaphysics or not, he most definitely has a metaphysical outlook at work in his life. This is because he has at least a general understanding of what he believes the world is all about. If he did not, he wouldn't be able to make sense out of his experience and couldn't function in the external world.

As ultimate issues relating to reality, the metaphysical questions listed above are concerns for both secular and Christian worldviews. As Dr. Bahnsen points out, they can be expressed in terms of Christian doctrines, such as Creation, Fall, and Consummation. Since apologetics is concerned with the question of God, it necessarily deals with God and His relation to man, man's obligation to God, how God regulates the world, man's moral predicament, and the question of man's freedom in a God-created and controlled world.

What metaphysicians study is actually Christian theology in secular dress. This is not just because both the Christian and unbelieving worldviews must deal with the same ultimate issues regarding reality, and because man is intrinsically a religious creature, having been created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26; 9:6), but also because God has created all things and those things can only be properly understood in terms of God and His plan. Therefore, unbelievers have their secularized versions of the Christian doctrines

of Creation, Fall, and Consummation. The vocabulary differs, but the issues are the same.<sup>2</sup> As Van Til expresses it: “There is a philosophy of fact in the Bible that we use for the interpretation of every fact of our lives.”<sup>3</sup>

Though you are now aware that you are not on *neutral* ground with the unbeliever, you must understand that you do have *common* ground with him. That is, Christians have a “point of contact” with the unbeliever. You need to understand this point of contact in order to engage him properly. A good Christian apologist will be alert to basic metaphysical issues as he challenges the unbeliever’s worldview.

The Christian faith involves a holistic worldview. Christianity does not differ with anti-Christianity over only a few items, or even over several. It disagrees with the unbelieving worldview across the board—*in principle*. It offers an entire, self-contained system of life. As such it has a definite metaphysical outlook, a way of looking at and understanding ourselves and the world. As a defender of the faith, you must be aware that the Scriptures reveal numerous truths that fill out and frame the Christian metaphysic.

As we noted in our previous study, the Bible majestically opens with the foundational statement of the very origin of the Universe. It reveals that it was created in its massive entirety by the all-powerful creative word of God (Gen. 1; cp. John 1:3; Heb. 11:3). All of Scripture rests on the assumption that the tangible world actually exists and that it is what it is because of God’s original creative activity and continuing providential governance (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3). It teaches that all things were created by and for God

---

<sup>2</sup>For more discussion of this, see Greg L. Bahnsen, *Van Til’s Apologetic: Readings and Analysis* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1998), 58–62.

<sup>3</sup>Cornelius Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974), 15.

(Rom. 11:36; Rev. 4:11) and directs you in properly understanding and interpreting the world as a God-created and governed system.

You live in God's world as God's highest creature (Ps. 8:4–9). Proverbs underscores your obligation, as Van Til puts it, to “think God's thoughts after Him,” that is, you are not to think neutrally or to dismiss God from consideration when evaluating yourself or the world:

“Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise,  
And apply your mind to my knowledge;  
For it will be pleasant if you keep them within you,  
That they may be ready on your lips.  
So that your trust may be in the LORD,  
I have taught you today, even you.  
Have I not written to you excellent things  
Of counsels and knowledge,  
To make you know the certainty of the words of truth  
That you may correctly answer him who sent you?” (Prov. 22:17–21)

As a Christian you must recognize the unchallengeable authority of God's Word and understand the Psalmist's praise of God in this regard: “in your light we see light” (Ps. 36:9b). Only from God's perspective do you have the proper light to understand the world aright. As Solomon expresses it: You must avoid viewing the world and life from a limited perspective “below the sun” (e.g., Eccl. 1:3, 9; 3:16; 4:1) or “under heaven” (e.g.,

Eccl. 1:13; 2:3; 3:1) so that you may understand the world accurately and live life properly.<sup>4</sup>

As a Christian, you are committed to a revealed metaphysic outlined in Scripture and founded upon the infinite, personal Creator, rather than upon impersonal, irrational chance (as in the prevailing unbelieving worldview in our culture today). In *Always Ready* Dr. Bahnsen writes:

“The Scripture teaches us that ‘there is one God, the Father, by whom are all things . . . and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things’ (1 Cor. 8:6). All things, of all sorts, were created by Him (John 1:3; Col. 1:16). But He is before all things, and by means of Him all things hold together or cohere (John 1:1; Col. 1:17). He carries along or upholds all things by the word of His power (Heb. 1:3). Therefore, to exist is to be divine or created. In God we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). He, however, has life in Himself (John 5:25; Ex. 3:13). The living and true God gives the distinguishable unity or common natures to things (Gen. 2:19), categorizing them by placing His interpretation on them (e.g., Gen. 1:5, 8, 10, 17; 2:9). It is He who also makes things to differ from each other (1 Cor. 4:7; Ex. 11:7; Rom. 9:21; 1 Cor. 12:4–6; 15:38–41).

Similarity and distinction, then, result from His creative and providential

---

<sup>4</sup>Ecclesiastes is comparing and contrasting two approaches to life: A life lived without reference to God, wholly from an “under the sun” perspective, as over against a life lived by faith in God who exists above the sun. This explains the negative bent of Ecclesiastes. Solomon is not expressing a *believer’s* despair of the world, but the despair that arises from an unbelieving approach to life. For a worldview exposition of Ecclesiastes, see Kenneth Gentry, “Ecclesiastes” ([www.kennethgentry.com](http://www.kennethgentry.com)).

work. Both the existence and nature of things find their explanation in Him—whether causal (Eph. 1:11) or teleological (Eph. 1:11). God is the source of all possibility (Isa. 43:10; 44:5; 65:11) and thus sets the limits of possible reality by His own will and decree.”<sup>5</sup>

In this regard important metaphysical revelation about God’s being includes the following:

- God is uncaused and eternally self-existent. There is nothing prior to God accounting for His origin and existence (Gen. 1:1; Deut. 33:37; Isa. 45:5–6, 18; Eph. 3:19; 1 Tim. 1:17).
- God is self-contained, needing nothing outside of Himself to prolong His existence. He is absolutely self-sufficient; He alone is self-definitional<sup>6</sup> (Exo. 3:14; John 5:26; Acts 17:25).
- God is absolutely independent and self-sufficient in thought (Job 11:7; 40:1–8; Isa. 55:8–11; Rom. 11:33–34), counsel (Ps. 33:11; Isa. 40:12–14),

---

<sup>5</sup>Bahnsen, *Always Ready*, 179.

<sup>6</sup>In Scripture the act of *naming* something involves exercising authority over that person or thing that is named, like when parents name their children. In creation week we see the Creator naming the various aspects of creation (e.g., Gen 1:5, 8, 10). Following up on this, Scripture teaches that God names the stars (Isa. 40:26). In that Adam was created in God’s image to reflect him (Gen. 1:26), he “names” the other creatures, exercising authority over them (Gen. 2:19–20, even naming his wife in that he was her head (Gen. 2:23; cp. 1 Cor. 11:3, 8, 9). At dramatic events in the lives of certain saints, God directly renames them. For example, Abram becomes Abraham (Gen. 17:5; Neh. 9:7), Jacob becomes Israel (Gen. 32:28; 35:10), Simon becomes Peter (Matt. 16:17–18). Therefore, no one names God; He names Himself. He alone is self-definitional: no authority exists over Him.



will (Dan. 4:35; Rom. 9:19; Eph. 1:5), and power (Ps. 115:3; 135:6; 40:21–26).

- God is the ultimate ground of all reality. Everything outside of God ultimately derives from His creative power (Gen. 1:1; Exo. 20:11; Neh. 9:6; Rev. 4:11).

Therefore, God and God alone defines the world and reality. He is the floor of all reality and must be the foundation of our metaphysical outlook and program. When asked to give the basis and starting point for the orderly universe and all external reality, the Christian points to the self-contained, omnipresent all-powerful, all-wise, personal God of Scripture.

As Dr. Bahnsen will point out in a later lecture, when the non-Christian is asked to provide his foundation for the orderly universe and external reality, he points literally to nothing. It has been amusingly expressed that “an atheist is a man who has no invisible means of support” (John Buchan, 1857–1940). In his view all has risen from nothing by the irrational mechanism of chance. When asked if something can miraculously pop into being from nothing in an instant, the non-Christian vigorously responds in the negative. Instant miracles are out of the question! But when asked if something can come out of nothing if given several billion years, the non-Christian confidently responds in the affirmative. But as Van Til has noted, the non-Christian overlooks the fact that if one zero equals zero, then a billion zeros can equal only zero. The non-Christian attempts to base the rational upon the irrational; the rational Universe on irrational chance.

## Epistemology

Another key issue in any worldview is epistemology. The term “epistemology” is based on two Greek words: *episteme* (“knowledge”) and *logos* (“word, discourse”). Dr. Bahnsen defines epistemology as “the study of the nature and limits of human knowledge; it addresses questions about truth, belief, justification, etc.”<sup>7</sup> It investigates the origin, nature, methods, and limits of knowledge, discovering what we know and how we come to know it. In his lecture Dr. Bahnsen explains that epistemological inquiry focuses particularly on four classes of questions:

- What is the nature of truth and of objectivity?
- What is the nature of belief and of knowledge? What are their relationships? Can we *know* and yet not *believe*?
- What are the standards that justify beliefs? How do we know what we know? What is the proof or evidence that is acceptable?
- What are the proper procedures for science and discovery? How are they evaluated? What standards do they offer?

In Christian theology epistemology corresponds with divine revelation. Revelation is the personal, supernatural act of God’s self-communication by which He actively makes Himself and His will known to man. We have knowledge of God and the world revealed to us through three basic means:

---

<sup>7</sup>Greg L. Bahnsen, *Van Til’s Apologetic: Readings and Analysis* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1998), 4, note 8.

**General Revelation:** The doctrine of general revelation teaches that God reveals Himself in the created order (nature). It is that creational revelation which addresses man as man (the creaturely image of God, Gen. 1:26; 9:6). It reveals God’s existence (Rom. 1:20), glory (Ps. 19:1), power (Rom. 1:20), holiness (2:14–16), and wrath (1:18). This revelation is undeniably known by man, thus rendering him morally accountable to God (1:20; 2:1). This form of revelation is directed to all men (thus it is called “general” revelation). Though God’s revelation in nature does not show man the way of salvation, the Trinitarian nature of God, and many other such divine truths, it does show that God exists, that He is powerful, and that man is responsible to Him.

David speaks of general revelation in Psalm 19:1–2, noting that the revelation in nature is clear and universal:

“The heavens are telling of the glory of God;

And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.

Day to day pours forth speech,

And night to night reveals knowledge.”

Paul reflects the same idea while emphasizing man’s moral culpability arising from this knowledge:

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven *against all ungodliness and unrighteousness* of men, who *suppress the truth in unrighteousness*, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God

made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse” (Rom. 1:18–20).

The idea of general revelation in nature will be very important to our apologetic method. This is because Scripture teaches that all men do in fact know God—even atheists—though they attempt to “suppress that truth” (Rom. 1:18). Because of general revelation, we do have a point of contact with the unbeliever: he is the image of God and sees the glory of God in nature so that he knows deep down in his heart-of-hearts that God exists.

The apologetic import of general revelation is found in three significant implications:

1. All the universe *necessarily* reveals God. Van Til argues, “Not one single fact in this universe can be known truly by man without the existence of God.”<sup>8</sup> He further adds that “Every fact proves the existence of God because without the presupposition of God and his counsel, no fact has any distinguishable character at all.”<sup>9</sup> God’s world reveals God; the creation shows forth the Creator. This insures our point of contact with the unbeliever: We both live in God’s world—and the unbeliever knows it deep within.

2. All facts and laws of the universe are only properly comprehended in terms of their relation to God as divinely created facts and laws. All facts are pre-interpreted by God, which means everything in the Universe has meaning within the overarching,

---

<sup>8</sup>Cornelius Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974), 14.

<sup>9</sup>Van Til, *Systematic Theology*, 17.

divinely-ordained, all encompassing plan of God in which they exist (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3). The unbeliever will not be able rationally to account for the orderly Universe which he experiences, since he is committed to the ultimacy of chance. (Dr. Bahnsen will press home this issue in later lectures. For now, he is simply laying the foundations for such apologetic assertions.)

3. The universe is an intensely personal environment in that it is permeated with the presence of God (Jer. 23:23–24; Acts 17:27–28) and controlled by his wise purpose (Isa. 46:10; Eph. 1:11). As the Puritan Thomas Watson commented regarding God’s omnipresence,<sup>10</sup> “God’s center is everywhere, his circumference is nowhere.” The Universe is not an impersonal environment awaiting the interpretation of man and devoid of purpose and meaning apart from human activity. It is the God-created, God-permeated, God-controlled environment of man. In the unbeliever’s worldview, he is standing quite alone in a cold, impersonal, and meaningless universe:

- “The universe is indifferent. Who created it? Why are we here on this puny mud-heap, spinning in infinite space? I have not the slightest idea, and I am quite convinced that no one has the least idea” (André Maurois, 1885–1967).
- “Why shouldn’t things be largely absurd, futile, and transitory? They are so, and we are so, and they and we go very well together” (George Santayana, 1863–1952).

---

<sup>10</sup>“Omnipresence” is derived from the Latin words *omni* (“all”) and *praesens* (“present”). It speaks of God’s personal, simultaneous presence everywhere throughout the universe.

- “All existing things are born for no reason, continue through weakness and die by accident. It is meaningless that we are born; it is meaningless that we die” (Jean-Paul Sartre, 1905–1980).
- “Life is a bad joke” (Voltaire, 1694–1778).
- “All is relative” (Auguste Comte, 1798–1857).
- “How am I, an a-temporal being imprisoned in time and space, to escape from my imprisonment, when I know that outside space and time lies nothing, and that I, in the ultimate depths of my reality, am nothing also” (Samuel Beckett, 1906–1989).

**Special Revelation:** God also reveals Himself directly and propositionally to the mind of man in Scripture. Special revelation is that disclosure that is given to God’s people (hence, it is “special”). It comes from God by means of direct, personal, verbal (or visual) communication, either through special, prophetically endowed messengers or through the written record of those messengers.

As we learn from Scripture: “No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2 Peter 1:21). “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16–17).

Special revelation’s apologetic import is felt in that the presupposition of Scripture’s truth is the absolutely indispensable pre-condition for true and proper knowledge and science, as Dr. Bahnsen is arguing in his five lecture series.

**Incarnational Revelation:** Revelation through incarnation is unique form of special revelation.<sup>11</sup> When Christ was on the earth in the first century he brought the highest revelation of God in himself. He was literally God walking on the earth, though shielding his glory in human form (Phil. 2:6–8). He only displayed his majesty in fullness on one occasion: at the transfiguration (Matt. 17:1–2). Peter recalls this glorious event:

“For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased’” (2 Peter 1:16–17).

John’s Gospel informs us that “No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him” (John 1:18). “Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, ‘Show us the Father’?” (John 14:9). Today we do not personally witness the incarnational presence of Christ among us. However, the record of this special form of revelation is summarized for us today in Scripture.

---

<sup>11</sup>The word “incarnation” is from the Latin *incarnare*, “to become flesh.” This is based on two Latin words: *in* (“in”) plus *carn* (“flesh”). It speaks of the coming of the invisible, spiritual God in bodily form in Jesus Christ.

The Christian establishes his theory of knowledge on the all-ordering omniscient God of Scripture. God's knowledge is instantaneous (he does not learn it piecemeal over time), true (he is not confused over any aspect of reality), and exhaustive (he knows all things perfectly and fully). He is "perfect in knowledge" (Job 37:16; cp. Rom. 11:33–36). Indeed, "known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18). And he has revealed to man in the Bible the comprehensive principles necessary for a sure foundation for reality, knowledge, and experience (2 Tim. 3:16–17). Such a foundation insures that what man does know (although he cannot know all things) he can know truly. Knowledge does work because man's mind as created by God is receptive to external reality and is given validity by God himself.

So then, we have three modes of revelation from God: indirectly through nature, directly through Scripture, and personally in Christ. These frame in our Christian theory of knowledge, with special revelation in Scripture being particularly important for us today, as God's direct interpretation of the world and life.

As Dr. Bahnsen will point out later, the non-Christian must establish his theory of knowledge on the same foundation upon which he established reality: nebulous, chaotic, irrational chance. If followed out *consistently* the non-Christian theory of knowledge would utterly destroy the very possibility of knowledge, causing it to drown in the turbulent ocean of irrationalism. *There is no way to account for reason in the non-Christian system.* The concepts of probability, possibility, order, rationality, and so forth, are impossible in a random and chance system.

Thus, the Christian has a sure foundation for knowledge, whereas the non-Christian has none.



## **Ethics**

Ethics is the branch of philosophy known as moral philosophy. It studies right and wrong attitudes, judgments, and actions, as well as moral responsibility and obligation. Bahnsen highlights four questions of special concern for the ethicist:

- What is the nature of good and evil?
- What are the standards for ethical evaluation?
- The questions of guilt and personal peace.
- How do we attain or produce moral character?

For the Christian, morality is founded upon the all-good, all-knowing, everywhere present, all powerful, personal, and eternal Creator God of Scripture. His will, which is rooted in His being and nature, is man's standard of right. Since God is all good (Ps. 119:137; Mark 10:18b) and all-knowing (Ps. 139:2–27; Prov. 15:3), moral principles revealed in Scripture are always righteous and always relevant to our situation. Since God is eternal (Ps. 90:2; 102:12), his moral commands are always binding upon men. “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Eccl. 12:13–14).

For the non-Christian there is no sure base for ethics. Since reality is founded on nothing and knowledge is rooted in irrationalism, morality can be nothing other than purely arbitrary, relativistic, personal preference. The relativist holds that “the Golden

Rule is that there are no golden rules” (George Bernard Shaw, 1856–1950). Of course, this is self-contradictory for if there are no rules, then this cannot be a rule.

Against the non-believing perspective D. M. Baillie (1857–1954) commented: “Either our moral values tell us something about the nature and purpose of reality or they are subjective and therefore meaningless.” Richard Purtill observed that “if our rationality and morality do not come from God they come from chance permutations of some basic stuff or from the working of mindless forces. In either case, they have no validity.”

In the unbelieving system presupposed by non-Christians, there are no—indeed, there can be no—ultimate, abiding moral principles. Everything is caught up in the impersonal flux of a random universe. Random change is an ultimate in such a system, consequently ethics is reduced to pure relativism. Non-Christian thought can offer no justification for any moral behavior whatsoever. This is dangerous, for as Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821–1881) commented, “If God does not exist, then everything is permitted.” Christian scholar Steve Kumar suggested an appropriate creed for atheists:

“There is no God.

There is no objective Truth.

There is no ground for Reason.

There are no absolute Morals.

There is no ultimate Value.

There is no ultimate Meaning.

There is no eternal Hope.”

## II. Exegetical Considerations

Two particular theological issues of consequence for us are the absolute being of God and His authoritative revelation contained in Scripture. Let us analyze some key texts dealing with these doctrines.

### **Exodus 3:14**

Fundamental to the Christian worldview and apologetic is the absoluteness of God. All our presuppositions for life are anchored in Him. Unfortunately, all sorts of nebulous and mushy views of God cloud the minds of evangelicals today. To help clarify the glory of God's being, we will briefly analyze one particularly powerful verse. This verse is found in God's statement to Moses at the Burning Bush. Exodus 3:13–14 reads:

“Then Moses said to God, ‘Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I shall say to them, “The God of your fathers has sent me to you.” Now they may say to me, “What is His name?” What shall I say to them?’ And God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM’; and He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

The statement of particular interest is: “I am Who I am.” This passage is the historical source of God's special covenantal name Yahweh (or Jehovah), which appears 6,823 times in the Old Testament. The name is spelled with four Hebrew consonants (and no vowels) and is sometimes called the “Tetragrammeton” (“four letters”: YHWH). It is

generally spelled “LORD” with all caps in English versions, so as to distinguish it from “Lord” (*Adonai*). A world of theology is packed into this divine self-revelatory name.

1. “I am Who I am” is the verb “to be” found in the imperfect tense in Hebrew. The imperfect tense indicates uncompleted action, thus involving an ongoing reality. When names are formed from this tense they are distinguishing a constantly manifested quality. The name speaks of God’s self-existence: God *is*. He did not come to be. He does not say “I was.” He is. He exists of Himself without prior cause or present dependence: He always is. We might understand it as signifying: “I am simply because I am,” or “I am being that I am being.”

2. The name speaks of God’s unlimited duration: He is the eternal “I Am.” The repetition of the verb (“I am/ I am” in “I am that I am”) emphasizes uninterrupted continuance and boundless duration. When biblical characters give their names, they generally relate themselves to their father who gave them being (e.g., Hag. 1:1; Zech. 1:7; Matt. 4:21). The Bible is filled with genealogies (e.g., Gen. 5; 10; 1 Chron.; Matt. 1). But God always is, and of Himself. He has no beginning. As we pointed out previously, there are two levels of reality: the eternal God and temporal creation.

3. The name speaks of His sovereign self-determination. God determines from within His own being. “I am that I am.” As the Absolute One, He operates with unfettered liberty. He is not moved by outward circumstances nor resisted by countervailing forces. Consequently, this name speaks of God’s absolute and unchangeable constancy. He is not subject to change in character or determination, because He is not subject to change in himself as the Absolute One. Elsewhere we read: “I am the Lord, I change not” (cp. Mal. 3:6; James 1:17).

The Christian worldview is established on a sure and unchallengeable foundation. It is established on the eternal God of Scripture.

### **2 Timothy 3:16–17 and 2 Peter 1:20–21**

Two important biblical passages speak of the *fact* and the *method* of inspiration. In that we know God most clearly and precisely through Scripture, and in that biblical apologetics posits Scripture itself as one of its foundations, you should be acquainted with these passages.

Second Timothy 3:16–17 reads: “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

This is universally recognized as the key passage establishing the *fact* of divine the divine inspiration of Scripture. It states forthrightly: “All Scripture is inspired by God.” The English word “inspiration” is technically unfortunate in dealing with the origin of Scripture. This English word has an active import that means “to breathe in.” It implies that the Scriptures were first written by men then were “breathed into” by God and given their divine authority as an addition. Though the implication is erroneous, due to the popular and widespread acceptance of the term, however, we will continue to use it in our study.

The Greek word underlying “inspired by God” is *theopneustos*. It is a passive word meaning “breathed of God.” The word does not speak of *inspiration*, but of *spiration*. Not God breathing in, but God breathing out. The Scripture here is spoken of as a final product breathed out by the creative breath of God—without reference as to

how man received it (whether personally written by God as in Exodus 31:18 or given through the agency of a prophet).

This verse informs us that *all* Scripture is the product of divine “spiration.” The Bible does not suggest differing levels of trustworthiness in God’s Word: “all Scripture is inspired by God.” And because of that, all Scripture “is profitable . . . that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” The Scriptures adequately equip us for every good endeavor in which we engage. Indeed, it establishes the floor of our worldviews upon which our lives are built.

Now let us consider the *method* of inspiration. Second Peter 1:20–21 reads: “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”

Before we begin, we must recognize that the word “prophecy” refers to the entire message of Scripture, not just formal prophecies which foretell the future, such as those found in Isaiah or Daniel. The word “prophesy” means “to speak forth, forth tell,” not simply “to foretell, predict.” In this passage Peter speaks both negatively and positively. Let’s see what he denies and affirms.

When you read the phrase “private interpretation” you might think Peter is speaking of our efforts in *interpreting* Scripture today. But he is really speaking of the prophet’s original *receiving* of Scripture. For he goes on to declare that “no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will” and “men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke.” These demand that Peter is speaking of the prophet’s original reception of Scripture rather than our current understanding of it.

So then, Peter points negatively to the fact that the Scriptures did not originate as the result of any individual's contemplating matters and declaring his own thoughts. He expands on this by stating that "prophecy never came by the will of man." This means that no divine revelation had its origin in man's will or human effort. Peter is emphatic: Not even one revelation in Scripture originated by human activity. This "never" occurred.

Then he focuses on the positive reality. The phrase "holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" asserts the origin and the manner by which Scripture came to man. The importance of "moved" is not that of "directed, guided, or lead," as if God helps the prophet find the truth; rather, it speaks of his being "taken up and carried along" by God's power throughout the process of speaking (or writing) the Scripture. The Scripture was written by men "borne along" (controlled, dominated) by God. They "spoke from God."

This passage emphasizes God's controlling activity in imparting revelation. The Old Testament often condemns false prophets as creating their own (alleged) revelations: "They speak a vision of their own imagination, not from the mouth of the Lord" (Jer. 23:16b; cp. 27:14-17; Deut. 18:20-22; Matt. 7:15).

When reading the Scriptures we find clear evidences of a peculiar and supernatural involvement of God in revealing His will to specially chosen, providentially prepared, and sovereignly governed agents. Consider the following examples.

1. In 372 cases in the Old Testament, we find the phrase, "Thus says the Lord" (e.g., Ex. 4:22; Josh. 24:2; Judges 6:8; Isa. 7:7; Jer. 2:2). In 92 instances we find: "The word of the Lord came" (e.g., Gen. 15:1; 1 Sam. 15:10; Isa. 38:4; Jer. 14; Eze. 1:3).

2. In numerous places in the New Testament, the writers cite the Old Testament as the words of God or of the Holy Spirit. For example: Matthew 15:4: “For God commanded, saying, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’” Hebrews 1:5 “For to which of the angels did He ever say: ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You’? And again: ‘I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son’?”

3. Paul claims his words are from the Holy Spirit: “These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (1 Cor. 2:13); “You seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you” (2 Cor. 13:3); “For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe” (1 Thess. 2:13).

4. Peter places New Testament words on a par with Old Testament words: “Account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which those who are untaught and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures” (2 Peter 3:15–16).

Your proper understanding of the divine character of Scripture is absolutely essential for giving you confidence in your faith and in establishing a proper Christian worldview—and for challenging the unbeliever’s vain efforts. Any doubt you have about the trustworthiness of Scripture undermines your entire Christian outlook.



### **III. Questions Raised**

1. What are the three leading issues for any worldview to answer?
2. From what do we derive the word “metaphysics”? What is metaphysics?
3. What are some key metaphysical questions?
4. Do all people have a metaphysical program? Explain your answer.
5. What is the difference between “neutral ground” and “common ground”?
6. In the Christian view, what are the two levels of reality?
7. What do we mean when we say that God is “self-contained”? How is that significant for our apologetic?
8. From what do we derive the word “epistemology”? What is epistemology?
9. What are some key epistemological questions?
10. Why do we say that all the Universe reveals God?
11. What are the three forms of revelation in the Christian epistemology? Briefly explain each one.
12. What are some key ethical questions?
13. Discuss Exodus 3:14 regarding its instruction as to God’s being.
14. What are the two principal Bible passages that clearly assert the Bible is inspired revelation from God?

### **IV. Practical Applications**

1. The presuppositional apologetics is holistic, worldview apologetics. Get together with some Christian friends and discuss some ways in which the Christian outlook on any

given issue is fundamentally different *at the level of basic principles* from the non-Christian outlook.

2. Carefully read Genesis 1 and Psalm 8 and discuss what it means to exist in the image of God and how man differs from animals in that regard.

3. Write a brief paper on the significance of metaphysics from a Christian perspective.

You might want to consult an article such as found in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*.

4. Write a brief paper on the significance of epistemology from a Christian perspective.

You might want to consult an article such as found in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*.

5. Read and then outline in detail the first chapter of the Westminster Confession of Faith “On Scriptures.”

6. Read the “Humanist Manifesto II” and list the metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical differences with your Christian worldview.

## **V. Recommended Reading**

Bahnsen, Greg, “The Importance of Canonicity”: [www.apologeticspress.org/articles/2466](http://www.apologeticspress.org/articles/2466)

Butler, Michael R. “A Truly Christian Epistemology”:

[http://solagratia.org/Articles/A\\_Truly\\_Reformed\\_Epistemology.aspx](http://solagratia.org/Articles/A_Truly_Reformed_Epistemology.aspx)

“The Chicago Statement on Inerrancy”: [www.reformed.org/bible/index.html](http://www.reformed.org/bible/index.html)

“Humanist Manifesto II”: [www.americanhumanist.org/3/HumandItsAspirations.htm](http://www.americanhumanist.org/3/HumandItsAspirations.htm)

Thompson, Bert, “In Defense of the Bible’s Inspiration”: [www.apologeticspress.org/articles/2466](http://www.apologeticspress.org/articles/2466)