

# Liberalism: Its Cause And Cure –

## Chapter Five: Defending Morality

I think this is the very first time I have read an article from a Christian how to engage in a debate with atheists and antagonistic people over doctrines and morality in the most intelligent way. I hope you enjoy and benefit from it!

This is continued from [Liberalism: Its Cause And Cure – Chapter Four: Charismatics Are Liberals](#)

Anyone who tries to discuss contemporary moral issues finds himself enmeshed in well-rehearsed arguments which do not seem to address the real issues. For this reason, many orthodox Christians feel constrained to withdraw from the field of battle rather than endure the aggravation of reasoning against emotional tirades and visceral attacks.<sup>1</sup>

The debater must be able to identify and defuse the logical fallacies which are a staple of all bad arguments. Not only does this leave the opponent sputtering, but it can also impress an audience which otherwise would be victimized by personal attacks, emotional appeals and subtle deceptions.

Logical fallacies are as old as ancient Greece and Rome, where public debate formed policy. For this reason many fallacies are still identified with Latin terms. Lawyers and debaters learn these fallacies and their antidotes. Politicians revel in them. Shouldn't Christians study them as well? This chapter will illustrate some of the most common fallacies and defenses against them. One may obtain many more examples from circuit meetings, family discussions and TV editorials. Lewis Carroll wrote in *Alice in Wonderland*:

“In my youth,” said his father, “I took to the law,  
And argued each case with my wife;  
And the muscular strength, which it gave to my jaw,  
Has lasted the rest of my life.”

Lewis Carroll also wrote *Symbolic Logic* in 1896.

### **MATERIAL FALLACIES OF RELEVANCE**

These do not rely on ambiguous language, the wrong use of words, but on the distortion of facts.

#### **The ad hominem (against the man)**

The most popular fallacy continues to be the most useful. Weak arguments cannot be won by debating the issues. The *ad hominem* is used to deflect the argument away from the facts and toward the person.

“Nazi” is a favorite term. If the believer tries to say, “I’m not a Nazi,” then he has already fallen into the trap. A better approach would be to

define the Nazi philosophy or to identify the characteristics of Nazi leaders. He could say, "You used the term Nazi about me, but is it really accurate? I have no sympathies with them."

Heirs of the spirit of compromise may respond to an orthodox Lutheran by calling him a "Fundamentalist." This infuriates some Lutherans, who know they are not Fundamentalists. However, some non-Lutherans consider the term a positive description of someone who believes scriptural doctrine. A balanced answer to the charge of Fundamentalism would be: "Fundamentalist? If you mean that I believe in the basic doctrines of the Bible, such as inerrancy, creation, the virgin birth, and the resurrection, then I would call myself a Fundamentalist. But if you are suggesting that I believe in the earthly reign of the Messiah, then I would have to disagree and ask you to use more precise terms. Like Luther, I am simply stating my trust in the Holy Scriptures, in the entire Bible, not just parts of it."

The final statement is an opportunity to confess the truth of the Bible. Then the issue is no longer whether the person is a Fundamentalist, but what Luther taught. An editor once wrote a letter which said, in effect, "Prove to me that the Wisconsin Synod is not a Fundamentalist group." He combined an *ad hominem* with an *ad ignorantiam* (discussed below).

Deflecting the *ad hominem* might be preferred to a frontal attack on the content of the fallacy. The deflection is simple: "I would rather stick to the issues." Taking the high road is always a better approach with a discerning audience.

People have piled up a host of terms for use when the battle is being lost, so that they can insist sanctimoniously: "You are being judgmental. You are a sexist. You are homophobic." The value of any particular term increases with public acceptance, which subsequently grows with use by the print and broadcast media. A response to the accusation of being judgmental, a term borrowed from psychologist Carl Rogers, might be: "Of course I use my judgment. I hope that doctors, lawyers, nurses, and teachers all use their judgment, to choose between good and evil, right and wrong. You may remember that Nixon claimed to have used bad judgment." Sexist? Why not ask whether feminism really benefits women. Homophobic? "I'm not afraid of men. That's what 'homophobic' means."

The victim of name-calling should consider the effort a great compliment and act accordingly. The intent of the *ad hominem* is to anger the opponent and seduce the audience. An angry response to an *ad hominem* fallacy creates in the audience the very impression of malice which the non-believer wants to prove. Name calling is not new. Jesus told us, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.." (Matthew 5:11, 12 KJV).

**The *tu quoque* (and you too)**

Small children catch on to this fallacy right away. If one child says,

'You're a pig," the other responds, 'You are too!" The *tu quoque* is simply a bad response to an ad hominem. When issues are being discussed, people often use the *tu quoque* with impunity. Hearing that someone is in favor of capital punishment but opposed to abortion, a person declares, "How can you claim to care about life when you openly support killing criminals?" In basic terms, the argument involves this exchange:

Pro-life – Abortion is murder and therefore unjust.

Pro-abortion – You are killing people unjustly.

Here the believer must be careful not to surrender to emotional blackmail. One response would be: "You suggest that it is fine to kill innocent children. The law says it is permissible to take the life of those who have committed capital crimes, been tried by a jury of their peers, and been given the presumption of innocence. If only our unborn children could again be given the same rights they enjoyed for almost 200 years, before *Roe vs. Wade*."

#### **The *ad populum* (to the people)**

Ask any teenager, and he will say, "Everyone is wearing. . . No one would be caught dead in. . . ." The *ad populum* fallacy is an appeal to popularity: everyone knows, everyone feels, or conversely, no one else shares your opinion. The popularity of an idea does not support or detract from its veracity. George Bernard Shaw, a pioneering socialist, said that we never tire of honoring live conformists and dead nonconformists.

This fallacy can be attacked by questioning the facts, such as when a church official said, "You and Jerry are the only ones who feel this way about Lutherans Concerned." This apparent aberration was tested subsequently by a resolution on the issue, where the confessional position earned more than two votes, though not many more. The real message of the *ad populum*, which is effectively destroying the mainline churches, is this: "You are not moving with the tide of change. You are not on the cutting edge of theology."

The victim of the *ad populum* should say, "The issue is not whether everyone agrees but whether this is right or wrong, according to the Word of God." If the apostate attacks the Scriptures in front of an audience, he may experience a profound lack of support.

#### **The *ad verecundiam* (out of respect)**

Claiming authority for a statement is common and necessary in theology. False claims of authority, in contrast, are a logical fallacy. Luther and Calvin have been victimized by the false claims of mainline theologians, who commonly assert, without citations, that both reformers rejected the inerrancy of Scripture, that both were "free and creative" with the Bible, that both distinguished between the Word of God and the Scriptures.

Martin Marty, the prolific Evangelical Lutheran Church in America pastor who teaches at the University of Chicago, pointed out in his Notre Dame summer lectures that a body of published work, even if it is wrong, establishes a

“canon,” a standard against which all future efforts are measured. Liberals have largely won the battle for control of American institutions by establishing in every area of thought a canon, a body of literature by accepted scholars.

We once stopped at a church-owned college to buy a Greek New Testament. The college bookstore and the student bookstore had no copies for sale, but both places had fifty separate titles about feminism and other recent causes. This church college serves as a source for many mainline seminary students. The canonical Scriptures have been replaced by the feminist/homosexual/Marxist/abortion canon, with obvious deleterious results for dogmatics. The alumni magazine of the college in question once featured articles about Christ, but recently honored a feminist advocate of abortion on demand and the main speaker at the homosexual convention in Toronto.

Countering an *ad verecundiam* fallacy can be tricky. Many mainline members are ill-informed about their own denomination’s legacy of scholarship, considering it out of date. The best approach, then, is to appeal to their own authorities. Several liberal theologians, such as George Forell and Stanley Hauerwas, have opposed abortion on demand. Christian Century, a periodical of established liberalism, will occasionally publish an article questioning a prevailing myth, such as one about the crime of aborting a twin with Down’s syndrome. Combating the *ad verecundiam*, then, requires a diet of liberal publications, or a reliable source of their latest intellectual follies.

#### **The *ad ignorantiam* (pleading ignorance)**

This particular fallacy is a natural for many people, because bad arguments require massive ignorance. However, the *argumentum ad ignorantiam* is a false plea, that something is true because it has not been shown to be false, that something is false because no one has proved it true. One mainline minister has repeatedly insisted that no one has ever proved the inerrancy of Scripture to him. One could cite the appropriate references in Pieper’s Christian Dogmatics, Hoenecke’s Dogmatik, and Robert Preus’s The Inspiration of Scripture, but this fallacy provides a convenient cover: ‘You still haven’t proved to me that the Bible claims to be inerrant.’”

The fallacy is widely used in books of liberal scholarship and in the classrooms of mainline schools. Some old warhorses of the Left:

1. No one can prove the Trinity from the Bible;
2. Paul never mentioned the virgin birth or the empty tomb;
3. Jesus did not claim to be the Messiah or the Son of God. For a college student untrained in Christian apologetics (the art of defending the faith), these statements can be devastating.

#### **The fallacy of *accidence***

This false argument derives its name from the Latin word meaning “appearance.” The fallacy of appearance consists of arguing from a general rule in dealing with an exceptional case. The converse fallacy of *accidence*

means arguing from an exception for a general rule.

One denomination argued for abortion on demand by claiming correctly that Lutherans do not baptize dead babies. The general rule about the sacrament of baptism did not fit the ethics of killing a helpless child in the womb. The statement had the appearance of logic, but was fallacious and murderous. These are tricky to deal with, because a person with common sense knows something is wrong. A truth used in a misleading way is still dishonest.

***Ignoratio elenchi* (changing the subject)**

The *ignoratio elenchi* consists of changing the subject, a time-honored method of avoiding the issue. In one discussion, a church leader was repeatedly asked if he favored the use of x-rated pornography in the treatment of sex offenders in church-sponsored programs. "Scripture has been understood from two perspectives. One is prescriptive. The other is descriptive." The issue was not hermeneutics but episcopal approval of pornography. He never answered the question.

The antidote to *ignoratio elenchi* is repeatedly saying, "Answer the question!"

Another form of the fallacy is using another question to deflect the original question. When a student was asked questions which threatened to expose his ignorance, he responded with this, "First, I want to ask about. . ." The professor answered so thoroughly each time that he forgot his original question was unanswered. Questions, in whatever form they take, tend to control the direction of any conversation. A salesman and a debater will ask many questions.

***Ad baculum* (appeal to force)**

A mainline minister was appointed to the Minnesota Council of Churches in time to consider a radical proposal endorsing homosexual rights. He did not attack the item but asked some clarifying questions. During a break another minister said, "What do you think you are doing? Do you want to be on this council or not?" The threat was clear enough: people who question the agenda do not stay on the council.

Another minister challenged the policies of the national youth board, which was sponsoring homosexual workshops for the teenagers. The responses varied, from "What is your hang-up?" (*ad hominem*) to "How badly do you want to be on the national staff?" (*ad baculum*). Unfortunately, many have succumbed to the threat of force, whether it is the loss of ministerial pension, the loss of church property, or the loss of a call. The answer is to fear God rather than man.

***Ad misericordiam* (sympathy)**

A plea for sympathy (*ad misericordiam*) is often combined with special pleading for popular causes. For instance, a United Presbyterian minister said, "Here is a handicapped woman with no husband and no job. Are you going

to insist that she must have a baby?" The special pleading (offering only reasons for an abortion) added to the intended effect of the multiple problems faced by the woman in question. In fact, many abortions are performed on married women with excellent health and with above average income, and some "terminations" are done solely to allow the couple to choose the sex of the child. The "wrong" sex is aborted.

A harsh answer to this mainline minister would have made the speaker seem heartless. (For instance, the pro-life speaker might say, "How did this handicapped woman get pregnant without being married?") Often people will identify with the distress of the single person. Instead of a harsh response, the speaker can switch to the language of the Presbyterian. "I'm pro-choice. . . that is, I will be pro-choice the moment we give unborn babies a choice in whether they live or die."

The *ad misericordiam* fallacy can be defeated by employing the Pauline method of using the opponents' terms against them. What is genuine compassion? According to one liberal minister, abortion on demand prevented children from being unwanted and therefore beaten. Someone responded, "Should we kill children to keep them from being beaten, to show our compassion?" The pro-abortion minister walked away without answering. Mainline ministers may have a monopoly on speaking about compassion, but not on compassion itself.

### **MATERIAL FALLACIES OF INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE**

The following fallacies depend on their force from a lack of factual support. If the argument appeals to the prejudice of the audience, people will approve. A well executed fallacy will leave supporters smiling and opponents baffled. Diagnosis is a crucial part of the cure.

#### **Post Hoc, Ergo Propter Hoc (after this, therefore because of this)**

The post hoc fallacy follows this pattern: When X happens, Y also happens; therefore X causes Y. These arguments were used to justify the introduction of the Social Gospel movement to mainline seminaries. The great depression (Y) happened after the excesses of capitalism had gone unchecked by the mainline churches (X), they argued. Since the mainline churches still preached individual salvation, quietism caused the depression. Therefore, the church had to use its material and spiritual resources to reform society. The argument is based on unwarranted assumptions. First of all, the true cause of the depression was not the residual conservatism of the mainlines. The stock market crash was not the cause of the depression, either. The main cause was the imposition of a rigid tariff system, turning America's recession into a worldwide financial collapse.

To combat a post hoc fallacy, one must analyze the cause and the effect. The adverbs may be loosely used and vulnerable to attack. "Every time you drive, the car has another dent," The defense: "Every time? Yesterday? Last Monday? I drive it three times a week. It should have 347 dents in it by now." The question is really whether X caused Y, or whether X was the sole cause of Y.

### **Petitio principii (begging the question)**

Begging the question is a simple or elaborate way of proving that X is true because X is true. One church executive, in attacking the traditional doctrine of inerrancy, said, "The terms inerrant and infallible are confusing because they offer less than they promise." One antidote to begging the question is a simple analysis of the statement. The believer might ask, "Aren't you using the conclusion to restate the argument, rather than proving it? Isn't that begging the question?"

Another way to stop this tactic is to profess confusion, dismay, or befuddlement. "What did you just say? It didn't make sense. Weren't you arguing in a circle?"

It is also fair to expect a claim to be supported by valid evidence rather than another version of the claim.

For that reason, orthodox Christians should be ready to give a "reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15), knowing that God always works through the Word, regardless of our abilities.

### **Opposition**

The fallacy of opposition, designated by Carney and Scheer in *Fundamentals of Logic*, works this way: He is in favor of this, so we are opposed; or, he is opposed to this, so we are in favor of it. Hitler is a popular component of this argument. In the *Midland Daily News*, the liberal editor quoted someone's opposition to pornography, made a plea for free speech, then concluded the article by admitting in an ominous tone that Hitler had written the passage in question.

The implied conclusion was that people opposed to pornography were Nazis, or that we should protect the production of obscene material because of Hitler's statements against it. The fallacy was countered by identifying the lack of logic, quoting the textbook, and summarizing the tacky life of Hitler, citing *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, a widely owned, if not widely read, book.

A common tirade offered up as truth starts in the following way: "The same people who oppose a woman's free choice are in favor of the military buildup." The implication is that opposition to abortion is not a genuine rejection of killing but a pretense, a hidden desire to oppress women in the name of the sanctity of life. It follows then that people should oppose the anti-abortion people as fiercely as they should oppose the defense industry.

The believer should seize the initiative as quickly as possible, pointing out that two issues are involved, abortion and defense, that many people of all political persuasions oppose abortion (rendering the grand conclusion false), that it is mischievous to make such hasty, arbitrary, and capricious statements. Another antidote is to ask why anyone would favor violent solutions, such as abortion, to social problems.

### **Special pleading**

When only the arguments on one side of the issue are offered, without accounting for opposing views, the person is indulging in special pleading. When certain elements argued for legalized gambling in New Jersey, only the economic benefits were mentioned in an expensive media campaign. That was a clear case of special pleading.

When the mainline denominations changed their constitutions to allow women's ordination, they claimed it was only a matter of changing pronouns or establishing justice. By ignoring the relevant passages of Scripture, they engaged in special pleading.

The only answer to special pleading is a clear and logical presentation of the other side. In the case of the ordination of women, which is now a "women's issue," these facts would be germane in many denominations:

1. Scripture is our norm for faith and practice.
2. The pastoral epistles do not allow for the ordination of women or for women to exercise authority over men in the church.
3. Nearly twenty centuries of tradition should call into question the claims of women's ordination, especially when we see that women ruled most of Europe in the 16th century without anyone concluding at the time that women must preach as well.

### **Hasty generalization**

Generalizations are not wrong, but it is a fallacy to argue that a general rule fits all those in that category. An interesting example was offered by a feminist minister in training, who had just summarily dismissed the virgin birth and the resurrection as "unimportant doctrines." She suggested that Christ could be understood as a woman because he compared himself to a mother hen! (This also represents a momentary lapse into Fundamentalism, an apostate becoming rabidly literal on one particular point.)

Mainline ministers enjoy telling horror stories about a particular conservative and then making a hasty generalization. Believers are also guilty of making a hasty generalization if they think all mainline seminary professors deny the virgin birth simply because it can be shown that most of them do. We are in contact with one mainline seminary professor who teaches the virgin birth without equivocation. Another hasty generalization made by some conservatives is that all ministers of mainline groups are unbelievers. If a believer states a hasty generalization as fact and one exception can be proven, the argument is blown to pieces.

Those mainline ministers who are more orthodox have been used as examples by their opponents of how tolerant the denomination is. "We have room for everyone, and we need your zeal." Precision of language is extremely important to avoid the charge of hasty generalization. The believer, by being well informed, can counter the hasty generalization by pointing out exceptions to brash claims.



## FALLACIES OF AMBIGUITY

The following arguments depend on misuse of the language, as if we can use words to mean what we want them to mean at the moment, like the character in *Alice in Wonderland*.

### **Equivocation**

Equivocation is the method of using the same word in two different senses. Liberal theology is essentially an equivocation at every point of doctrine, as witnessed by Adolph Harnack's *What Is Christianity?* and Walter Rauschenbusch's *A Theology for the Social Gospel*. Countless examples can be found in mainline "confessions of faith," especially in respect to the Scriptures.

Equivocation is countered by demanding clear definitions of terms used. Blurred distinctions are used deliberately to confuse the unwary. The believer must say, "What do you mean by. . .?" Because written materials can be misleading, the believer must discover how words are being used. Some efforts are rather transparent, such as when the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights launched a campaign claiming that pro-abortion activists were pro-life, since they were concerned about the mother's life. Other attempts work quite well, such as the independent Lutheran congregation which called itself "Orthodox Lutheran" and yet borrowed, word for word, a statement of faith from the most liberal Lutheran group, a doctrinal summary which the national magazine claimed as a triumph of the historical-critical method.

Equivocations about moral issues come from equivocations about the faith. If a minister denies that the Bible is the revealed Word of God, without any errors or contradictions, his moral reasoning will be deficient and misleading. His members will become confused by his leadership, the blind leading the blind.

### **Amphiboly**

The term refers to an ambiguous sentence or group of sentences which allow two different conclusions to be drawn. Church bulletins are full of examples, such as the famous but apocryphal example of thanking the ladies' aid for laying Easter eggs on the altar. The Father of Lies could never afford to let his followers communicate directly and honestly about their theology and their causes. If they did funds would dry up, Executive positions would disappear and many would need to seek gainful employment. Instead, public statements are designed to suggest one conclusion to camp-followers and a different conclusion to believers. For instance, when one denomination became too obvious about its support for the Marxists in Nicaragua, where the church was being persecuted by the heroes of the mainlines, one church executive said, "Yes, we confess a bias, a bias toward the poor."

When the mainline churches publish reports about their work in world missions, outreach, and world hunger, one might expect the conversion of pagans, evangelism in America, and providing food for the hungry to be the chief activities of those agencies. In fact, it would be a genuine miracle,

in the biblical sense of the term, if such work dominated their departments. Since mainline executives use the term "mission" for social activism, most mainline members naively think of God's work being done.

Accordingly, Evangelicals in the United Methodist church had to organize their own independent world mission agency to get some genuine missionary work done. Were their bishops relieved and grateful? No, the United Methodist bishops boycotted the first commissioning service.

### **Accent**

A fallacy of accent derives its error in placing the emphasis on the wrong element in the statement. For instance, a Lutheran layman called into question a prayer for the pope after the assassination attempt in 1981, wondering if the prayer implied doctrinal unity with Rome. The minister responded in the following way: "I apologize for showing concern." A solution is to question the accent. In this case, the issue was not of sympathy for the wounded pope but of doctrinal agreement. Instead of sarcasm, the minister could have explained, "I don't like church leaders shot down in public, even when we disagree with their confession of faith." The use of a fallacy made the minister appear evasive and defensive.

## **OTHER FALLACIES**

### **Straw man**

When an argument is weak, one is tempted to construct a straw man fallacy. The straw man is a false construction of the opponent's views. The executive director of the Michigan Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights shouted into the phone, "What you want is to have every woman in America tested for pregnancy every month." The response which destroyed her straw man fallacy was a simple question about the facts: "Is that what happened before the 1973 decision, Roe vs. Wade?" A sputtering sound was heard.

The popularity of the straw man comes from the habit of bellowing arguments at those who agree with us. People are often convinced that the straw man fallacies they construct are the genuine views of the other side. An agency head said, "You're saying that. . . ." By calling attention to her straw man argument and naming it, the victim was able to stop the attack. Self-defense is hardly the answer. If the believer says, "I'm not saying. . . ," then the opponent can continue to press his attack.

### **Slippery Slope**

Advocates of pornography love the slippery slope. "If we censor this child pornography, even though I loathe its content, then we are just one step closer to a Nazi police state." Two matters are involved in the slippery slope. First, is this really a step toward the slope? Second, is the slope really so slippery? Banning child pornography is not a step toward censorship but a means of protecting the innocent. The constitution guarantees the free exercise of religion, not the free exercise of pornography.

Remember Vietnam? Some people howled with laughter every time someone suggested that the loss of South Vietnam would lead to the domination of Southeast Asia by the Communists. They complained that the domino theory was a slippery slope fallacy. The Soviets, who now use the crucial naval base we built in Vietnam, thought otherwise. Countering the slippery slope involves an examination of both premises.

#### **False dilemma**

A false dilemma proposes only two possibilities, both unsavory, to the listener. "If we do not allow for homosexual marriages, more social chaos will result from a lack of stability in their relationships." Several antidotes to this ancient falsehood are possible:

1. Attack one horn of the dilemma or the other;
2. Jump between the horns;
3. Construct a counter-dilemma.

Number one: Will homosexual marriage really foster stability? Our legal tradition suggests that unnatural relationships have never been endorsed by Western society, precisely because sanctifying wrong has a destabilizing effect on relationships of all kinds.

Number two: Since more chaos is not desirable, we must return to the concept of natural law, which assumes universal principles of right and wrong based upon God as the creator.

Number three: If we do legalize homosexual marriages, we will surrender the most basic foundation of morality, lead more people astray, and spread disease.

#### **Two wrongs/common practice**

Most people know that one wrong does not justify another, but all anti-Christian attitudes are based upon wrong and seek vindication through this falsehood. "Sex education may condone promiscuity, but isn't it better to teach them birth control than to have more illegitimate children born?" Conceding that birth control at the age of sixteen is wrong, is followed by claiming that unwanted children are worse. One response would be to say, "Two wrongs don't make a right." Another would be to propose a solution, such as teaching deontological ethics (based on principles) rather than teleological ethics (the end justifying the means).

Common practice is related to two wrongs. "Everyone is doing it. It's common practice." Common practice is used to justify the use of illegal drugs, the theft of small items, the practice of deceit. One executive said, "The only question is—how much lying do you do?" The popularity of sin does not make it virtuous.

### **RULES OF ENGAGEMENT**

Gilbert has offered these valuable "super-rules" for winning arguments: 1) Never give in; 2) Listen.<sup>2</sup> The first super-rule is a warning not to concede

anything to an opponent, even while looking for concessions from him. Centuries ago Thomas Aquinas stated that one could not make progress in a debate unless the other person conceded some ground.

The second rule needs to be remembered in the heat of debate. We should not be so much in love with our own words that we fail to listen to the other person. In many cases, two people are saying the same thing in different ways.

However, if the opponent is a genuine, dedicated enemy of the Scriptures, listening for a weak point or a minor concession is essential. It is too easy to become emotional, an indication that the conversation is becoming personal. At that point, the issues have been sacrificed to personality. A confident person listens well and comes across as reasonable, articulate and temperate.

The following rules have been learned on the battlefield:

1. The best case is made by the person who remains calm, reasonable, friendly, and sincere. Wisconsin Synod pastors are unusually well trained in apologetics. One WELS pastor carefully explained the position of confessional Lutheranism while being taunted and baited by an unrepentant apostate. The liberal became red-faced with frustration while the Wisconsin Synod pastor remained calm. Who made the best impression?

2. Liberals seldom want to examine the issues closely, preferring to offer a dramatic enactment of some memorized fallacies. As Concordia, Ft. Wayne professor David Scaer has said, "Debating with liberals is like hunting cows with a bazooka."

3. Because liberals are such poor debaters, one should be careful to remember the audience. A well-known Evangelical destroyed a famous atheist in a public forum, making the unbeliever an object of sympathy.<sup>3</sup>

4. Ask questions, since questions control the discussion. Use "closing" questions, such as, "That would be the compassionate thing to do, wouldn't it?" or "You are not trying to say that all the Christian ministers, laity, bishops, and theologians were wrong for centuries about the Bible being God's Word, until Reimarus said otherwise, are you?"

5. The New Testament offers many examples of defending the faith, such as Paul, who never passed up an opportunity to evangelize. 1 Peter 3:15, 16 KJV says:

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

6. The Word of God is always effective (Isaiah 55:11), so we should not

shrink from debate because of a paralyzing sense of modesty.<sup>4</sup>

7. The truth is so compelling to people that some liberals will listen for hours while every one of their sacred cows is turned into hamburger.

8. Luther has said that Christ has already done everything for us. There is nothing for us to do except tell the good news to our neighbors.<sup>5</sup>

An active, living faith leads us to proclaim God's Word wherever the opportunity arises, knowing the Holy Spirit will place the correct words in our mouths. We will not always be successful. Paul sometimes failed to persuade, because of the hardness of his listeners' hearts, but Paul never ceased being faithful to the truth.

#### NOTES

1. My son, Martin, gave me invaluable help with this chapter. The categories of logical fallacies come from James Carney and Richard Scheer, *Fundamentals of Logic*, New York: Macmillan, 1964. The book consistently makes liberal arguments seem logical while making a parody of traditional thinking. Another example of this is Michael Gilbert's *How To Win an Argument*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979. Both books are good mental exercises for the Christian apologist.

2. *How to Win an Argument*.

3. William A. Risher has made this point in *How To Win Arguments*, Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1981.

4. Three useful books on Christian apologetics are: Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, 2 vols., San Bernardino: Here's Life Publishing, 1986; William Arndt, *Bible Difficulties and Seeming Contradictions*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1987; Uuras Saarnivaara, *Can The Bible Be Trusted?* Minneapolis: Osterhus Publishing House, 1983.

5. Martin Luther, *Sermons of Martin Luther*, 8 volumes, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House; First Sunday after Easter. This is an excellent sermon on evangelism.

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