



Os Guinness'

Fools Talk: Recovering the Art of Christian Persuasion

Chapter Summaries

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CHAPTER 1: CREATIVE PERSUASION (Pgs.21-28)

In this timely book by Os Guinness in a day where in America the light of the Gospel seems to be increasingly lost in our churches and in the culture, the author reminds us that to effectively do our apologetics and evangelism, we must as God's people recover the art of Christian persuasion.

Persuasion is an art [and science] that the biblical writers employed in different times and for different purposes when communicating the word of God. Unfortunately, this art has been lost to us in our apologetics and evangelism. We must not only re-engage the enterprise of apologetics/evangelism as Scripture reveals, but we must also make it our goal to *persuade* people.

In an age of acute self-promotion (E.g., media freaks) or hyper Narcissism, how do we reach the indifferent, belligerent, enemies of the Gospel with the message? Guinness answers this question by several observations. First, we must start by understanding the nature of unbelief. Second, we must look at how God addresses unbelief. Third, we must reach unbelievers where they're at, not where we hoped they would be. Fourth, we must go to the core problem—the heart!

Os argues that we must go directly to Scripture as a model of how we are to communicate to unbelievers. To persuade he sees the need to be situationally prepared always considering the audience. Two examples he uses are of King Ahab and how one named prophet and another unnamed prophet deal with his mulishness. The former seems to use mockery, the latter acts out a parable. Both get their point across to Ahab by using his words to indict him.

Guinness then instructs the reader to keep in mind five “pillars” of the Faith when persuasion is the goal of our message: creation, fall, incarnation, cross, the Spirit. *Creation* reminds us that people can reason, but their hearts are primary. *Fall* prompts us to the truth that humans are truth suppressors. *Incarnation* takes us back to the way Jesus most impacted people and that was through “one-on-one” personal interaction. There's no greater means of persuasion. *Cross* tells us people's greatest need is to behold a “Cross-centered” Gospel. *Holy Spirit* is present to empower the execution of persuasion and we must rely on Him. See quote on the Spirit's activity (Pg.28)

CHAPTER 2: TECHNIQUE—THE DEVIL’S BAIT (Pgs.29-46)

On the fridge in our home is a little magnet that shows a flock of sheep meandering down a country road. Underneath is a caption: “Rush hour Ireland”. It reminds me of a Spanish professor visiting the west of Ireland where the sense of time used to be the slowest of all. Interviewing an old gentlemen he observed sitting for hours outside a pub, he asked him if the Irish had an equivalent for eh Spanish word mañana. The old Irishman thought for a long while, and then answered, “No, we don’t have any word as urgent as that.”

A Kenyan once said, “Westerners have watches, Africans have time” (pg.29) which is a succinct description of the way we in America tend to live our lives. Our clocks form the way we live, McDonalds the way we market ideas, but time is not on our side and fast food is often neither fast nor good. Thus, we trade quality for quantity, use clocks to measure efficiency and all the while never seem to have enough of either efficiency or time.

Good thinking however, requires thought, meditation, disjunctive reasoning and *time* which are not measured. When it comes to Christian persuasion, Guinness reminds us that it takes more than arguments to capture a persons’ soul.

First, *Christian persuasion deals with a persons’ heart* not just their “head.” We are complex creatures and as such our “web” of beliefs are not one dimensional, but rather multifaceted.

Second, *Christian persuasion is not a science, but an art* [I would say it’s both or else Os would not be instructing us with *knowledge*], there’s creativity, nuance, timing, etc. to the craft.

Third, *Christian persuasion is person relative and as such, it’s rarely the same*. No “cookie-cutter” approaches here. No two people are alike, thus it’s critical in conversation to listen rather than “waiting to speak”.

Fourth, *Christian persuasion* because it’s person relative *requires different approaches to attain*. What works for a scientist might not work for a carpenter.

Fifth, *Christian persuasion has no sure-fire way to commend the faith*. This means that sometimes regardless of our arguments, skill and tactics, some people won’t be reached.

Sixth, *Christian persuasion is organic not mechanical*. It often flows naturally in conversation and by *how* we live. The old adage, “Your actions speak so loudly, I can’t hear what you are saying” is so true. If our walk does not match our talk we lose “social capital” in persuasion.

Seventh, *Christian persuasion uses techniques but is not overwhelmed by them*. Well used techniques can often help remove obstacles for a clear hearing of the Gospel message and that is a good thing. But when it *consumes our focus*, we have *lost focus*.

Eighth, *Christian persuasion welcomes honesty and at times silence*. These two factors in human communication can have tremendous force in getting at the truth. In the West we tend to applaud honesty but abhor silence because it threatens our sense of “control” our sense of “stability” when neither obtain.

Ninth, *Christian persuasion is sourced and grounded in the Cross of Christ not sophistry*. The temptation to want to “out-sophisticate” our opponents with arguments without ever bringing in the meaning of the Cross must be avoided because believers are called to make disciples of the nations, not theists.

Tenth, *Christian persuasion makes much of God and humbles man*. The Gospel indeed crushes human pride for Christ alone is the answer to our sinful plight. We bring nothing to the table but a broken and shattered life which needs to be mended in order to flourish. The only physician fit for such a task is the Great Physician Christ Jesus.

Eleventh, *Christian persuasion uses both books but ultimately submits to God’s incarnate word*. Both General revelation (the knowledge of God through nature) and Particular revelation (the redemptive knowledge of God through Christ in Scripture) are the means used to communicate the Gospel. But the Particular revelation of God through Christ is ultimate and must be our last word since it is God’s last word (Heb.1:1-3).

Twelfth, *Christian persuasion aims for repentance which leads to real conversion*. A prayer does not save a person, Christ does. Consistent with the preaching of the apostles in Acts, the hearers of the Gospel must be confronted with Christ’s demand to repent and believe in the resurrected Lord who bids us all to come and lay down our lives for the cause of the kingdom and ultimately the King.

Thirteenth, *Christian persuasion must be enveloped by love which grounds the previous points*. This love is costly but gives life to those who receive the message. “The one who does not love”, the apostle John wrote, “does not know God for God is love”

CHAPTER 3: THE DEFENSE NEVER RESTS (Pgs.47-60)

Guinness points out that a major difference between our apologetic and the prophets is that they came with God's word, whereas we tend to neglect it and come with the word of our age instead. To be faithful Christian persuaders, we must remember that old news needs to be newly spoken to our generation.

And thus, the defense never rests until the eschaton (the end of the age) because God is constantly being framed by image bearers who want to be their own "god." They accuse God of crimes he has not committed, blame God for suffering he has not caused and slander God's name because they are blind. As previously mentioned in what it takes to persuade Christianly, Guinness notes that different people and circumstances require a relative defense, a particular method of engagement—old news, newly told.

When it comes to the "framing" of God—where God's motives and meaning of His words are subversively questioned (E.g., Genesis 3 account), the advocate lover (believers) aim to rectify the lies stated and believed about Him—the God we love.

Lovers are advocates (this is every Christian's call) of the One who rescued them from Himself (Eph.2:1-3). Advocates think hard—it requires their entire being to engage here as a means of loving God—and are God-centered with their motives and craft and thus cry, "Hallowed by your name" not "hallowed by mine". First and foremost apologetic work is about making much of God, not ourselves. As Guinness writes:

"Christian advocacy is a lover's defense, a matter of speaking out and standing up when God is framed unjustly and attacked wrongly. It is therefore anything but dry and sterile" (pg.57)

Not only is Christian advocacy concerned with God's name, but also must do it's bidding through God the Holy Spirit's power, not our own if it's going to be fruitful in God's view (Note: many times the fruit will be hidden to us). Os reminds the reader that Christian advocacy at the end of the day is God's burden in which we get to participate. It's about old news newly told, and the defense of the faith is *about* God and *by* God. It's not about us, and it's not up to us for God is His own best counsel.

CHAPTER 4: THE WAY OF THE THIRD FOOL (Pgs.61-78)

In this chapter Guinness begins by asking the question: In what sense are the “New Atheists” really new, and why are they so aggressive, strident, intolerant, or just plain rude—as Richard Dawkins appears to delight in? He points out that historically, atheism has been around since the Greek philosophers Epicurus and Democritus and that the cause for such aggression and rudeness are multifaceted.

First, *the failure of the Enlightenment secularization theory where reason alone is king and naturalism grounds the view of reality*. But what brought about this massive shift in the West? First, Guinness says, “The oppressive intolerance of Christendom”. He continues:

“Far from honoring truth and open debate, the orthodoxy of the previous centuries had made “truth dangerous” in the sense that when the power of orthodoxy was coercive, there was no freedom to disbelieve.ⁱ When the Catholic Church claimed a monopoly on thought, when dissent was outlawed and “error had no rights”, when the era of Inquisition, the Index, and later the Syllabus of Errors was at its height, and when forced conversions were the order of the day, dissent was impossible and the truth was considered too dangerous to allow people to be open about what they thought. Thought control in its late medieval form was a Christian form of political correctness on steroids, and it could be life threatening.” (Pg.62)

This type of intolerance to dissenting beliefs created a private/public dichotomy in the culture. For fear of punitive damages, people would give lip service to the Church but privately dissent in their hearts. This was a tragic, non-Christian spirit that is a stain and deep wound in Church history. Back then the Catholic Church tolerated no dissenting thought. Today the State tolerates no Christian thought.

Second, *the corruption of the Church had reached a sad peak such that relativism ruled the roost, not the truth—especially Scripture*. When Church authorities bed relativism, truth is prostituted, corruption is inevitable and justice is aborted. Thus, when the Church of the Renaissance spoke, they had lost their persuasive power, their social capital had vanished. Thus the powers that be forbade open dissent, and were corrupt. Not good, but frightening.

In response to this climate, Erasmus wrote a book titled *The Praise of Folly* where he focuses on the biblical notion of folly and fool-making and uses Dame Folly as the central spokesperson. The reason Guinness brings this up is because

the times of Erasmus profoundly mirror ours as Postmodernism and its relativism has ushered in an “anything goes” mentality that has resulted in a, “severe crisis of authority that leaves the church in many Western countries sounding as either a mumbler, a mute, a hypocrite or someone speaking out of several sides of his mouth...”

Thus Erasmus’ book can be very instructive to us when straight forward communication is unpromising, for Scripture speaks of the fool in powerful ways and demonstrates the power of subversive persuasion in order to make a point.

The first fool is *the fool proper*. This is the atheist who says God is non-existent. They flat out refuse to acknowledge God or fear Him: “The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God.” (Ps.14:1). This type of fool is not to be emulated for he has nothing to teach us concerning communication.

The second fool is *the fool for Christ*. This is the fool *bearer* not the actual fool. That is, this person is willing to be *seen and treated as a fool*—for Christ’s sake. The Corinthians thought themselves intellectually superior to the apostles but Christ was actually God’s wisdom—superior to their Greek philosophers (1 Cor.4:10). Guinness reminds us that faithfulness in a “Fallen” world is costly (E.g., King David was seen as a dancing fool by his wife, Jeremiah was the laughing stock in Israel).

Jesus, as in most things, is our example to follow. He allowed himself to be *mocked as king* before the religious leaders, the king and the Roman authorities. The irony here is that he actually was the King; not *powerless* nor a *poser*. Nevertheless, our sovereign momentarily endured the taunts and jeers so that real fools might have hope. That’s ironic! Hebrews says that Jesus endured the cross and despised the shame because of the joy that was set before him—the subversion of sin for the rescue of rebels.

The third fool is the *fool maker*. This is the person who is not a fool, but is willing to be seen as the jester in order to confront power with truth and “wisdom” with “foolishness” so that society’s power brokers may be utterly humbled and broken beggars may find bread. Guinness says that’s exactly what God did (the ultimate fool maker) through the cross:

“He simultaneously shamed and subverted the vaunted wisdom, strength and superiority of the world through the cross—shaming and subverting the world’s wisdom through folly, the world’s strength through weakness and the world’s superiority through coming in disguise as a nonentity” (Pg. 73)

Had the forces of darkness known what God’s plan from eternity was, the crucifixion never would have occurred. The Devil went for the bait and was utterly surprised with horror. As Guinness puts it:

“Everything that climaxed in that sultry Passover week was spring-loaded with a deeper, history-shaking truth, although under a disguise so strange that it bewildered even the closest and most ardent followers of Jesus—and the devil himself fell for the smell of the cheese. Just so did God shame the world’s folly, subvert the world’s pride and put death to death through the death of his Son.”
(Pg. 73)

Guinness points out that by Erasmus writing his *Praise of Folly* he actually wrote the *Praise of Wisdom* through writing it upside down so that those opposed to being challenged would be more receptive through humor. This humor can open the door to faith according to Guinness because as humans we tend to think ourselves the center of the universe, but know that’s an absurdity (Ps.8). We see life’s conundrum’s of how things are as opposed to how things ought to be and they at one time or another make us laugh or cry.

The New Atheists according to Guinness are one dimensional with their naturalism which reduces humanity to nothing more than a piece of meat whose “dignity” and “freedom” is but an illusion; and Eastern worldviews who utterly deny any distinctions between right and wrong, good and evil ends up with a meaningless existence.

The Biblical worldview however does not reduce existence to only one dimension or an illusory reality, but deals with both worlds. It gives hierarchical meaning to humanity based on God’s image, even though it understands things are not the way they are supposed to be—that day is forth coming. It also admits that good and evil are real and justice is not an illusion, thus a day of reckoning awaits all mankind.

Because of the cross and the resurrection of Christ, people can have real hope, can smile at the future and laugh. Reality is not just sadness and sorrow, but ultimately it’s joy unspeakable.

CHAPTER 5: ANATOMY OF UNBELIEF (Pgs.79-105)

In this chapter Guinness tackles the issue of unbelief. What often is held to be the case is actually the converse when it comes to why people don’t believe the Gospel. The reason many modern thinkers don’t come to faith is not because

of philosophical reasons but for ethical ones. Eminent contemporary philosopher Thomas Nagel admits his deepest objection to Christianity is not rational but visceral—fear:

“...I want atheism to be true and am made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers. It isn’t just that I don’t believe in God and, naturally, hope that I’m right in my belief. It’s that I hope there is no God! I don’t want there to be a God; I don’t want the universe to be like that.” (Pg.82)

It’s not about the truth, facts or evidence, Nagel, like many people have psychological, not rational barriers that cause them to resist faith in God. That is, instead of conforming their thinking to reality, many choose to conform reality to their thinking because something is at stake. Guinness mentions that Huxley is one such example of a person who embraced a philosophy of meaninglessness because morality interferes with “sexual freedom”, and Pascal is quoted to say that: *“Men despise religion. They hate it and are afraid it may be true.”*

Guinness continues and points out that the philosophy of meaninglessness twists the truth into deception and makes reality conform to its thinking rather than the converse. Thus, at its core, unbelief is the suppression of truth (Rom.1), and because God’s truth won’t go away self-deception results. This self-deception results ultimately from worshipping the creature rather than the Creator.

Moreover, in a meaningless existence diversion turns out to be king, the examined life is neglected and thus the numbing effects prevent us from pondering the realities of faith and death. The many diversions are swallowed up by the greatest of them all—false religion—which clothes lies in the garb of “truth” and fools people into thinking life has meaning.

According to Guinness, at the end of the day, unbelief is an act of the will choosing and how to deal with unbelief requires much wisdom.

CHAPTER 6: TURNING THE TABLES (Pgs.107-129)

In this chapter Guinness gives some very helpful insights into what people say as opposed to what they believe. That is, some thoughts can be articulated, but some thoughts can’t be lived out because we live in God’s world and are created in His image.

Guinness recalls a G.K. Chesterton account in *“Manalive”* where a pessimist philosopher waxes eloquent from the comfort of his chair and glass of port to a student that’s trying to make sense of life—to live or commit suicide from this “horrible world” was the student’s dilemma. The logical responses given by this professor’s philosophical pessimism however turned when he found himself staring down the barrel of this student’s gun on the ledge of a window.

The professor’s horrified eyes revealed that he’d rather live than die and thus resolved the student’s suicidal dilemma. The point is that what we believe surfaces when reality is about to pull the trigger. This is table turning which has several facets worthy of note.

First, *in order to reach those whose minds and hearts are closed off to the gospel, we must appropriately use apologetics and evangelism.* While these two are distinct, they are nevertheless inseparable (E.g., like the head is inseparable from the neck). Guinness laments modern day apologetics when he says:

“The isolation of apologetics from evangelism is the curse of much modern apologetics, and why it can become sterile and deadening intellectualism. Whenever apologetics is needed, it should precede evangelism, but while apologetics is distinct from evangelism, it must always lead directly to it. The work of apologetics is only finished when the door to the gospel has been opened and the good news of the gospel can be proclaimed.” (Pg.110-111)

Thus, in our defense and proclamation we need to *scratch* where people *itch*.

Second, *in order to reach people that are contented and contending, we must find the inconsistencies of their worldviews and point them out.* That is relativize the relativist, be skeptical of the skeptic’s skepticism. Too often, the relativist and skeptic think that everyone but they are immune to being questioned, but it “just ‘ain’t so”.

Third, *in order to reach people that are sitting on the spiritual fence, we must with prophetic subversion apply their own criterion to their objection and mirror it onto them.* God in Romans 1 gives up those opposed to Him to their own desires. We must challenge people to choose between God and any other treasure because the day of reckoning awaits us all. Moreover, we must remember that the consequences of words need to be considered in light of reality—can one live what they say?

Fourth, *in order to reach those closed to the gospel sometimes requires no argument at all.* The centerpiece of approaching these kinds of people often

requires our focus to be on their treasure (i.e., their children) in order to come to faith (Pg.122). Sometimes life itself, not just logic, forces people to reconsider what they believe and how they are living because of who/what they treasure.

Fifth, *questions that raise other questions by using another's authorities rather than our own are powerful ways of peaking interest.* That is, we must know the prophets' people listen to, understand and be familiar with their big ideas so that we may be able to turn the tables on their unbelief.

Sixth, *we must remember that people live in God's world.* That is, they are created in His image and are constantly bumping up to His reality, thus their claims will have a mixture of truth and falsehood. When these are discovered ultimately it will lead them to the *dangers of their position* because the Day of Judgment is forthcoming and their decisions have an end result.

CHAPTER 7: TRIGGERING THE SIGNALS (Pgs.131-147)

Guinness sucked me in with riptide force by the people referenced, their historical milieu and their life experiences which created a "cognitive dissonance" forcing them to reconsider their view of reality—worldview.

Issues like death, suffering, evil, justice, truth, and joy are often the necessary "triggers" that awaken people to rethink their dearly held worldview presuppositions and as a result, it leads them to Christian conversion. Two of the many examples Guinness considers are W.H. Auden and C.S. Lewis, both former atheists who converted to Christianity.

Consider W.H. Auden, one of the 20th century's most influential English speaking poets, whose worldview was jolted by the gruesome reality of Nazi Germany and their death camps. Previously, he thought people were generally good, God was a crutch, and there were no moral absolutes. However, Auden now faced a two-fold conundrum: first, how could he make sense of the undeniable evil he encountered, and second, how could he justify rightly condemning Hitler for the evils perpetrated if there are no moral absolutes? These "pebbles" in Auden's soul caused him to raise this question to his friends and later to a reporter:

"The English intellectuals who now cry to Heaven against the evil incarnated in Hitler have no Heaven to cry to." And, "Unless someone is ready to take a relativist view that all morals are a matter of personal taste, one could hardly

avoid asking the question: If, as I am convinced, the Nazis are wrong and we are right, what is it that validates our values and invalidates theirs? ” (Pg.133)

Auden’s desire for justice in the face of egregious evil could not be realized if relativism was true. He concluded that the only way to combat such evil was to renew “faith in the absolute”. Here Guinness explains that although Auden had not yet converted to Christianity, these “signals of transcendence” propelled him to leave his atheism and to become a seeker. His life experience and the horrors of the holocaust jarred him into reality like no argument could.

Guinness goes on to explain that such jarring experiences act as “signals of transcendence” that cause us to transcend our present awareness to think more deeply, broadly and honestly. He notes:

“The signals message is a double one: it acts as a contradiction and a desire. It acts as a contradiction in that it punctures the adequacy of what we once believed. It arouses in us a desire or longing for a new answer that is surer, richer and more adequate than whatever it was we believed before—which has patently failed ” (Pg.134)

These signals are pointing to an end that is hopefully more satisfactory than the present state of affairs. Auden, the former atheist turned into a seeker because existentially his worldview could not satisfy his desire for justice, truth and moral knowledge.

Death is the horn-blast that something’s wrong! The signal (I.e. the horn-blast) however is not the end but the means through which an answer can be had; it does not conclusively determine the destination. When the signal is confused for the goal, the search for meaning stops and some commit suicide— seeing no point to life.

Guinness goes on to consider the issue of desire and longing in light of the truth. Depending on the religious persuasion, desire and longing can be viewed either negatively (Buddhist and Stoic position) or positively (Jewish and Christian tradition). Negatively viewed, desire needs to be transcended and escaped, positively considered the object of desire determines whether it is negative or positive.

For example, the reason we have desire according to Plato is because we are incomplete essentially because we’ve been “cut-in half” and we long for our other half. Again, in the Classical Greek and Roman paradigm there’s four major

passions: *desire, fear, joy and grief*. *Desire* is yearning for that which we don't possess; *fear* is the aversion to the undesirable; *joy* is the possession of what we desire, and *grief* is undergoing what we fear.

However, in the Judeo-Christian perspective desire is positive or negative depending on the object desired. There's no need to deny, escape, or transcend desire itself (I.e., Buddhism & the Stoics). However, when it's directed ultimately toward the creature instead of the Creator, something called "The Fall" occurred (Genesis 3). As a result of God not seen as our highest good, it's not that we've been cut-in-half (I.e., Plato) but we've been cut-off from God, ourselves, each other, and nature itself. Guinness says,

"So now we live east of Eden...We are all prodigals now, and we are all in a far country. Yet however far away we go there is always a longing for home that will not go away" (Pg.136-7)

We are aware that something is missing and there must be *something more*. Apologetically, we must prick the soul in its desire factory for "something more/better" secondly, we must appeal to what we know is wrong "fear grief". That is, we must point to the *desire for joy* and the *fear of grief*, these immaterial drives that trigger a hunger for the transcendent, as evidence for an object that can satisfy such longings, even though some would suppress that truth of God in unrighteousness.

Guinness contends that a strategy to combat such suppression is to use an existential presuppositional approach which presses people to the logic of their own assumptions and shows them that their faith (whatever it may be other than in the Creator) is neither true nor adequate. In other words, what they profess to be "true" can't be lived and this realization leaves them thinking, maybe even perturbed. This happened to Auden, it can happen to our loved ones.

Consider C.S. Lewis, a former atheist and 20th century Christian apologist who was *captivated by joy* as retold in his biography. He recalls that this joy was aroused by a flowering currant bush which brought back childhood memories with his brother. Lewis describes joy *not as* pleasure or happiness which is conditioned by circumstances or the senses, but as something other worldly. That is, if this joy could be possessed it was not attainable in this life, but how he knew

it was indeterminable. Regardless, to possess such joy would be incomparable to any experienced pleasure (E.g., The Pearl of Great Price *parable*).

Here was a signal of transcendence not the attainment of faith, says Guinness, although for Lewis that was its end. Although joy raised questions it supplied no answers (pg.144). Among Guinness' many points, the one made here is that sometimes nonbelievers come to faith as a result of the horrors or joys of life that contradict their present worldview. This causes a person to search through transcendent signals that point to a reality of life's true meaning. Sometimes this pursuit ends in conversions, sometimes in suicide.

CHAPTER 8: SPRING LOADED DYNAMICS (Pgs.149-167)

In this chapter, Guinness asks the question of how one chooses the proper *worldview* in the midst of Atheism, Hinduism and Christianity. Everyone has a worldview and when one is exposed to another worldview it often forever changes the way they perceive their own worldview.

Add to this the issue of *pluralization* where the choices offered seem to be unending, and we find ourselves in an era where the propensity to change our worldview or paradigm is real.

Guinness explains that *apologetically* it's crucial to know this for it points to what kind of unbelief (unbelief is always a rejection of God) we are dealing with, and it points to what kind of arguments we should employ. When people are closed minded this is especially helpful knowledge.

Reaching the Closed-Minded Person

Consider the account of the prophet Nathan exposing King David's adultery and murder. Instead of confronting the king with the facts, the prophet used a fictitious story to appeal to David as judge and lawgiver of Israel. The end of that account reveals an infuriated David unwittingly condemning himself when Nathan says, "You are the man", followed by heart break repentance and cries for forgiveness. That's powerful! Lesson—*keep the audience in mind in order to connect with them.*

Another way to reach a closed-minded person is to *keep the goal of the encounter clear*. That is, depending on their disposition, we must proceed with the truth in such a way that it will meet their need. Some people don't need a bunch of arguments to believe (E.g., the Philippian jailor) but others may (E.g.,

Doubting Thomas). Regardless, we eventually want to get to the truth of the gospel if possible.

Sometimes there will be the need to *reframe the truth* properly when God is misrepresented and thus rejected on false premises. Our duty is to clarify who God is and explain what entails rejecting Him. After this is done, if one still rejects God, then at least the real has been snubbed, not a phantom caricature (E.g., the disciples on the road to Emmaus [Pgs.166-7]).

Still another way to pry open the closed mind is to ask *questions*. When we learn to ask questions properly, we help people live the examined life, perhaps see the way of their errors and thus enable them to pursue the truth. Guinness reminds us that questions have the power to engage people because they are *indirect* and *involving*. The greatest questioner in history was not Socrates, but God seen in Genesis 3 and blossomed in the life of Christ.

Yet another way to open the closed minded is through the use of *parables*, *drama* and *ploys*. For example the Rechabites were used by Jeremiah the prophet to explain Israel's disobedience through Jeremiah asking the Rechabites to drink wine with him. He knew they didn't drink (modern day equivalent to *fundamentalists*) because they obeyed the word of a man, but Israel refused to obey the word of the LORD God.

Postscript: Guinness ends the chapter by pointing out that in this age words suffer from *inattention* and *inflation*. When we speak people are not listening, and when words are used they distort reality so as to sell one's product to a consumer. As people of the word, who worship the WORD, words ought to matter to us. Thus instead of championing technological marvels, Christians should grow deeper in their theology. This is one way to combat the misuse of words—*the suppressing of truth in unrighteousness*.

CHAPTER 9: THE ART OF ALWAYS BEING RIGHT? (Pgs.169-185)

This chapter confronts a real problem in many apologetic encounters and reminds me of difficult encounters with family and friends I've experienced where they always had to be right, at all costs. I'm certain we all struggle with this to one degree or another but it's contra the spirit of 1 Peter that commands believers to humility rather than pride in human interaction and Christian advocacy (1 Pet.3:15).

Guinness points out that in the early Christian century's the great church orators understood the dangers of using words as power and thus balanced persuasion with grace and truth (E.g., Ambrose, Augustine, Gregory of Nazianzus, Chrysostom, etc.). He highlights that truth and persuasion should not be pitted against each other as the Greek Sophists often did by twisting words for their own gain regardless if its truth or falsity. The goal was to win the argument at all costs—even at the expense of the truth.

This lead to a dilemma in debate: to be a failure or a fraud. The former's focus on truth and not persuasion often lead to defeat, while the latter's focus on persuasion often lead to lies twisting the truth. One was a failure, the other a fraud. But it doesn't have to be that way.

Guinness then writes the principles (virtues) some Greeks and Romans kept in mind when engaging debate so that the truth would not be distorted. First, it was kept in mind that truth and virtue are more powerful than falsehood and vice. Second, that the speaker must be one of character and virtue. And third, that the speaker should always address the public good and not just his own interests.ⁱⁱ This is a good starting point, but for Christian advocates there's more.

Christian's as Christ's ambassadors in their debating or apologetics must be God-centered not man-centered so as to guard against the "Sophist" spirit. This is accomplished by keeping in mind the effects of "The Fall" (I.e., people both suppress the truth and seek it), the Master's manner of communication (E.g., human strength subverted by God's weakness), and God's truth requires God's art to serve God's end (I.e., His ways are not ours too often).

Guinness continues by warning believers if their manner of speech is rightly criticized, humility, not pride must obtain. That is, if one is wrong, they must admit it, not cover it up which is far more attractive than the opposite.

Guinness then turns to the issue of persuasion which incorporates not only logic and argumentation but also drama and humor, for the latter disarms and invites the hearer to discover the truth in a way the former can't.

He finally deals with the charge that persuasion while an art, seems to be manipulation in disguise and thus spends several pages answering that indictment. Guinness finally concludes that the art of always being right is a trap for Christian advocates, and the art of persuasion is a privilege that needs to be exercised with humility and God's grace.

CHAPTER 10: BEWARE THE BOOMERANG (Pgs.187-208)

Guinness begins this chapter by affirming that Christianity's Achilles heel is hypocrisy and when believers fight among themselves it is a sure signpost that this fracture obtains. Hypocrisy among believers (i.e., charge of Christians not loving one another) is one of the main reasons for why people don't come to faith and coupled with a worldly church, leaves the Christian advocate in a difficult place.

Guinness admits that everyone is a hypocrite because self-deception and truth suppression is committed by all which means that for the charge of hypocrisy to be real, objective truth must be presupposed. This is problematic for Post-moderns because the very notion of objective truth is alien to their worldview.

Hypocrisy ends up violating; truth, justice and honesty, because in one way or another, the position of a proponent is merely spoken, rather than lived out. That is, a person can "talk the talk, but fails to walk the walk". When this kind of disconnect, from word to deed occurs, a loss of credibility follows and results in many people not having an ear to hear the Gospel, and thus calling believers hypocrites.

[It's important however to point out that most, if not all non-believers, don't understand the Christian struggle Paul reveals in Romans 7 with sin. To struggle with sin is one thing, to pretend not to, is another. And that is perhaps where I think Guinness could have been clearer. Nevertheless nonbelievers do understand that hypocrisy is bad which points to the reality of objective truth.]

This notion of objective truth is revealed through the social benefits of hypocrisy according to Guinness. While admitting that hypocrisy is bad and immoral, he says that it can offer some benefits to society for it:

falsely (models) virtue—there's actually a good to imitate, it may affect others to practice what they preach—there's actually moral consistency at which to aim, it may stir everyone to self-examination—there's actually a corporate understanding of this malady, it points to the inner value of life and not just outward image—there's actually more to us than mere physical properties.

When it comes to the confession of hypocrisy, Guinness admits that it's the road to freedom and truth rather than bondage and deception. Moreover, our

confessions' motive should be God's approval, not peoples, and lastly if truth does not exist, the charge of hypocrisy can't coherently be leveled.

CHAPTER 11: KISSING JUDASES (Pgs.209-227)

In this chapter Guinness begins by pointing out that Christendom has enemies from without and also from within. Enemies from within the ranks are responsible for heretical doctrines and a syncretism that undermines the Faith once delivered to the saints and are unfaithful to the LORD of the Church. These are responsible for weakening the church through their anti-intellectual bent and their abhorrence of the apologetic enterprise (pg.211).

These heretics Guinness calls **revisionists** who essentially imbibe the cultural climate of the day, and what's in vogue is promoted (I.e., the culture determines truth, not Scripture). Now, more than ever, the church needs Christian advocacy with the prophetic spirit of St. Paul, Athanasius, Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, etc. who are radically Bible-centered using the best arguments available to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

It's time for prophetic courage to say what's not popular and declare what the culture views as passé. Unfortunately, many Christians in the past and presently scorn apologetics for good reasons, but in so doing have thrown out the baby with the proverbial bath water. They have unwittingly weakened the bride of Christ by deriding some members of the Body of Christ (See 1 Cor.12).

Apologetics has fallen on hard times and negatively viewed such that instead of persuading with the Gospel we are only to proclaim it, instead of defending the faith we are called to dialogue about the faith (Pgs.212-215). Unfortunately, these divisions of duty are contrary to Scripture (Mt.28:18-20; 1 Pet.3:15; Jude 3) and rather than strengthening believers have left them vulnerable and ineffective in their being salt and light (Mt.5:13-16).

Guinness says the two major objections to apologetics are that it has first, trumped the authority of the preached word and second, that it has been used to grieve the Holy Spirit. Where that charge obtains, it should be corrected and not be tolerated. But let us not kid ourselves that **only** apologetics is guilty here. I contend that unlike apologetics; inept preaching, unbiblical leadership, finite power struggles among believers, petty rivalries and more, have often stripped the church from coming under the Scriptures authority and has grieved the Holy Spirit perhaps more than apologetics.ⁱⁱⁱ

The sad reality is that through abandoning the apologetic enterprise the church has been left weak and defenseless: it's weak because it does not understand the power of the Gospel and it's defenseless because it does not know how to fight darkness with arguments wedded to prayer. Said defenselessness has permitted the revisionist's (I.e., the heretics within the church) to denude Christianity from its historic roots and Scriptural authority.

This denuding has come in the guise of liberal theology that's not challenged but assumed to be true. Assumptions like; what's *new is good* and true, but what's *old and traditional is false and bad*, what is left of the traditional is *adapted* to bend to the spirit of the age and is *assimilated* in the syncretism of culture such that the Christendom which remains is a shadow of the reality (pgs.222-226).

Revisionists betray the LORD of the Church and weaken His Bride not with a kiss, but through a pen, as they twist the meaning of Scripture and suppress the truth of God in unrighteousness, not only to their own destruction but also to those who hear them. This is serious business, not a joke. Thus the apologist must speak to the maladies outside the church but also combat those within her ranks.

CHAPTER 12: CHARTING THE JOURNEY (Pgs.229-252)

Guinness winds up his book here by focusing on what the apologist needs to focus on with the true seeker. According to Os, it's a journey people are on for the meaning of life. Too often we don't live the examined life but there are those who chose to and it's these we must focus our energies on. What happens often is that people are either *diverted* in the journey of life so that they don't want to face their inevitable end (death), or they're *bargaining* with life that they'll eventually get to the serious issues of life.

Nevertheless, for those wanting answers to life's toughest questions the examined life they embrace. Here is where a road with common questions or issues surface and the following stages follow.

First, *it's important for the apologist to be skilled at leading people in their journey for meaning in life*. This is where the word of God is central to guide what and when things are brought up and done. That is, the apologist must use his God's eye view (I.e., biblical understanding) to focus the path. This means that the gospel must center the interaction and the thought of man reaching up toward God must be corrected with the fact that God is the one that descended

toward man. This is a massive and pivotal thought. Get this wrong, and we've missed entirely according to historic orthodox Christianity.

Second, *people must ask questions that deal with life's meaning*. Here, the apologist must direct the person to understand that the base for meaning in life is truth which informs our ethics, community, identity, and purpose as people. Only serious people ask these questions and consider their depths, not shallow disinterested ones. Thus, the apologist must be ready to emphasize thinking and uphold it as supreme in the journey for meaning in life, not just belief.

Third, *questions require answers and at this stage they are conceptual, critical, and comparative* which govern the remainder of the journey. The comparative questions have been regarded as negative for several reasons that really lack substance so I'll disregard them for now (See pg.241) but the questions the seeker asks are to concern the apologist, not ones they don't ask.

Fourth, *the evidence for the faith believed must obtain*. A faith that can't be challenged for its truth claims is not the Christian faith. So make sure as the apologist that the evidence for the questions raised are demonstrated from either biblical or extra-biblical sources.

Lastly, *call for a commitment*. The meaning of life is not an endless journey of searching, but one that when life's questions have been satisfactorily answered it's warranted for one to decide either to commit or not.

Guinness concludes his book with reminding the apologist/advocate that there's a place for *negative and positive apologetics* depending on the audience and that conversion is toward a lover, not a set of ideas.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS (Pgs.255-256)

When Guinness gives his acknowledgment for those who have deeply impacted him, I was moved. It occurred to me that most advocates/apologists', will never author a book or "contribute" to the dialogue which makes them stand out (myself included). But each one of us has a particular sphere of influence that the Eternal one holds in His hands.

May we be faithful ambassadors to Him, and may we relentlessly placard Christ's supremacy in all things as we pursue God and let Him be known through our lives.

(SDG)

ⁱ This would severely anger my sense of personhood and must have to them. Even today when someone wants to shove their views onto us (E.g., Same Sex Marriage is good, or Abortion is bad) we are repulsed because all humans are passionate about something they deem worth living for.

ⁱⁱ Pg.173

ⁱⁱⁱ I say *perhaps* more but *actually more* is closer to reality. Too many professing Christians I've observed are lazy and don't read the Scriptures much less in context, making them less inclined to seriously make disciples and to engage the spiritual warfare we are in with **arguments** (2 Cor:4:3-4; 2 Cor.10:1-5) and **prayer** (Eph.6) which was Jesus' and Paul's practice.