

## The Tools of Integrated-Apologetics: An introduction

By [Billy C. Sichone](#)

*Central Africa Baptist University*

### Introduction

The Bible is consistently under ferocious, yea, serious attack today. Historically, this was not always the case to the degree it is presently hunted down. It is being systematically pelted from all angles by mortals from all walks of life within and without the Christian Church. These pundits are very well organised, educated, informed, equipped, resourced, coordinated and focused on what they want to achieve. In their minds, theirs, is a most noble task and duty for which are more than ready to devote their lives on, in the guise of liberating the naively captivated many. *“The Bible is a fluke, a composition full of contradictions and errors, a mere writing of men bereft of any authority,”* they increasingly are heard shouting from about every corner of the world. What is surprising to note is that some of the loudest voices emanate from once theologically sound seminaries and Bible Colleges whose Faculties have been waylaid, yea, hijacked by Liberal Theologians. Others are renowned theological giants that have progressively drunk the poisoned chalice of rank rationalism resulting in serious theological compromises on their part. In their quest to accommodate or harmonise scripture with naturalistic evolution, they have ejected some fundamental key doctrines as original sin or the historicity of Genesis 1-11. But that is not all, it is correct to assert that some of these men and women are exceptionally methodical and logical while others dismiss the Bible, as earlier hinted at, as a pack of mischievous fairy tales meant to captivate and enslave naïve less exposed people. Historically, this sustained attack became more sophisticated, organised and formidable around the 1950s when the unbelievers merged with some supposedly authentic professors of the faith, effectively joining hands to attack the word of God. The two groups thus formed some kind of cartel, synergy and strategy to tear down the Bible where possible. To achieve their objectives, they got hold of key functional means thus positioning themselves to have an upper hand over the sleepy, insensitive, less educated or exposed but genuine believers. Thus, today, these radicals, as they are sometimes called, have infested, if not representations in many of the major Bible colleges and Seminaries, the media, hold influential positions as well as direct Bible translations boards! There was a shocking case when a former Bible society high profile gentleman abandoned ship and published a terrible book called *“Leaving the Flock”* which basically threw mud at the Bible and the faith altogether.

This group of people is now widespread, influential and dominates the world's views about the Bible. Out of their "factories" and machinery, these opinion makers churn out all sorts of deleterious allegations against the Bible where anyone holding on to infallibility of the Scriptures for instance, is perceived as being unrealistic to themselves. Why tie yourself to an old outdated book, they argue. Why believe a book that has been proved wrong by *objective* Science and thus discredited, they further taunt? As though that were not bad enough, in recent years, Dr Robert Funk and R Hoover have gone so far as to author a book called *The Five Gospels* which in itself is a landmark statement. Through their Jesus Seminar work, like Marcion of Old, they go about tearing the Bible apart alleging that it cannot be said to be inspired or inerrant. This group and many others defy or reject any accountability unless unto themselves! Evidently, there is a ferocious battle of the mind going on in respective cultures as Craig (2008), Dockery & Thornbury (2002) have rightly observed. Thus, the Christian needs to have the right tools to wad-off this mounting attack to keep themselves in perfect spiritual health. There is need to have some stamina at the present and future time. Previously, the attacks on the Bible were easier to combat, relatively isolated and not well coordinated. The scenario today is different. The Apologist needs specialised tools to stand their ground or be seriously routed, yea, embarrassed in public debate. What is worse, the Christian faith is injured in the process, although we all know that the almighty needs not any mortals to vindicate Himself.

In the quest to build this body of tools, the Christian needs to have certain things in place neatly tied together in an integrated fashion. This paper, in a small way, does just that as it attempts to bring all the separate strands together. It needs to be said that many people have undertaken the field of apologetics from different angles, some of whom we have alluded to in passing in this paper. Largely, two schools come to the fore: Presuppositional or Evidential schools of thought. Scanning the earlier apologetics works, some of the more sophisticated issues are still not tackled today. Thus in the 1980s, several Christian leaders began to engage in seriously deep contemplation and development of tools to counter the equally sophisticated and formidable atheist, heathen or non-believer despising the Bible today. Among the many and early innovators of this movement were Dr Johnson C Philip & Saneesh Cherian who did (and continue to) a lot of research, developed specialised tools and refined them for integrated apologetics over the years. Of course, they too drew from others before them but what they have done is to sharpen what exists while adding new ones. Moreover, other equally interested people continue to read their works while adding some aspects that have helped refine these tools. In this particular discourse, we highlight some of these tools whilst asking pertinent questions unveiled at length:

## **Why the use of Tools**

Tools are essential for effective and efficient apologetics work (Phillip & Cherian 2009). The type of tools used determines how and why someone either successfully or miserably fails to defend the faith. The enemies of the cross are very well seasoned and prepared and would easily take on any challenger and probably win the argument. It is therefore critical for the Christian to be well equipped with appropriate tools for warfare because truth suffers as a result of the apologist's defeat, although winning is not the primary objective of apologetics. We proceed to open up these key tools in the ensuing sections.

## **Introduction to the tools**

Close to ten tools have so far been fully developed while two others are still “a work in progress” (Philip & Cherian 2009). There is always room for improvement even on the already developed tools though. In this section, we briefly highlight the said tools

1. **Analysis of errors of interpretation:** This tool deals with issues surrounding interpretation of scripture so as to get a correct interpretation of what the passage meant to communicate. The social set up, background, culture etc must be taken into consideration when interpreting scripture. This may lead even to genuine errors in interpretation and therefore faulty practice (Carson 2007; Downing 2020; Klein, Blomberg & Hubbard, 2004).
2. **Analysis of scripture twisting:** Many people deliberately and intentionally twist the scripture meaning to say what they want. They are masters at that to the extent that even the very elect may be deceived. A discerning eye is needed.
3. **Analysing Bible difficulties:** this tool handles or gives principles on how to handle difficult passages of scripture. They are difficult in the sense that their precise meaning may be difficult to arrive at or may seem at variance with other parts of the holy writ (Phillip & Cherian 2009).
4. **Analysis of Scientific information:** This alludes to the matters related to Christianity and science. Many people assume that science and the Bible are at variance and irreconcilable. This is not necessarily so. This, this tool equips the apologist to know the facts and use them appropriately in combat. Notably, the issues are classified into a few manageable categories which should handle the most difficult opponent of scripture.
5. **Analysing fallacies of Logic:** Logic, in and of itself is good but if not correctly or rightly handled can lead to error or even mislead. While it is good to be logical in our structured thinking and acting, it is important to ensure that the premise we are working from is correct and then it inevitably leads us to the correct response/position (Carson 2007).

6. Analysis of propaganda Techniques: Humans are very subtle and know that if something is repeatedly talked about, recited or memorised, it is bound to affect the perception. If a person is repeatedly exposed to something, good or bad, soon it his perception will change about that thing. If I hear every day that something is good and acceptable, especially by people I trust or respect, my view over that issue may change over time. The all pervasive mass media, print media and all sorts of avenues have greatly been used by people to spread their philosophies. This tool examines what propaganda is and its essential nature. It also highlights the factors that have aided it as well as its potency in today's world (Philip & Cherian 2009).
7. Analysis of Mind manipulation techniques: The techniques aim at influencing and effectively hijacking the mind to begin to think and respond in a certain way. This manipulation takes place in different ways and reaches the inner soul springs and alters the "program" so that the subject alters in their thinking and world view. The manipulators know exactly where to touch and thus effectively use that route to even by pass reason. This tool helps to identify mind manipulation as well as how it relates to the Propaganda tool mentioned above.
8. Analysis of debating techniques: This looks at how best to debate and come off successful. Although today's debate is not about fact but wit, the Christian apologist must know what is important and how to effectively put it across. The debater must be lively, interesting and yet factual. He must know what to say and when lest they play into the opponents hands. This tool helps the apologist acquire the right and relevant skills. This tool also analyses the type of questions and tricks which opponents use in public and thus equips the saint to appropriately counter such questions whether in public or private debate.
9. Analysis and formulation of leading question: This practically helps the apologist how to construct the right questions for the right occasion. These questions must be designed in such a way as to lead to a specific goal. The opponent must be asked specific leading questions, get and affirmation and then logically draw a conclusion from what they have said. At times, people are very crafty and may hop around if nearly cornered but this tool equips the apologist as well as offers suggestions on how to improve their prowess. The tool gives suggested questions as a learning tool.

## **How these Tools Work**

These tools work well if used well and systematically. The key is to master the type of issue and in what category they fall into. In that way, the apologist will save time and energy responding to thousands of questions piled up by the opponent. This entails adequate and thorough preparation on the apologist's end. The tools are like a sword. If they are not used well, they will not do their job but if they are mastered, internalised and used well, they can resolve about every problem that comes along.

### **How to Practice the use of These Tools**

The secret, like in any art, lies in the regular use and practice of these tools (Philip & Cherian 2009). One gets more proficient as they simulate, use them and master them in different daily life situations. Just like learning about swimming in a class room session is not enough, the apologist must actually learn how to use these tools by doing. For instance, the apologist must read magazines, journals, attend debate sessions and in the process develop appropriate questions, responses as the case may be. The apologist must however not rush into public debate unless competent and well prepared to handle the situation. Half the time however, many plunge to the deep end of debate and mess up. The apt and competent apologist however is a lifelong student who devotes himself to rigorous continuous consistent study with a growing desire to know more.

### **Take home lessons**

Having had a brief excursion in the apologetics tools shed, it behoves us to make some applicatory points for our taking home. We limit ourselves to a few but none the less urge our readers to read through our other companion discourses related to this subject matter. Here goes:

1. The Bible consistently receives attacks from all and sundry. This is likely to increase with time.
2. Despite all these heavy assaults, its integrity remains solidly secure.
3. Bible Inspiration conviction is essential to effective defense of God's word.
4. There are various approaches to apologetics. A book, *Five Views on Apologetics*, edited by Cowman & Gundry (2000) published by Zondervan Academics makes this abundantly clear. Christians need wisdom to select which is best fitting and God-glorifying. I strongly recommend the Presuppositional over Evidential, although some good aspects exist in the approach (i.e. Evidential) as well. Christian Prudence is enjoined.

5. The Christian needs to be adequately prepared beyond rote knowledge or arguments. They need tools and effective techniques to carry on the work of Apologetics.
6. Armed with these tools, the Christian can safely navigate the poisoned waters of differing world views. To be fore-warned is to be forearmed, so that quaint old saying goes.
7. Christians need to take an active interest in what is going on around them and thus formulate effective, relevant responses through good strategies, tactics and means. The tools highlighted in this discourse are just some of them.
8. Once the Biblical foundations are uprooted, then the entire superstructure comes falling down. The Christian Church cannot afford to have a God's solid word to be needlessly maligned when the truth is in the Bible.
9. Apologists need to know that the Hebrew Bible is basically the Protestant Old Testament scriptures albeit, re-arranged into 39 books not 22-24 as appears in the Hebrew Bible. Some books are combined in the Hebrew Bible hence the appearance of fewer books.
10. The book of Genesis is a foundational book to both Judaism and Christianity. Specifically, the first 11 chapters are key to setting the stage to the rest of the Bible. These narratives are historical rather than poetic or fairy tales as some theologians would like us to believe. Vlach (2021) has done the Church great service in opening up the various approaches to Biblical interpretation. Although his focus is primarily on how New Testament authors quoted the Old, his work gives an excellent panoramic view of what the issues could lie or be. It's a great starting point for enquiry. On the other hand, once great minds like William Lane Craig have in recent times abandoned ship by embracing rationalistic views to Genesis. In a sense, this is hardly surprising because he has always been one, only that he made his views on Adam and Eve fairly recently in his September 2021 book. Many more should follow but the Christian should stand firm on the literal interpretation path as vouched by Michael Vlach. I may not agree with Vlach on everything but certainly his 2021 work is commendable.
11. Works by Young Earth Creationists like Doctors Henry Morris (1974) or Whitcomb are sure worth reading. Their book on the Genesis Flood (1961) is definitely a great read for the Christian in contemporary times. Others like Dr Francis Schaeffer (evidential) or Plantinga among others, are also worth reviewing.

12. The Bible, and the Bible alone is the religion of the Protestants. It is under severe attack from unlikely sources including seminaries that increasingly have succumbed to the pressure from Evolutionists. This needs to be stopped so that we return to the Old Time Religion, simply premised on the Infallible word of God! It can and must be done! It is a most urgent matter.

## **Conclusion**

From the highlighted tools in this paper, it is possible to be reasonably equipped for work of Apologetics, if the individual is willing to practice, thus mastering the techniques. While it is true that these tools are not all comprehensive or even universally effective, the apologist is better off with them in their tool box. They can have recourse at any time and, where possible sharpen or add to them. Christians have reason to be confident with what God, through various apologists, have developed for His glory. We may not agree with each other's' approaches but one thing is true, we all seek to advance the cause of Christ, and these tools are at our disposal. These tools are meant for Integrated apologetics rather than exclusive schools of thought (say Presuppositional or Evidential). That said, they are designed to work just as effectively in either school. In all these interventions, the Christian should know that God is the one that ultimately makes things work, otherwise they remain a bag of wind, mere human innovations. This enjoins much prayer before engaging in the work.

## **Bibliography**

Carson D.A. (2007). *Exegetical Fallacies*, Baker Academic.

Chalk J. (2013). *Making Disciples In Africa: Engaging Syncretism in the African Church Through Philosophical Analysis of World Views*, Langham.

Cowman B.S., Gundry S.N.: (ed), Craig W.L., Habermas R.G., Frame J., Clark K. J., and Feinberg D.P. (2000). *Five Views on Apologetics*, Zondervan Academics.

Craig W.L. (2008). *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, Crossway.

DeYoung K. (2014). *Taking God At His Word*, Crossway.

Dockery S.D. & Thornbury A.G. (2002). *Shaping A Christian World View: Foundations of Christian Higher Education*, Broadman & Holman.

Downing W.R. (2020). *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Issues, History, and Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, First Love Publications.

Drees B.W. God, Humanity and The Cosmos: Challenging A Challenging Text book, *Zygon* Vol 53 # 3 (September 2018): 887-896.

Edgar W., & Oliphint S.K. (2011). *Christian Apologetics: Past & Present: A primary Source Reader (Volume 2)*, Crossway.

Fesko J.V. (2019). *Reforming Apologetics: Retrieving the classic Reformed Approach to Defending the Faith*, Baker Academics.

Funk R.W., & Hoover R. W. (1993). *The Five Gospels*, HarpOne.

Geisler N.L. (2008). *Christian Apologetics*: Baker Academic.

Klein W.W., Blomberg L.C., & Hubbard L.R. (2004). *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, Thomas Nelson.

Kuhn T.S. (1996). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, The University of Chicago Press.

Lewis R.G. (1966). *Confronting the Cults*, Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing.

Manganyi J.S., & Buitendag J. A Critical Analysis on African Traditional Religion and the Trinity, *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* volume 69 # 1 (2013): 1-13.

Mbugua K., Maura M.O., Mbewe C., Grudem W. and Piper J. (2015). *Prosperity? : Seeking the True Gospel*, The Gospel Coalition.

Morey R. A. (1989). *Introduction to Defending the Faith*, Crowne Publications.

Morey R.A. (1989). *Battle of the Gods: The Gathering Storm in Modern Evangelicalism*, Crowne Publications.

Morris H.M. (1974). *Many Infallible Proofs: Evidences for the Christian Faith*, Master Books.

Philip C Johnson & Cherian Saneesh, The Tools for Integrated-Apologetics: An introduction, *Calvin Research Group Academic Resource*, (2009): 1-8.

Vlach M. (2021). *The Old In the New: Understanding How the New Testament Authors Quoted the Old Testament*, Kress Biblical Resources.

Whiston W. (1998). *Josephus: The Complete Works*, Thomas Nelson.



Young E.J. (1963). *Thy Word is Truth: Some thoughts on the Biblical Doctrine of Inspiration*, The Banner of Truth Trust.

Zwart John, "Science and John Calvin: A review Essay", *Pro Rege* (September 2009): 27-31.

This article is provided as a ministry of [Third Millennium Ministries](#) (Thirdmill). If you have a question about this article, please [email](#) our *Theological Editor*.

**Subscribe to *Biblical Perspectives Magazine***

BPM subscribers receive an email notification each time a new issue is published. Notifications include the title, author, and description of each article in the issue, as well as links directly to the articles. Like BPM itself, *subscriptions are free*. To subscribe to [BPM](#), please select this [link](#).