



28700 Christian Apologetics

Final Examination

Fall 2022

You may use handwritten class notes—including notes on lectures and notes from the assigned readings—and a Bible without study notes. No textbooks or resources may be used. There is no time limit; however, once you open this document, you must complete the examination in its entirety without stopping.

You may handwrite your responses, scan your responses, and upload a digital scan of your responses in PDF. Or, you may type your responses and upload your finished responses as a DOC file.

You must include an affirmation that no resources were used other than your handwritten notes from this class and a Bible without study notes.

QUESTION 1. APOLOGETICS DEFINITION (5 points)

Provide the definition of “apologetics” that was given in class.

QUESTION 2. APOLOGETICS METHODS (5 points)

Summarize each of the following perspectives:

- (1) Classical apologetics (*1 point*)
- (2) Evidential apologetics (*1 point*)
- (3) Transcendental apologetics (*1 point*)
- (4) Van Tilian presuppositionalism (*1 point*)

Which perspective is *most* and *least* compatible with Scripture? (*1 point*)

QUESTIONS 3, 4, and 5. SHORT ESSAYS
(5 points each, at least five paragraphs each)

FOR QUESTIONS 3, 4, AND 5, CHOOSE AND ANSWER THREE OF THE FOLLOWING FIVE PROMPTS.

PROMPT 1: PAPA HET AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

When James Hetfield was sixteen, cancer took his mother's life. Because his mother was a devout Christian Scientist, she refused medical treatments that might have saved her life. Later, as the lead vocalist and rhythm guitarist of Metallica, Hetfield wrote these words in the song "The God That Failed":

*I see faith in your eyes
Never you hear the discouraging lies
I hear faith in your cries
Broken is the promise, betrayal,
The healing hand held back by the deepened nail
Follow the God that failed*

When Hetfield wrote these words, his perception seems to have been that, because his mother was not healed ("healing hand held back"), God must have betrayed her ("broken is the promise"), if there is an all-powerful God. His underlying assumption appears to have been that, if God could have healed his mother, God should have done so. Drawing from the lectures on the problems of evil, engage carefully with the pain that James Hetfield expresses here. Your response must take into account not only a response to the *logical* and *evidential* problems of evil but also gentle engagement with the realities of his *existential suffering*. Your response must demonstrate thorough understanding of Alvin Plantinga's arguments as presented in class, as well as the lecture on how to respond to existential suffering.



PROMPT 2: A GODLESS COSMOS CAN'T PRODUCE STAR WARS

Many of humanity's greatest stories include a hero whose sacrifice and sufferings are beautiful and redeemable. In *Star Wars: Episode VI: Return of the Jedi*, the final sacrificial suffering of Anakin Skywalker redeems the galaxy by bringing balance to the Force. Perhaps most clearly, in *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*, the sacrifice of Jyn Erso is presented not merely as redemptive but as beautiful.

According to philosopher Anthony O'Hear, however, a purely Darwinian explanation of reality cannot account for stories in which suffering is beautiful and redeemable. Viewing suffering in this way does not, after all, contribute positively to human survival or reproduction. According to O'Hear,

To show suffering as beautiful or as ultimately redeemable is to show the world as not ultimately alien, and ourselves as not necessarily alienated. It would also show that our constitution, physical and rational, sensual and reflective, is of some value in revealing the essence of the world. But, how could we think of an aesthetic justification of experience, that really was a justification and not just a momentary narcotic, unless our aesthetic experience was sustained by a divine will revealed in the universe, and particularly in our experience of it as beautiful? It is precisely at this point that many or even most will draw back. Aesthetic experience seems to produce the harmony between us and the world that would have to point to a religious resolution were it not to be an illusion. ... This is a dilemma I cannot solve or tackle head on.

Develop a detailed *positive regressive transcendental argument* for the truth of the gospel, beginning with the widespread human pattern of narratives which "show suffering as beautiful or as ultimately redeemable." Your notes from the lectures on transcendental arguments will be helpful in responding to this prompt.



PROMPT 3: A MARVEL-OUS ARGUMENT AGAINST ATHEISM

The director of *The Avengers* and *Avengers: Age of Ultron* is an atheist who spoke these words in a 2013 interview with *Entertainment Weekly*:

I have no hope. ... My stories do have hope. ... If I wrote what I really think, I would be so sad all the time. We create to fill a gap—not just to avoid the idea of dying, it's to fill some particular gap in ourselves. ... So I write things where people will lay down their lives for each other.

Drawing from the lectures on transcendental apologetics, develop a *negative regressive transcendental argument against naturalism*, based on this film director's incapacity to live consistently within the constraints of his own belief system.

In making this negative transcendental argument, your essay should draw from the lectures to demonstrate the unlivability of the director's belief system. Your notes from *The History of Apologetics* on Francis Schaeffer and Charles Taylor may be helpful as well, depending on how you develop your argument.



PROMPT 4: A VISION OF ATHEISM

In the graphic below, Viv engages in theistic practices after the death of her brother Vin, even though she does not believe in God. She and her father Vision are apparently unable to live consistently within their naturalistic worldview. As a result, in a time of grief, they draw from the resources of theism.

Use their incapacity to live consistently within their own worldview as a starting point to develop a *negative regressive transcendental argument* against naturalism, drawing from the course lectures.



PROMPT 5: A TALE OF TWO VANS (AND ONE SAM)

In the 2004 Van Halen song “Learning to See,” Sammy Hagar sang the following:

*“Trying to follow every footstep,
I feel so lost along the way,
reading the Scriptures—
straight from the Gospel—
but never understanding what they say.”*

According to Van Tilian presuppositionalism, why is Sammy Hagar “never understanding what” the words of Scripture have to say?

How would an evidentialist or a classical apologist view Hagar’s lack of understanding differently?

Which perspective on an unbeliever’s failure to understand the Scriptures best describes your own perspective on belief and unbelief?

Your class notes on *sensus divinitatis*, classical apologetics, evidential apologetics, and Van Tilian presuppositionalism, as well as your notes about Cornelius Van Til, should be referenced in your response.

