

Απολογία

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The International Society of Christian Apologetics

Donald T. Williams, PhD, Editor

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IS GOD GOOD?

Is God good? What does it mean to claim that He is? Can a case for a good God be made in a world permeated by evil and suffering? For many people who doubt, the issue is not really God's existence as such, but rather His goodness. There is after all no successful argument against God's existence, for that would be proving a negative. But many people think they have a compelling argument against His goodness from the suffering He permits in His world—and if He is not good, why bother with faith in Him anyway? Therefore, one step toward restoring our ability to have faith in Him must be to examine more carefully the idea of His goodness. Is it even a coherent claim for Christian theists to make?

Let's begin by assuming that God exists and created the world. OK, when God created the universe He obviously gave it being and form; He also gave it value by calling it "good" (Gen. 1:4). Goodness then flows from God as much as being or design. It is therefore one of His essential attributes. As C. S. Lewis summarizes it, "God's will is determined by His wisdom which always perceives, and his goodness which always embraces, the intrinsically good" (*Problem of Pain* 88).

But what does this mean? Is it simply circular to say that the good comes from God because God is good? You cannot talk about this topic without Plato's "Euthyphro Dilemma" coming up: Is something good because God says it is, or does God say something is good because it is good?

Lewis understood that this is a false dilemma. The correct answer to it is "neither." God's attribution of goodness is not arbitrary, nor is it based on some standard external to Himself. Rather, his own character is the standard for goodness. We can see that this standard is not arbitrary once we ponder His identity as Creator alongside Augustine's analysis of the nature of evil as a privation of the good. Creation is inherently a constructive, not a destructive, act. Creation is creative, not destructive; giving, not taking; orderly and purposeful, not chaotic. How else could it produce a *cosmos*, an ordered world? Evil, on the other hand, is a perversion of some prior good; otherwise it could not exist at all. So Lewis asks, "Is it rational to believe in a bad God?" No, he concludes: such a God "couldn't invent or create or govern anything" (*A Grief Observed* 27).

Lewis was certainly right about this. We often ask why a good God would create such an imperfect and often painful world. The answer is that He didn't. He permitted the Fall of His world. But had He been destructive rather than creative, harmful rather than beneficent, chaotic rather than intelligent and purposeful, there could have been no world to fall in the first place. Creation is an act of super-abounding goodness. A world that continues to exist and to be redeemable simply cannot have evil as its source.

Donald T. Williams, PhD

FORTHCOMING ISCA PUBLICATIONS

Donald T. Williams, “Text vs. Word: C. S. Lewis’s Doctrine of Inspiration and the Inerrancy of Scripture,” chp. in festschrift for Norm Geisler, (Wipf & Stock, 2015); “The ‘Trilemma’: Pro,” in *C. S. Lewis’s Defense of Christianity: For and Against*, ed. Gregory Bassham (Amsterdam: Rodolpi, 2015); “Expressing Emotion in Poetry: Grief and Recovery in Psalm 6,” *The Luther Rice Journal of Christian Studies*, Jan. 2016; “Anselm and Aslan: C. S. Lewis on the Ontological Argument” (reprinted by permission from *Touchstone*), *Global Journal of Classical Theology*, 2016; “The Justice of Hell,” *Christian Research Journal*, April 2016.

RECENT ISCA PUBLICATIONS

C. Fred Smith, *Developing a Biblical Worldview: Seeing Things God’s Way* (Nashville: B and H Academic, 2015) ISBN: 978-1433674464.

Donald T. Williams, “G. K. Chesterton, *The Everlasting Man*,” in *C. S. Lewis’s List: The Ten Books that Influenced Him Most*. Edited by David and Susan Werther, with a foreword by David C. Downing. N.Y.: Bloomsbury, 2015: 31-48; “Discerning the Times: Why We Lost the Culture War, and How to Make a Comeback,” *Christian Research Journal* 38:2 (May, 2015): 24-30; “Unique and Dated,” *Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity* 28:3 (May/June 2015): 5-6; “Apologetics with Love,” *Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity* 28:3 (May/June 2015): 6; “Rightly Dividing Ezra,” *Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity* 28:4 (July-August 2015): 6.

Faith: “The art of holding onto things your reason has once accepted, in spite of your changing moods.” C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* p. 123.

PAPERS PRESENTED

Donald T. Williams presented a paper, “Text vs. Word: An Evangelical Critique of C. S. Lewis’s View of the Inspiration and Inerrancy of Scripture,” at the regional meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society at Luther Rice Seminary in Lithonia, Ga., March 27. He also presented a paper, “Discerning the Times: Why We Lost the Culture War, and How to Mount a Comeback,” at the regional meeting of the Evangelical Philosophical society, meeting concurrently with ETS, March 28. He also presented both papers and moderated a panel discussion at the annual meeting of the **International Society of Christian Apologetics**, at Southern Evangelical Seminary in Charlotte, NC, April 10-11.

PREACHING AND OTHER SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Donald T. Williams preached at Second Baptist Church, Varna, Bulgaria, on Sunday, May 31, and at Evangelical Pentecostal Church, Varna, Bulgaria, on Sunday, June 7. He also led an apologetics seminar for local pastors and youth leaders in Sofia, Bulgaria, on Saturday, Aug. 30, and gave a lecture on “The Historical Case for the Resurrection of Christ” at the International Students Union in Varna, Bulgaria, on Monday, June 1.

SUMMER MINISTRIES

Randy Hroziencik is scheduled to be one of the speakers at the 2015 International Christian Evidences Conference, put together primarily by Dr. John Oakes, President of the Apologetics Research Society (San Diego). The event is to be held at York College in York, Nebraska on June 19-21, and coincides with the opening of the John Clayton Museum of Antiquities, which houses the Foster Stanback collection of New Testament artifacts. His topic is the relationship between faith and reason,

revolving around an historical survey of this relationship (Justin Martyr v. Tertullian, Augustine v. Aquinas, Enlightenment rationalism v. fideism, etc.)

The ARS and York College are affiliated with the Churches of Christ. **Hroziencik** is not a member of that denomination, but as the first graduate of the ARS' Certificate in Christian Apologetics (which he undertook after Trinity Theological Seminary's coursework), he has been invited to present this material. This is his first large-scale apologetics presentation (he presented this same topic in his home church in February to a crowd of 150 people, which could be larger than the group that he will speak to in June, but this upcoming audience should be much more "apologetics savvy").

Hroziencik would appreciate the prayers and encouragement of the ISCA.

Donald T. Williams traveled to Sofia and Varna, Bulgaria, with a group from the Toccoa Falls College Choir in late May and early June. They participated in a performance of Haydn's "Creation" in Varna. The choir members worked with local churches' music ministries. **Williams** preached in two churches in Varna, conducted a seminar on Apologetics for local pastors in Sofia, and gave a lecture to college students in Varna on the historical argument for the resurrection of Christ, sponsored by Agape, which is what Campus Crusade for Christ is called in Bulgaria.

Williams will also present a paper on C. S. Lewis's view of the Fall of Man at Mythcon, the annual meeting of the Mythopoeic Society (for the study of C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, and fantasy literature in general) July 31-Aug. 3. Then from Aug. 3-15 he will serve as Scholar in Residence at session six of Summit Ministries' summer program, a series of two-week Christian Worldview Boot Camps for high school students.

"I believe in Christianity as I believe the Sun has risen, not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else." C. S. Lewis

MINUTES, ISCA EXECUTIVE BOARD April 10, 2105

Present: Don Williams (President), Kerby Anderson (Acting VP), Dan Guinn (Treas.), Bill Roach (Journal Ed.), Phil Fernandez (At Large), Norm Geisler (Past Pres.)

The meeting was **called to order** by the president at 10:05. **Phil Fernandez** opened in prayer.

Journal: **Bill Roach** suggested making the journal available to all on the ISCA website. (Currently only members can log in and download it.) Pros and cons were discussed. It was moved and seconded that the Journal be made available to all. The motion passed with no dissent. **Roach** will also create a student journal for those who do not yet have their masters degree.

Media: **Dan Guinn** will coordinate making our video and audio recordings of sessions available on the website and social media. **Kerby Anderson** will do a radio show to promote it.

Next Meeting: The next meeting will be at Veritas Evangelical Seminary in Los Angeles, CA, on April 1-2, 2016. The theme agreed on is "Redeeming the Culture," with tracks on Science, Islam, and Free Speech Issues as representing three particular challenges. The idea is to address how to do apologetics in a culture that is increasingly hostile to Christian witness, rather than indifferent. Franklin Graham was suggested as an ideal plenary speaker, as he has combined faithfulness with loving forthrightness in some of these areas. Phil Ginn will try to line him up.

Officers: All will continue in their present position except **Kerby Anderson**, who is serving as Acting VP because we were not able to select a suitable candidate last year. Joe Holden, Richard Howe, and Bruce Little were discussed as good VP candidates. Of them, we were able to confirm **Richard Howe's** availability and willingness to serve, so he was nominated to the membership at the membership meeting. **Kerby Anderson** will remain on the Board as a Past President and give special attention to public relations and fund raising.

There being no further business, the meeting was **adjourned** at about 10:45. The president closed in prayer.

ISCA MEMBERS' MEETING April 10, 2015

At the Members' Meeting reports were given on everything covered at the Executive Board Meeting, and **Richard Howe** was nominated as Vice President and elected by acclamation.

NORM GEISLER INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES

To keep up with the ministry activities of Norman and David Geisler, or to help with their work or more intelligently pray for them, visit their frequently updated website at <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/14da2d7f6590a885>.

ISCA JOURNAL NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE!

The Executive Council voted at the annual meeting in April to make the ISCA journal available online at the ISCA website. Meanwhile, the journal is getting wider exposure due to the kindness of Rob Bradshaw and THEOLOGICALSTUDIES.ORG.UK. To access any issue of the complete run, go to their website.

BOOK REVIEW

Steven Waterhouse, *Papias and Matthew; Papias and his "Elder John."* Amarillo, TX: Westcliff Press, 2014. viii + 100 pp., n.p., pbk.

This small book by the pastor of Westcliff Bible Church contains three studies, on the date and authorship of Matthew, the date

"We trust not because 'a God' exists, but because this God exists." C. S. Lewis

and authorship of the fourth Gospel and Revelation, and Messianic prophecy. The first two make a solid case for apostolic authorship and early dates. They admirably cover complex material in a short space but without oversimplification. The section on Messianic prophecy is valuable for its listing together of a number of Messianic prophecies and has some good exegetical material about them. However, it often misses critical issues. For example, the section on Isaiah 7:14 makes a strong case for *almah* as referring to an actual virgin, but ignores the real stumbling block to acceptance of that prophecy—the fact that in context it seems relevant to the present of Ahaz, who will see the destruction of the kingdom he fears in the time it takes an unconceived child to reach the age of accountability, and not to a future messianic event at all. Still, the book has much of value, especially in the first two studies, and will get it to you efficiently without wasting words.

-- Donald T. Williams

CONFIDENT CHRISTIANITY CONFERENCE

There will be a "Confident Christianity Conference" Sept. 18-19 at Fielder Church, Arlington, Texas, with **Frank Turek** as the featured speaker. It promises that "You will be strengthened and equipped to evangelize those who have no faith or are of another faith. We have brought together a team of expert speakers and workshop leaders who will present evidence for the truths of Christianity in a way that is biblically grounded and culturally relevant." For further information go to sbtexas.com/ccc.

The Executive Council of the International Society of Christian Apologetics includes Donald T. Williams, President; Richard Howe, Vice President; Dan Guinn, Treasurer; Phil Fernandez, Secretary; Tim Adkisson, Webmaster; Bill Roach, Journal Editor; Norm Geisler, Kerby Anderson, and Win Corduan, Past Presidents.



Ἀπολογία is a newsletter published quarterly for the members of the International Society of Christian Apologetics, *Donald T. Williams, PhD*, editor. Please send news of publications recent or forthcoming, papers, debates, etc. presented, preaching or other ministries, etc., to the editor (Microsoft Word, Times New Roman, 11 pt., single-spaced) at dtw@tfc.edu. Short news articles, essays, or book reviews (400 words) on issues relevant to your fellow apologists are also welcomed. The deadline for submissions to the next issue is September 10, 2015.

