

A Calvin Research Group Academic Resource, Module 018A1

Debating Techniques

An Analysis Of The Standard Techniques

Chapter -1

Analysis Of Debating Techniques

Debating is one method for bringing out truth. Many subjects have more than one aspect, each one of them claiming to be true. Similarly, many schools of thought might exist about a complex subject. In all such matters an open debate is one method for establishing the truth.

Trials in Courts are a special form of debate. While ordinary debates are not often controlled by any rules except common courtesy, the debates that take place in a Court Of Law are regulated by certain strict rules and codes of conduct. Further, while the public (mob mentality) might be the subjective arbiter in a common debate, a highly learned and objective judge is the arbiter in a Court Of Law. The public might side with the erring party because of their bias, subjectivity, mob mentality, or even plain selfishness. However, Judges are expected to be people above all these considerations.

Unfortunately, common debates cannot take place in a Court Of Law. Nor can such debates avail the services of learned Judge, or the regulated atmosphere of a Court Of Law. Thus debating and winning in a public debate becomes very difficult. Often truth becomes a casualty and the crafty party wins even if he is a liar. Yet there is no way for a Christian Apologist to avoid debates altogether.

The best strategy for the apologist in such a situation would be to understand the tricks that dishonest debaters use. They can then spot these dishonest tricks and attempt to counter and expose them. They can also learn to avoid those situations in which no amount of debating would be profitable. For a better understanding of this subject we would discuss this subject under the following headings in this and the following chapters:

- 1-The Existence Of Tricks And The Reasons
- 2-Multiple Meanings And Dishonest Tricks
- 3-The Debaters' Tricks
- 4-Anatomy Of A Twisted Argument
- Analyzing Debates
- 6-How To Counter Twisted Arguments
- 7-Precautions

We discuss each point in detail in the chapters that follow.

Chapter - 2

The Existence Of Tricks And The Reasons

Almost till the last century most of the public debates were held in an atmosphere of inquiry and mutual respect. However, at both of these attitudes are gone at the dawn of the twenty-first century. Deceptive tricks for winning the debate by hook or by crook have now replaced logic and honest inquiry. There are several reasons for this, and an understanding of these reasons can help the apologist from getting into unnecessary situations.

The Difference Between Straight And Crooked Thinking: Straight thinking analyzes problems carefully, logically, without bias, and without subjectivity. It takes all data into consideration, and objectively applies logical analysis to it. Crooked thinking, on the other hand, avoids all the principles of sound evaluation. The basic purpose is to establish what one wants to, without regard to truth and objectivity.

Almost all propaganda by consumer organizations, politicians, deviant movements, and deviant writers fall into this category. Their thinking and reasoning is crooked, benefiting only them. On the other hand, most evaluations in science, history, or archaeology are more straightforward. They often bring out the objective truth, benefiting everyone. Yet there are a lot of people who prefer crooked thinking, and the reasons are given below.

The Importance Of Winning The Case: Even till the end of the nineteenth century, the general attitude of people was that of inquiry. They wanted to investigate and find the truth. People understood that they would have to tolerate diverse viewpoints on some subjects, and that this was part of the social life.

However, the twentieth century became a period where ideas were used for dominating the world. The most notable example are Evolutionism and Marxism. Many people have been able to control business, organizations, people, or even entire countries using these ideologies. Thus establishing one's ideas became a tool for gaining control over people. Further, technological developments made Mass Media Communication very cheap and economical in this century. Thus for the first time ideas could be used to control not just a few people, but million of them at the same time.

In this milieu winning a debate became essential for obtaining prestige and power. Since many kinds of ideas still compete with each other, it became all the more important for position and power-hungry people to win their side of the argument at all costs.

The Complexity Of Induction And Deduction: While some people found it necessary to win arguments at any cost, the subjects discussed in the twentieth century became more and more complex. For example, the idea of Evolution was only a philosophical one before the time of Darwin. However, starting from Darwin, the subject became a mixture of philosophy, biology, palaeontology, genetics, biochemistry, probability mathematics, information theory, thermodynamics, and numerous other subjects. The mutual interaction of these subjects made it all the more complex.

In such milieu the propagandists found it very difficult to discuss these complex issues in a systematic manner. Inductive and deductive logical thinking are not easy anyway. Thus they realized that instead of a step-by-step logical analysis of the problem it would be far better to launch into a debate using twisted arguments. Further, logical thinking on complex issues is all the more difficult for the public. Thus the public also began to favour rhetoric over reason. This added to the discovery and deployment of dishonest debating techniques for suppressing truth.

The Ability Of Some People To Argue And Win: Arguing and winning requires great skill, knowledge, insight, and patience. These things do not come easily, and most people are simply not fit for this kind of mental deliberation. Consequently, in any debate some people win most of the time, even if they are on the side of the error.

The observation that some people can always persuasively argue and win motivated many people to investigate the causes of such victory. This in turn resulted in the development of dishonest tricks for arguing and winning the case. The rise of dishonest lawyers, politicians, dictators, propagandists, and such biased people has also contributed to the rise in twisted thinking. So much so that many groups even publish books on how to argue and win the case.

The Jehovah's Witnesses, the Seventh Day Adventists, Marxists, and even Atheists have published such handbooks. Prometheus Press, the largest atheist publishing house in the world, have published The Atheist Debater's Handbook. Their Encyclopedia Of Biblical

Errancy has a very lengthy chapter on how to trap unsuspecting Christians using these tricks. The rise of consumerism has also resulted in sales departments of different firms teaching tricks of persuading people against their will. Here again they use twister arguments. Thus great has been the overall increase in twentieth century of techniques of arguing and winning.

Chapter 3

Multiple Meanings And Dishonest Tricks

Words are the tools of communication. Every word has multiple meanings, but most of the time the context of the speech reveals which meaning is to be preferred. However, dishonest debaters and propagandists can use the presence of multiple meaning to great advantage. Since their use of language is calculated and contrived, the listener often fails to recognize the deception. Some of the ways in which multiple meanings enter human speech are given below.

DENOTATION/CONNOTATION: A large number of words (whether in daily use or in technical use) have two types of meanings -- the actual one, and the implied ones. The implied meanings can in many case be totally different from the actual meaning. They can even have a pejorative or indicting meaning.

A person good with the use of language can thus choose words in such a way that his speech denotes a totally harmless and right meaning, but the connotations can be highly damaging or defaming to the opponent. Thus the words dog and bitch in normal use denote the male and female of a domesticated animal. However, in religious and social circles these words have many connotations that are damaging to the character of people. Similar is the usage of the word "myth" by the radicals. They denote one meaning for this word (which technically looks harmless), while the connotations for the layman is totally damaging to the Bible.

It is total dishonesty on the part of a debater to use words with double implication for the express purpose of hurting the opponent with the hidden connotation. Arguing for truth and winning becomes very difficult in such situations because the actual implications of the statements remain unsaid verbally, and it is not easy to attack implied meanings. Also, since the common audience might not be able to logically analyze the difference between denotation and connotations of words, it becomes all the more difficult to argue the case in front of a technically unqualified audience.

EMOTIONAL OVERTONES: All groups of people have subjects of interest, longing, fancies, fear, hatred, and ever shirk. All of them have some subjects that are taboo for discussion or practice. All of them have some subjects that would raise more heat than light. A public discussion on these subjects cannot remain objective.

All discussion of truth should be objective. However, when emotions of people are involved, the discussion becomes subjective and it becomes impossible for the discussion to proceed in a meaningful manner in a useful direction. Emotion is such a strong force that it can cloud clear thinking of even the most learned man. Thus the subject or ornaments among the Brethren of Kerala, the subject of tongues among the Pentecostal, and the subject of predestination among Calvinists are such issue. No sooner a discussion starts people become so passionate that a Biblically balanced discussion becomes impossible.

Clever debaters are known to manipulate the emotions of the audience to win the

debate. Many of them are so adept at it that even their opponents do not realize how the emotions of the audience are being manipulated. Unfortunately, once emotions are touched, no attempt at rational thinking would succeed. The audience would only favour that speaker who manipulated their emotions.

Any large collection of people can easily be turned into a mindless mob, who would then display only what is called "mob mentality". Once a crowd gets into this kind of a mentality, they respect now law or order, are not bound by any rules, and cannot be controlled except by the use of force. This is why police has to resort to using tear-gas and firing upon crowds that were initially very peaceful, but who become violent after hearing the provoking speeches of their aggressive leaders.

There is no known antidote to emotional manipulation. Force can be used to deny further opportunity to the speaker (who manipulated their emotions) but this kind of violent action is not conducive to winning the hearts for truth. The best method against emotional manipulation is prevention. Thus speakers should take care so that the opponent is denied every opportunity to manipulate public emotions.

This might require them to employ a sharp and strong moderator would be quick to perceive the direction in which a debater is going, and who would immediately prevent the erring speaker from continuing. This is not always a very good alternative, specially in front of a large audience because much damage can be done by a persuasive speaker before he is prevented from further speech.

Another (an perhaps the best) approach would be to speak in front of smaller groups of people so that the chances of the group turning into an unruly mob is reduced. Also it is easier to be selective in who attends a smaller group, and those who come only for mockery can usually be eliminated. In such a case it is easier to lead them into truth.

ALL/MANY/SOME CONFUSION: The words all, many, and some, when attached to sentences totally alter their meaning. In our common speech people are not always very careful about the way they use these words, and often use ALL for MANY, and MANY for SOME without much serious repercussion. The respondent usually understands the correct meaning from the context. However, it is not so in a debate.

In a debate, where people have gathered with the specific purpose discussion clashing viewpoints, the way in which these words are used can affect the whole proceeding. For example, everyone knows that many politicians are corrupt. So are many preachers, lawyers, doctors, businessmen, and scientists. But instead of using MANY, if a speaker uses the word ALL for designating corrupt people in these groups, then this would become a false representation. This would in turn make many people tense, and the eventual result would be chaotic.

The best antidote to the confusion created by the deliberate interchange of these three words would be to bring to truth to light by using appropriate Leading Questions. By successive Leading Questions it can be demonstrated that where the opponent used the word ALL, the word SOME would be more appropriate. Often this is sufficient to diffuse his arguments.

Conclusion

Debating is a good method for arriving at truth, provided that all the sides participating in a debate are sincere and honest. However, in real life many people debate not to arrive at truth but to win, even if they are wrong. Consequently, many debaters use dishonest techniques for attaining victory. In a debate things take place so fast that the audience is often not in a condition to analyze which side is presenting the truth. Therefore, rather than leaving it all into the hands of the audience (which is often

undiscerning), the Christian Apologist should take care to effectively counter and neutralize the techniques of his opponent.

Chapter 4 The Debaters' Tricks -- I

In practical life the debaters present their cases with so many twists and tricks that people would think that the opponents of the Bible have dozens (if not hundreds) of tricks at their disposal. Thus often it looks like a formidable task to handle those hundreds of arguments. However, these multitudes of arguments are a manifestation of just a handful of basic techniques, and one has to master only these basic categories to fight back effectively.

All the approaches used by them can be divided into the following six basic categories. Since each category of technique can be adapted in many ways, the total range of arguments looks numerous and formidable. This means that the apologist does not have to master hundreds of debating techniques. Rather if he manages just the six basic approaches, he can begin to counter debates effectively. These six approaches are given below:

- 1-Provocation/Emotional Manipulation**
- 2-Generalization/Misguiding**
- 3-Deceit/Outright Cheating**
- 4-Sidetracking/Diverting**
- 5-Creating Delusion/Confusion**
- 6-Irrelevance/Idiocy**

We will study each one of these in detail. Since each approach can be used in a variety of ways, we will furnish some examples of this wide variety also. However, it must be noticed that these are only a limited number of examples chosen from a large variety that exist and that build upon the six basic approaches.

1-Provocation/Emotional Manipulation: A debate is an occasion when at least two sides are trying to present their case, with each side claiming to be on the right side. Thus their approach to each is adversarial, and the situation is mostly antagonistic. To arrive at truth in such a situation, it is necessary for the Apologist to maintain his emotional balance.

Emotions have not intelligence, and once the Apologist loses his emotional control he would fall into a lot of useless and senseless discussion which would only defeat his purposes. Knowing this, many debaters try to provoke (or emotionally manipulate) the Apologist to destroy the composure with which he presents his case.

Apologists should therefore be very careful about controlling their emotions. A look at the following methods of creating provocation would help them to further understand this strategy:

THE USE OF EMOTIONALLY COLOURED WORDS: Words are powerful tools not only for communicating with people, but also for manipulating them emotionally. This emotional aspect of words is exploited for good by people who deliver patriotic speech to motivate people into action. The same is the case when a person issues an emotionally charge appeal for spiritual commitment, or for involvement in a spiritual task. The same power can be used to manipulate the opponent to lose his balance.

Many words have multiple meanings. Most people use the word in the direct sense

denoted by the word. As previously mentioned, a large number of words (whether in daily use or in technical use) have two types of meanings -- the actual one, and the implied ones. The implied meanings can in many case be totally different from the actual meaning. They can even have a pejorative or indicting meaning.

A person good with the use of language can thus choose words in such a way that his speech denotes a totally harmless and right meaning, but the connotations can be highly damaging or defaming to the opponent. Thus the words 'dog' and 'bitch' in normal use denote the male and female of a domesticated animal. However, in religious and social circles these words have many connotations that are damaging to the character of people.

A person knowledgeable in the multiple meaning of words can use them in such a way that the hidden meaning provokes the opponent and he loses his balance. Christian apologists should be careful about this tactic, and should make it a habit to ignore all kinds of provocation. They should stick to the main subject till the end, and only that will give them victory.

PROVOKING THE OPPONENT SO AS TO DESTROY HIS BALANCE: In addition to using emotionally coloured words, the opponent can use any number of contrived stories, allegations, and such speech to provoke the Apologist. Often he would find the opponents hurling abuses and even false charges against him, his stand, and even his characters. This might be a shock to the Apologist who enters the fray

If the Apologist ever becomes provoked, he would lose his balance, get into irrelevant arguments, and lose his main thrust. The only answer is to ignore all the arguments aimed at provoking. Experienced debaters can handle the situation by throwing the allegations back at them, but this has to be done with great caution and it is not meant for inexperienced apologists.

USING THE OPPONENTS ANGER AS PROOF THAT HIS POINT IS WEAK: Many times those who take the weaker side of the argument become angry when they start losing. But often even those on the stronger side become irritated and angry when they are not able to convey their arguments in a persuasive manner. Whatever the case, the audience gets the impression that he is getting angry because he is losing the battle.

Once the Apologist gets angry or irritated, the opponents can successfully charge that this anger is the result of his weak arguments. The apologist should learn to keep his temper under control, lest the opponents get advantage in this matter.

ARGUMENT BY ATTRIBUTING PREJUDICE OR OTHER SUCH MOTIVE TO ONE'S OPPONENT: A debate is expected to be a forum for discovering truth. However, if any one of the parties can be demonstrate to have an ulterior motive, the other party can win automatically. Thus this approach is used by many people on the weaker sided.

The party on the weaker side might charge the opponent with greed, malice, vested-interest, or any such allegation that gives the impression that his interest is selfish in nature. Christian Apologists would have to learn to face these allegations repeatedly from those who hold on to error, and not lose control. Rather, they should stick with the facts and win the arguments.

2-Generalization/Misguiding: Generalization means presenting the subject in such a way that what is applicable only for some cases are applied to all. In this way, or in similar ways, the audience is misguided. This is done so cleverly that the audience keeps thinking that the speaker is presenting right arguments or deductions.

For example, many anti Christian teachers use the Relativity Theory in this way. After teaching Relativity, they claim that this proves that "all things are relative" and therefore there are nothing like moral absolutes. This is misleading through generalization because the Theory Of Relativity applies only to the study of objects in motion, not to anything else.

It is always helpful to reflect in advance upon the boundaries of the subject that one is discussing. Then it becomes easier to spot generalization if anyone crosses those boundaries. This preparation is essential because when a generalization is popped up suddenly, it often becomes difficult to spot the attempt at misleading.

Some specific examples of generalization and misleading are given below for illustration:

MAKING STATEMENTS IN WHICH "ALL" IS USED, BUT WHERE "SOME" OUGHT TO BE USED: This is perhaps the most common way in which generalization is misused. So much so that many of us fall into it without even realizing.

In society there are things that are often done by "some" people, but not by all. For example, some politicians are corrupt. But so are some people in all professions. However, when a person uses this information to label "all" politicians, evangelists, pastors, doctors, lawyers, businessmen, etc. as corrupt, he is trying to misguide the listeners through (often deliberate) generalization.

It is often possible -- by using leading questions -- to show this all/some distinctions, and that would be sufficient to diffuse the argument.

EXTENSION OF THE OPPONENT'S POSITION THROUGH REPEATED CONTRADICTIONS OR MISREPRESENTATIONS: A more clever method of generalization is to do it slowly and continually in steps, rather than presenting a single-step generalization.

When an idea is presented suddenly, the opponents might be able to spot the fallacy. But when the same thing is done gradually, it becomes more difficult to detect the exact error. Thus debaters often begin with a specific position of the opponent, and then gradually and step by step misrepresent their opponent till at the end the broad deduction presented by them has no connection with the opponent's argument.

For example, when the Christian Apologist speaks about Inspiration of the Bible, the opponents try to extend this to imply belief in Inspiration as belief in some kind of mechanical dictation. Similarly, opponents of Inerrancy and Infallibility try to extend these beliefs to portray Bible-believing people as bibliolators (those who worship the Bible as God).

The best method of fighting against such misinterpretation is to repeatedly present the accurate view and then contrast it with the inaccurate view imposed trickily by the opponent.

EMPLOYING GENERALLY ACCEPTED INFORMATION AS PREMISES FOR DEDUCING ERRONEOUS IDEAS: *When* a debater starts his presenting his ideas using generally accepted and reliable information, most people in the audience get the impression that he is being fair, and trying to represent truth. However, many of them gradually introduce erroneous ideas and eventually present totally false deductions.

When the beginning is right, it often becomes very difficult to discern the stage at which error has been introduced. The Christian Apologist would have to be alert to detect the point at which this switch to error occurs. The he would have to carefully show to the

public where truth and error were brought together to misguide people.

ARGUMENT BY ANALOGY: When discussing difficult subject, people often bring in the analogy of known phenomena to explain the unknown. For example, the idea of Trinity is often explained by showing that ice, water, and steam are three in identity, but are the same substance.

The above analogy is very imperfect, and thus can lead to serious errors of interpretation if pressed too far. At the same time, in the hands of a skilled communicator, analogies can be helpful to communicate and clarify difficult and abstract ideas. However, instead of communicating and clarifying, when analogies are used to debating and proving an argument, the use is often illegal. The Christian Apologist should thus carefully distinguish between using analogy for clarifying and using it for proving an argument. The former can be valid in many situations, while the latter is invalid in most situations.

Also, even when the analogy is used for the purpose of explaining an idea, the Apologist must be careful. All analogies are imperfect, but some are totally useless. Also, many of them are forced analogies, with no real similarities. None of them should be entertained by the Christian Apologist, because in the end they can lead to meaningless debates of the analogy while the main thrust of the argument is lost.

Chapter 5 The Debaters' Tricks -- 2

3-Deceit/Outright Cheating: In many cases the debaters feel that deceiving and cheating the audience is the best and the easiest approach. When successfully done, the effects last very long and the lie perpetuates itself from person to person. Thus deceit and cheating play a very important role in the presentation of those who present crooked arguments.

Radicals who fought against the Bible, the Evolutionists who suppressed all information harmful to their theory, and the deviant movement who suppressed information damaging to them, all come into this category. They indulge in deceit and outright cheating for the sole purpose of winning the debate, and not for truth to prevail.

Deceit and cheating in debate manifest in many ways, and some of them are:

PROOF BY SELECTIVE EVIDENCE: *Whether* it be physical sciences, biological science, or the historical-legal sciences, ALL available evidence should be taken into consideration before arriving at a conclusion.

In a complex subject, the same set of proofs can often lead to differing conclusion. Thus in many court cases the available evidence points strongly into one direction, only to be reversed when a single conflicting information comes up. Clearly, taking only a small number of evidence can tilt the conclusion in direction that lead away from truth. At the same time, when all information is taken into consideration, and when even conflicting information is not overlooked, then the deductions would often be closer to truth.

Evolutionists are a good example of people who thrive upon selective information. Though the support in favour of their theory is only scanty, they keep presenting it. At the same time, the vast amount of information that goes against the theory is suppressed. The same is the case with anyone who argues with a vested interest in winning, and not in discovering the truth. The antidote is to insist that the opponent should take ALL evidence into consideration.

EVASION OF A SOUND ARGUMENT OR REFUTATION THROUGH ELOCUTION OR

SOPHISTICAL FORMULA: The ancient Greece had a breed of people known as Sophists who were experts at proving day to be night and white to be black. They did this by weaving a web of words in front of the unsuspecting listeners.

Though Sophists are gone, even today there is no dearth of people who do follow in their footsteps. Instead of meeting an argument with a solid counter-argument, they oppose it with persuasive words and tricks of Sophistry. It is most evident in the political arena, but it does manifest itself within the Christian community also. Those who spread apostasy are great at using this trick. The antidote is to call their attention back to facts.

SUGGESTION AND IMPRINTING BY REPEATED AFFIRMATION: Humans have this weakness that repeated affirmation lulls them into believing a statement even if it is totally false and damaging. This strategy was used by Joseph Goebbels, the Propaganda Minister for Hitler. Joseph Goebbels used to claim that if you repeat a lie a hundred times with confidence, most people would accept it as a fact.

The theological radicals, rationalists, evolutionists, and many others are masters at repeated affirmation. They do this with such great confidence that people start believing them even without having any proof. The way in which Christians of India have started following the Prajapati Cult, which falsely claims that Christ is there in the Vedas, is the result of this trick. This approach should be countered before their affirmations start imprinting on the minds of the hearers. The best method to counter them is to ask for specific proofs.

SUGGESTION/INFLUENCING BY USING CONFIDENT MANNER/ASSERTIONS: Some people are so gullible that they believe a statement if a person makes it with great confidence. Even repeated affirmation is not necessary to influence these people, because they do not have the power to critically evaluate serious subjects. When a speaker uses this tactic, the only way left for the Apologist to point to his assertions that need documentation and proof.

SUGGESTION/INTIMIDATION BY APPEAL TO PRESTIGE: Every society contains numerous people who are awed by prestige of speakers. The prestige might be due to their ecclesiastical, academic, civil, social, or political position. While position is a good thing, it does not automatically confer authority to that person to make pronouncement on any subject.

Though there is no connection between prestige and the accuracy of the statement made by a person, many people use appeal to Prestige to intimidate the opponents. The Christian Apologist should make it a point to politely point out that he respects the position of a person, but that the position does not automatically confer him the authority to make infallible pronouncements. A couple of Leading Questions would also help.

PRESTIGE BY FALSE CREDENTIAL: We live in a society that is awed by credentials, specially if these are academic in nature. Thus there are many who claim to have high degrees, research experience, and things of a similar nature, when they do not actually exist. Things are so bad, that today there is a flood of Institutions in India that sell doctorates to any person (qualified or not) for a consideration of money.

Appeal to false credentials is foolish for any debater, and he can be exposed easily by asking a few leading questions about the subjects in which he did research and institutions in which he studied.

PRESTIGE BY EMPLOYING PSEUDO-TECHNICAL JARGON: Many people have this false impression that if a person uses highly technical words, then he must be a scholar speaking with great authority. While it is true that scholars are capable of using highly

technical vocabulary, most of them use only very simple language when they speak to the common man. Thus the usage of technical words in themselves are not sufficient to gauge a person's scholarship.

Crooked debaters use not only difficult words, but also words that are meaningless in the given context. The audience, however, is greatly impressed. The best solution in such a situation would be to summarize in simple words what the opponent said in technical jargon. Then ask him if the summary is right. Once he agrees that the summary in simple words is right, the Apologist can refute him by using appropriate Leading Questions.

BOOSTING THE ARGUMENT BY THE RESPONDENT'S APPARENT IGNORANCE AND ONE'S OWN PRESTIGE: This is a trick usually used by teachers to suppress inquisitive students. They fire a volley of questions upon the student and then scold him for not knowing such basic things. The student is so terrified that he does not dare to open his mouth any more. Some debaters try this technique on the general public.

The Christian Apologist can begin by demonstrating that nobody is omniscient. He can then point out that just because a respondent does not know everything, it does not automatically mean that the debater is right and the respondent is wrong.

TRICKY QUESTIONS FOR DRAWING DAMAGING ADMISSIONS: When discussing a subject, the debaters often ask questions that have no connection with the subject. At the same time, the answers (if given by the Apologist) can be used to damage the Apologist.

For example, when discussing the question of Evolution/Creation, many evolutionists would ask the Apologist whether he believes in a six-day creation, a young earth, Adam/Eve, and Garden of Eden. If he answers yes, the evolutionist uses it to mock him in public. The best solution is to refuse to answer all questions which have no bearing on the subject being discussed.

USING BELIEVABLE/ACCEPTABLE STATEMENTS FIRST TO BREAK RESISTANCE AND THEN SLIP IN DOUBTFUL STATEMENTS: This is a standard trick used by theological radicals and false cults. They begin by speaking on subjects that are acceptable to people. This helps the debater to overcome the apprehension of the listeners. Once the listener is put to ease, they introduce their errors.

SPECIAL PLEADING: Some arguments look very convincing in one context, but look totally wrong in another. This is because the argument has no solid logical foundation. Picking up such a useless argument, and presenting it only in the favourable situation (while the other applications with opposite results are ignored) is called Special Pleading.

A good example of Special Pleading is the Micro Evolution to Macro Evolution application. Everyone notices changes at micro level, such as one pair of dogs giving rise to a variety of dogs over several generations. It is a fact that such changes take place, but it is confined only to the category to which it belongs. Dogs produce only a variety of dogs, and cats produce only a variety of cats. But if a person applies this observation to claim that dogs can change into cats, it is special pleading. This is because though change has been demonstrated at the micro level, this observation is invalid at Mega level.

The best refutation is to show the variety of situations where the arguments fail, and then ask Leading Questions based upon this demonstration.

4-Sidetracking/Diverting: Debaters and listeners need to keep their focus on the

main subject and the important issues throughout the discussion. If not, there will be a lot of animated talk, but the result would not be favourable to Truth. Knowing this, many crooked debaters side-track and divert the whole discussion into peripheral subject or even non-issues. Not realizing this deception, everyone keeps thinking that the debate is going on well. Actually it goes nowhere, and falsehood comes out the winner. Some of the methods used for side-tracking and diverting debates are given below:

DIVERSION TO ANOTHER QUESTION OR SIDE ISSUE THROUGH IRRELEVANT OBJECTIONS, QUESTIONS, OR STATEMENTS: People who advocate erroneous views are often conscious of their weak stand. Truth is their greatest enemy, and so as not be exposed they try to divert attention to side issues. This can be done in many way, including the raising of irrelevant objections, questions, or by making irrelevant statements.

Thus in a discussion of Creation account, a person might ask for the exact identification of the Tree of Knowledge. He might say that unless it is identified exactly, the correct doctrine of fall cannot be formulated. While this might look like a valid objection, it actually is only a diversion. The exact nature of the tree has no connection with the doctrine because the doctrine depends upon the historical reality of an event. What is important for the doctrine is whether the event is true. The exact nature of all the components of the event are not needed.

PROOF BY INCONSEQUENT ARGUMENT: *Many* times people try to prove the reality by using arguments that look attractive, but which are actually not valid. Though they seem to reinforce the position of the Apologist, such arguments should not be accepted. In the long run any logically inconsistent deduction would only hurt the cause for truth.

For example, many people oppose evolution by claiming that today monkeys are not changing into humans. While this might look like a very attractive argument, it does not take the proposed mechanism of evolution into account. Consequently, the deduction is invalid. Apologists should reject all such arguments because they actually divert the debate proceedings from going in the right direction.

APPEAL TO SOUND DEDUCTION, BUT BASED UPON FAULTY PREMISES: This is very similar to the above argument. The deduction is sound, but the premises are faulty. It can be dealt in the same way in which the above argument is attacked.

LOGICALLY INVALID OR FALSE DEDUCTIONS: Here the premises might be right or wrong, but the deduction is logically faulty. The fault might be accidental or even deliberate.

The use of Logic in sound reasoning is a vast subject, and it has been discussed elsewhere in fuller detail.

ARGUMENT THAT WHEN A TERRIBLE EVIL Y EXISTS, WE SHOULD NOT WORRY ABOUT LESSER EVIL X: This is a favourite diversion tactic for people who do not want to face the bitter consequences of evil attitude and choices. For example, when a person is caught in an offence, they argue that this person should not be punished as long as criminals who committed greater offences continue to be unpunished.

The same argument comes in many other forms also. Appropriate Leading Questions would include applying the argument back to the debater himself. Thus if a person says that a certain offender should not be punished, the Apologist can turn back and ask whether the opponent would take the same stand if that crime were committed against his son, daughter, wife, or parents.

RECOMMENDATION OF A MEAN POSITION BETWEEN TWO EXTREME

POSITIONS AS THE TRUE POSITION: There are a lot of people who hate taking a stand. Taking a stand, specially in matters of doctrine and practice, involves paying much cost and making many sacrifices. At the same time, they do not want to be identified with the other group that is totally anti-doctrine. Thus, to retain the best of both the worlds, many of them recommend that everyone should take the mean position.

The mean-position argument looks very attractive, specially in our age of compromise. Listeners also readily agree with such arguments because it agrees well with their compromising attitudes. This kind of arguments can be exposed only by asking relevant doctrinally-based Leading Questions. Thus the Apologist might ask questions such as "should be interested in a mean position, or in a position ordered by the Bible", etc.

ARGUMENT OVER SAME WORDS BUT HAVING DIFFERING DEFINITIONS OR MEANINGS TO DIFFERING CAMPS: Words are the vehicles for communication, and most of the time people communicate accurately and without much ambiguity. However, this does not mean that word-meanings are always understood accurately by people.

Unfortunately, over years of use (or misuse) many words acquire more than one meaning. Thus in many debates one camp adopts one meaning, while the other camp adopts the other meaning. No meaningful communication is possible in such a situation. A good example is the arguments brought forward some time ago about "worship".

The general meaning of "worship" is to praise and thank God for who and what He is. However, in the last few decades the word "worship" has become the equivalent of "Lord's supper" in many churches. In the argument over whether the Lord's Table is an essential part of "worship", each party had its own definition in mind, and there was no common agreement about definition. This is the reason why the debate continued for long without a conclusion. The solution is to accurately define the terms before continuing the debate.

EMPLOYMENT OF A WORD WITH MULTIPLE MEANING OR CHANGE OF MEANING DURING THE COURSE OF THE ARGUMENT: Related to the previous point is the habit of people who craftily use words with multiple meanings. Others use words with one meaning in the beginning, but craftily switch to another meaning during the course of the debate.

The solution is to repeatedly affirm the precise meaning which is being used in the debate.

SUBMISSION OF A SPECULATIVE ARGUMENT: A commonly used method for side-tracking is to submit a speculative definition or argument, and then proceeding the debate based upon this speculation.

While speculation is a part of any discussion, starting with a speculative foundation is not very legitimate. If that is done, the end result would be total diversion from the target. For example, many people approach the question of Evolution/Creation by assuming that the description in the first ten chapters of Genesis is poetry. This is a speculation, and the end-result is devaluation of Bible and biblical doctrines.

The correct approach would be to begin with an evaluation of whether the first ten chapters are prose or poem. This can be done without difficulty, and there is no need for beginning with speculation.

TRICKY DEMAND FOR DEFINITION: Definitions are an important part of any intellectual discussion, specially when a word used by the speakers might be new, or one with more than a single meaning. However, clever debaters often ask the opponent for definition with the specific purpose of side-tracking the debate. No longer the opponent

gives a definition, they would raise some objection, forcing a redefinition. No sooner the new definition is spelled out, they come out with another objection, and so on till the opponent is totally side-tracked.

A few years ago the elders in our church were discussing the issue of backsliding. One of the elders at that time was backsliding though it was not yet not known to the others. A skilled orator, he asked the others for a definition. Once they defined who a backslider is, he asked whether an occasional omission or prayer or devotion is enough to classify a person as a backslider. Then he asked them precisely how often a person has to overlook these things before he becomes a backslider, and so on. Very soon the whole committee was wasting time on arriving at a definition which did not have any exceptions. Unfortunately, this brother pointed out to exceptions to any definition they came up with. Finally the dropped the subject, and this clever backslider won the debate.

When an Apologist suspects that the opponent is demanding a definition to trick him, he should move carefully. When the opponent points out to exceptions, remind him that exceptions do not invalidate the rules, but that they only strengthen them.

APPEAL TO AUTHORITY INSTEAD OF REASONING: A standard ploy of people on the weaker side is to appeal to authorities favourable to them. Evolutionists, false teachers, heretics, and all kinds of perverts take recourse to this trick.

In the world of scholarship, the rightness or wrongness of a subject is decided not by appeal to human authority, but by appeal to reason, logic, and proof. The Apologist must remind this to the opponent through appropriate Leading Questions.

FORMULATING QUESTIONABLE STATEMENTS IN A MANNER THAT FITS WELL WITH THE THOUGHT-PATTERNS OR PREJUDICES OF THE HEARERS: No human is perfect or all knowing. Some subjectivity will always be there. Thus instead of giving a reason for their position, clever debaters can state their answer in a manner that appeals to the biases and prejudices of the hearers.

Young people in many societies are prejudiced against the older people. If a debate on love-marriage takes place in front of such young people, a debater might make statements like: "Loving another person is not a crime. The older people do not understand our needs. They lived in a different society, etc". Though no concrete arguments in favour of Love Marriage has been presented, the crowd cheers these statements because they fit in well with their inclinations.

The Apologist can counter by showing that several options are available in the matter discussed. Some of these options are definitely better than other. He can then show that the opponent did not give the reason to show why the option preferred by him is better than the other options advocated by others.

ACCEPTING OR REJECTING A PROPOSAL ON THE BASIS OF ITS PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES ON THE HEARERS: Truth is often painful, specially to people who run away from it. Many crooked speakers are able to sense the mood of the audience -- whether they are truth-seekers, or runaways from truth. If they are runaways, the speaker would begin to plead that the position taken the opponent would hurt the listeners. Then they would plead that the opponent should not present his ideas to people, lest they feel bad.

The people opposed to the doctrine of Eternal Security often plead that this doctrine should not be taught. Not because it is an unbiblical doctrine, but because it would motivate people to become careless and sinful. This kind of argument looks very attractive, but it is not based in truth. The Apologist can counter this kind of argument by requesting the opponent to lay down (with adequate explanation of reasons) the

rules about when truth is not to be advocated in public.

Chapter 6 The Debaters' Tricks -- 3

5-Creating Delusion/Confusion: Many debaters realize that the listeners are interested in hearing an open discussion. They might also realize that it is not easy to side-track the opponent. In such situations they stick to the subject being debated, but create such delusion or confusion that the main issues are overlooked.

Many approaches exist for creating delusion and confusion, and some of the typical ones are:

CIRCULAR REASONING OR CIRCULAR ARGUMENTATION: The person who takes a stand on an issue is obliged to furnish proof for taking this stand. Many people who advocate know that this is difficult for their position, and thus they get into proof or argumentation by circular reasoning. It is the type of conversation: Where is your house ? Besides the river. And where is the river ? Besides the house !

Evolutionists use this argument when discussing fossils. Ask them how the age of the fossil is determined. They will claim that it is decided on the basis of in what type of geological layer it was found. Then ask how it is decided what type of layer it is. They will claim that it is decided by the type of fossils found in it. Obviously, no objective information can come out of such circular reasoning.

BEGGING THE QUESTION OR BEATING AROUND THE BUSH: When a debater wants to create confusion, but when he finds it difficult to divert the attention of people, he can confuse people by discussing peripheral issues. This gives him the advantage of dwelling upon the subject, while he does not have to touch the subject at all.

For example, when discussing the question of Tongues, Eternal Security, Justification By Faith, etc., a person who does not want to discuss the subject Biblically keeps talking about the experience of this person or that person, the opinion of scholars, and all that. He seems to be speaking on the subject, but actually he is beating around the bush. The Christian Apologist can solve the problem by constantly reminding the opponent that on any Biblical subject, the discussion should strictly be based upon what the Bible has to say.

ATTACKING THE OPPONENT'S CHARACTER: Another method for creating confusion among the hearers is to attack the character of the opponent. Actually the opponent's character has nothing to do with the subject being discussed. Rather, every subject should be discussed on the basis of facts. However, once the opponent's character is attacked, people's attention is drawn away mainly that subject and the actual issues are overlooked.

We see the above tactics used repeatedly in the doctrinal arena. A person points out the errors and heresies prevalent among believers, and immediately the heretics launch a character assassination camp against the Apologist. There is not talk about the doctrinal issues involved. The Apologist can face this situation, not by dwelling upon his character, but by drawing the attention of the audience to the main subject involved.

USE OF DILEMMA AND IGNORING A RANGE OF POSSIBILITIES: Some debaters restate the subject in such a way that an appropriate choice becomes a dilemma. Others restate the subject in such a way that only two extreme choices are available, and all the middle range of possibilities are ignored.

For example, on discussing Family Planning, pro abortion people compare only two

extreme possibilities: either give birth and raise up a child who was unplanned, or terminate it. Obviously, those who are not in a mindset to raise another child immediately opt for abortion. The middle possibilities like giving the child for adoption, or counting upon the grace of God to raise a child are overlooked. The Apologist should understand all possibilities, and then present them systematically and with conviction. Then he should follow up with appropriate Leading Questions.

USE OF CONTINUITY TO REFUTE CLEAR DEMARCATION: Clear cut demarcation is essential in many areas of life like examination, property limits, responsibilities in the office, etc. Also, in such demarcation is essential in spiritual life to distinguish between things that are essential, optional, and forbidden. People fight against such demarcation by point out to borderline cases.

Thus many people advocate mercy for a child who failed because he got only 32 marks in an examination where pass marks are 33. They claim that after all there is not material difference between the child who got 33 and passed the exam and the one who got only 32 and failed. This argument looks convincing till we realize that the boy who got only 31 is not much different from the one who got 32. Thus if the one with 32 marks is declared pass, what about the one with 31 and so on.

The Leading Questions in such cases should address the issue to fixing a demarcation somewhere. Also it should address the question of how much tampering one can do with such demarcation. Thus by shifting the debate from the case of one unfortunate incident to the actual principles involved, the debate can be led to a more meaningful and deeper direction.

PROJECTING A PICTURE OF INDIFFERENCE: *There* are many cowards in every community. They do not wish to take a stand on any side. Alternately, they prefer to take the stand on the wrong side, but do not want to reveal their loyalties. Such people often come up with the confusing argument that both sides have many arguments in their favour, and therefore they are not interested in taking a stand.

If the issue is trivial like whether the Transport Buses should be painted Red or Blue, much can be said on both sides and one need not take a stand. However, if the debate deals with topics like the reliability of the Bible, evolution/creation, sin and salvation, justification by faith or works, there is no middle position. A stand has to be taken, and the Apologist has to make it clear through Leading Questions.

6-Irrelevance/Idiocy: Many time people carry on animated debates, drawing to them everyone's attention, yet the sum total of their discussion is irrelevant and idiotic. There are many ways in which this is done, and some of them are explained below:

ATTACKING THE OPPONENT'S QUALIFICATION AND COMPETENCE: In the great world of science and scholarship, the qualification of a person plays no role in getting a hearing for his ideas. While qualification is considered good, it is not taken as the ground on which the truth of his thesis rests.

Most of the scholarly journals do not print a person's qualifications, so that readers are swayed only by the material presented by him, and not by his qualifications. Most journals do not even add titles like "Dr, Prof.", and print only the name of the individual because of the same reason. In the world of scholarship, debates are conducted solely on the basis of facts presented.

In the world of lesser people, flaunting one's qualification is considered great. Consequently, attacking the opponent's qualification is considered meaningful. This is sheer stupidity and idiocy of those who have no idea about the world of research,

scholarship, and academics. The Apologist should make this clear by providing them the right information and then supplementing it with appropriate Leading Questions.

INDULGING IN DISCUSSIONS THAT ARE ACTUALLY IRRELEVANT TO THE MAJOR THRUST OF THE ARGUMENT: Some issues might have a major as well as a minor thrust. The minor thrust might actually be irrelevant to the major one. People who do not know this difference often end up discussing the minor issues because that might suit their defective intelligence or petty ideas. On the other hand many clever debaters purposely indulge in the minor issues so that the major issue does not need to be touched.

The Apologist has to clarify the difference through affirmation and also through questions. Thus when discussing the question of Tongues many people believe that discussing whether the gift of Tongues have ceased is the major issue. However, if we look at the Biblical data (I Cor. 12, 13, 14), it is only a minor issue there. The major issue is the nature, purpose, and the principles that regulate the use of this gift. Thus in any meaningful discussion on Tongues, the major issue must be discussed first and then the minor issues must be discussed in the light of the major subject. Else, no definite conclusion would ever be reached.

Summary

Many and varied are the methods used by people who indulge in crooked and twisted argument. However, if the six major categories above are mastered by the Apologist, he can with effect counter the hundreds of variations in which these six approaches manifest themselves.

Glossary of Terms

Sophists: a group of Greek professional speakers who worked for hire and who would use verbal manipulation to prove anything in the world.

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