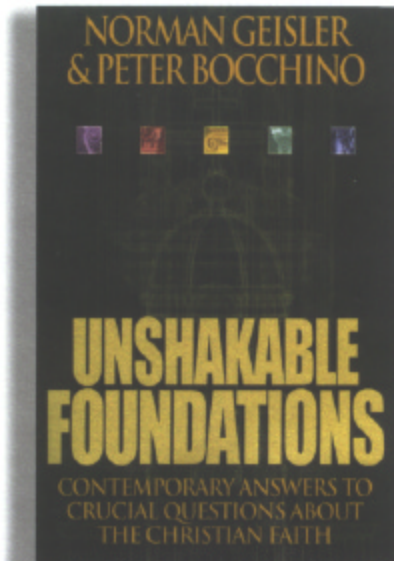


Building on a Solid Foundation



***Unshakable Foundations:
Contemporary Answers to Crucial
Questions about the Christian Faith***

Norman L. Geisler and
Peter Bocchino
(Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2001)

Authors Norman Geisler and Peter Bocchino succinctly describe the intent of their book, *Unshakable Foundations: Contemporary Answers to Crucial Questions about the Christian Faith*. In the introduction, they implore the reader: “Do not place your faith in the hands of someone else! This book offers credible reasons as to why Christianity is intellectually sound” (14). What makes *Unshakable Foundations* an extraordinary resource is the step-by-step format by which the knowledge is presented. By this method readers are empowered to think logically on their own about any topic, including those not addressed in the book.

When one understands the life calling of the authors of this book, it becomes clear why they want readers to gain the ability to think independently about the world around them, and to gain an understanding of the absolute truth of Christianity. Norman Geisler has authored or coauthored over 60 books (including *Philosophy of Religion* and *A General Introduction to the Bible*) and hundreds of articles (including a good number for the *JOURNAL*), in all of which he gives his readers the skills and abilities to think on their own and use the knowledge and wisdom he imparts to them. Geisler holds a doctorate in philosophy, has served as a university professor, and is president of Southern Evangelical Seminary. In other words, Geisler works in the real world and has heard so many objections to Christianity that when he offers counterarguments to these objections, we can be sure they are tested and successful ones. He has made himself an active participant in a variety of interpersonal settings, giving him credence as an expert in philosophical, theological, and ethical dialogue.

This may be the first venture into mainstream book publishing for Peter Bocchino, but I anticipate it won't be his last. Bocchino offers his years of ministerial experience in evaluating and critiquing world religions and

worldviews that challenge Christianity. Bocchino has led forums all over the world, during which his foundations were challenged and yet held firm. In this book we are offered his tested and successful arguments that will assist us in our daily conversations as well as our decision-making. Having gained experience as Director of Leadership for Ravi Zacharias International Ministries, Bocchino is now president of Legacy of Truth Ministries. *Unshakable Foundations* is the work of two very knowledgeable scholars, but more than that it is written by two God-loving, gospel-contending men who offer their experiences to help their brothers and sisters in Christ “contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints” (Jude 3).

Geisler and Bocchino start at the beginning of the road to understanding, instead of skipping ahead to a spot where they assume most readers already are. They explain:

All people have at one time or another given thought to the fact that they exist; existence and human reason are the two most fundamental assumptions that all people have in common. These two assumptions are unavoidable; in order to deny existence and reason one would have to use reason to think about the denial. Further, one would have to exist in order to be engaged in the reasoning process. Therefore, existence and reason must be the place to start an honest and impartial search for truth (21–22).

Geisler and Bocchino begin by introducing Aristotle's *first principles* — self-evident truths — including the law of noncontradiction (LNC), the law of identity (LID), and the law of the excluded middle (LEM). The LNC, LID, and LEM are used throughout the book to refute or prove arguments, just as they have been employed by philosophers for millennia. The LNC, LID, and LEM effectively show the inevitable logical collapse of

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agnosticism, atheism, pluralism, relativism, and pantheism. The book's illustrations and charts are especially helpful as they re-enforce the information presented in the text.

Every topic, from the causality of God, science, the cosmos, time and space, and the origin of life, is approached with first principles. By having readers use first principles to analyze arguments, the authors help them to make sound arguments on their own in their everyday life about any topic they wish. This is an ability that so few have today, and it is one that is invaluable to the thinking Christian who desires to "contend for the faith."

After refuting world religions and worldviews, such as pantheism and evolution, and showing how all but the theistic Christian approach fails under the scrutiny of the first principles of logic, Geisler and Bocchino show the moral ramifications of these beliefs on the administration of law and justice. For example, they show how America's founding fathers wrote the Declaration of Independence from the Divine Lawgiver view, but that today law in America is practiced from a naturalistic evolutionary view. The authors explain that as a result of this shift, basic human rights are no longer upheld, as demonstrated by the Supreme Court's 1973 legalization of abortion (201). The 1987 overturning of the requirement of teaching creation alongside evolution also demonstrates this shift in paradigm. The authors compare the opening of the Declaration of Independence as it was written by the founding fathers with a rewritten form of this foundational document that reflects how it is really practiced today. This fictional document, titled "A Declaration of Contingency," begins:

We hold these relative truths to be self-evident, that all Homosapiens have evolved slowly; that they are endowed by nature with certain contingent and relative rights; that

among these are the right to kill their babies, the right to full autonomy, and the right to pursue what makes them happy. (200)

This compares with the actual opening to the Declaration of Independence:

We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness. (200)

Geisler and Bocchino move into a comparison of the actions against the innocent by Nazi Germany and the actions against the innocent by our country since the legalization of abortion (the abortion debate is revisited in the appendix). The authors make it clear that a shift in philosophical approaches to human life must take place so that such atrocities are not justified in anyone's mind.

They conclude this discussion with a section on the problem of evil. Avid readers of apologetics books may find this treatment of the problem of evil too narrow in contrast to other works, such as Lee Strobel's *The Case for Faith*.

Their presentations on the historicity of the Bible and Jesus and their proof of the existence of miracles are likewise somewhat cursory in comparison to more hefty apologetic tomes, such as Gary R. Habermas's *The Historical Jesus* and C. S. Lewis's *Miracles*. Geisler and Bocchino's considerations nevertheless serve as starting points from which Christians can develop their own more in-depth arguments using the principles these authors have expounded.

As I stated at the beginning, what makes this resource unique and exemplary is the way the ideas are built on top of one another, enabling readers to understand the concepts so they can think rationally and

logically on their own about any topic. Every time the authors delve into philosophical topics, such as justice, morality, and ethics, readers will feel stretched by the authors' abilities to present tough arguments for all sides of an issue and argue that the Christian perspective is the only perspective worth adopting. Even the compact presentation of arguments against abortion in the appendix is thorough and convincing, though Christians would do well to arm themselves with more evidence from historical and scientific data and even more philosophical counterarguments to proabortionist rhetoric, as can be found in Francis Beckwith's *Politically Correct Death* (Baker Book House, 1994).

The one limitation of this volume is that it is written completely to a Christian audience, although that is the intent of the authors. So many times in reading this book wanted to give a copy of it to one non-Christian friend or another because of the tools for logical thinking that it offers, its accessibility, and the thorough, well-reasoned, philosophical and ethical arguments about Christianity and morality. I did not, however, buy a copy for a non-Christian friend (though I bought four copies for Christian friends of mine). Instead, I use the tools the authors gave me to talk with unbelieving friends. In a way, the one limitation is really one of the book's greatest strengths. *Unshakable Foundations* empowered me with the best tools to "contend for the faith" on my own that I might help non-Christian friends to understand God's truth.

— Mary E. Passantino

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