

Christian Presuppositional Apologetics
Part Two: The Critical Issues in Apologetics
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I. The place of Theology in Apologetics

A. Theology and apologetics are mutually dependent

1. The Bible is our belief which must be defended
2. The Bible is the foundation upon which our defense is built

B. Both the message and the method of apologetics must be biblical

1. Our minds must be taken captive by truth --2 Cor 10:5
2. We must challenge the unbeliever to think biblically, thinking God's thoughts after Him.

C. Doctrines that are crucial to Apologetics

1. The doctrine of God.
 - a. Incommunicable attributes
 - Independence -- God is in no sense correlative to or dependent upon anything-- Rom 11:33-36; He is autonomous
 - Infinite -- God eternal now with no beginning -- Isa 48:8-12
 - b. Communicable attributes
 - Holy -- His moral nature Isa 6:1-5
 - Sovereign -- He is all powerful and has all authority
2. The doctrine of Creation
 - a. A biblical world view begins with the creator God -- Gen 1:1
 - b. God is man's total environment -- Rom 11:36
 - c. The creation reveals the creator -- Ps 19:1-2; 97:6
 - d. The creation is dependent on the creator -- Acts 17:25
 - e. The creation can only be understood in light of the creator -- Ps 8:3-5
3. The doctrine of Man
 - a. Man is God's creation - Gen 1:27; Col 3:10
 - He is there inescapably religious -- his heart testifies to him as well as the creation around him that God exists and that He has a certain character -- Rom 1:18-20
 - b. Man is a finite creature without comprehensive knowledge -- Isa 55:9; Col 1:17
 - c. Man is fallen and is in desperate need of a Savior
 - He serves the creature rather than the Creator and is thus self confident in his own ways of thought. He is convinced he is right and extols his own thinking against the thinking of God.
 - d. Man is without excuse -- Rom 1:20

4. The Doctrine of Christ
 - a. Christ came to reconcile man to God in his death and resurrection
 - b. In Christ is all knowledge and wisdom Col 2:3; 1 Cor 1:30
 - c. Christ is Prophet, Priest, and King. To reject Him is thus an ethical matter -- John 19:7

D. Conclusion; Doctrine must drive our apologetic

II. The Place of Evidence in Apologetics

A. The Scriptures offer an abundance of infallible proofs- Luke 1:4. Acts 1:3

The witness of God in nature and in man's conscience
 The uniqueness of the Bible in all of History
 The reliability of the Bible
 The authority of Scripture -- it speaks like no other book (parental!)
 The incomparable message of the Bible -- the only message that calls of a broken submission to God in repentance and faith
 The fulfillment of Biblical Prophecies
 The Resurrection of our Lord
 The Support (at times) of Archaeology
 The Miracles performed by our Savior and His Apostles

B. The Problem with the evidence

The facts do not speak for themselves -- Acts 17:32 (not even for the believer)
 Matt 28:17.

1. Man's problem is far more deeper than the lack of evidence
2. The unbeliever can only understand the evidence on God's presupposition.
3. Evidences must have the right place in Apologetics

C. The use of evidence

1. Evidences are part of God's revelation of himself, not independent verification of Himself.
2. Evidences are most useful to those who seek God's answers and accept them on faith.

III. The place of Reason in Apologetics

The word can be ambiguous-- some give reason no place in apologetics!

A. Reason is a Tool

1. Man's ability to reason is part of the image of a God in man -- Gen 1:26
2. Christ commands the believer to love the Lord with all your mind- Matt 22:37

B. Reason must be the servant of Revelation (God's Word)

1. Biblical reasoning is "setting the record straight" -- Isa 1:18
2. Human reasoning is foolishness Ps. 14:1; Rom 1:22

C. Reason cannot be understood as an Independent Authority

so that it becomes the judge of what is right and wrong

1. All wisdom and knowledge comes from Christ --Col 2:3

The contrast is to this is to be deluded -- Col 2:4 -8

Such was the case with Eve -- 2 Cor 11:3

2. There are thus **two kinds of thinkers**:

Unbelievers who create their own **independent** thinking apart from God

These judge God and are thus their own god

Believers who think dependently-- submitting to God's truth

John 14:6 Jesus; "I am truth"

Prov. 1:7; 9:10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.
understanding, and wisdom.

3. Unbeliever are fools who refuse to begin their thinking with reverence for the Lord, and then go on to suppress what they see of God in nature. They will not build on the self evident words of Christ -- Rom 1: 25

A Bible fool is smart but uses his mind to deliberately reject God.

His downward progression Prov 1:22

He hates God --I Sam 26:21

He is Proud -- Prov 14:3

4. There is no **common ground** of knowledge with unbelievers

The Unbeliever and the Christian do not agree on anything-- not even

2+2+4. Every "fact" is interpreted by a man's world view so that every fact is really an "interprefact." There are no "brute" facts; facts that are facts because they are facts.

5. **Believers and unbelievers do not ultimately agree on anything because each interprets every "fact" from a different starting point. At the same time unbelievers borrow from the believer's world view because their own view does not make sense, but they will not admit it.**

1. Because God has revealed Himself to man in the creation, man has knowledge about science, medicine, baseball, rockets, music, etc., but he does not acknowledge God. This all happens God!! Thus he gets it all wrong! He can count but he cannot give an account for his counting.

2. For the unbeliever, God's creation becomes a proof for His non-existence. Brown cows eat green grass and produce white milk without out God and thus become a proof that God does not exist. Hosea 2:8 "it was I who gave her the grain . . .which they used for Baal."

Dan 5:22-23 "But the God in whose hand are your life-breath and your ways, you have not glorified."

3. Their knowledge and wisdom leads them to foolishness (Prov 1:7)

Note: Believers have absolute truth in scripture (true knowledge) and have the capacity to interpret the creation truly yet tentatively due to their finite limitations and the noetic effects of sin.

D. Reason in Apologetics

1. We Reason with him of Sin Righteousness and Judgement.
Man is **not** epistemological (a theory of knowledge) **neutral**
He **knows** the truth and is in willful rebellion against and suppressing of the truth
Man's speculations, prideful and lofty thoughts outside God must be destroyed and taken captive by obedience--2 Cor 10:5.
2. We Reason from the Scripture to show the unbeliever:
Without God, he is a Fool
Without God, he is hopelessly lost in his own thinking
Without God, he cannot make sense out of life
Without God, he has no basis for rational thought, even his own objections, his inner sense of morality, or his view of the unity of the world. **He needs Theism to make sense out of Atheism!**
He has no credible argument to bring against the truth (I Cor 1:22).
Man hates knowledge and can gain only a false knowledge --I Tim 6:20
Man only knows anything due to the suppressed truth within him.
When he argues against God, he is **opposing himself** - thus showing his desperate need for a change of mind in Christ. He is a man of water, in a pool of water, trying to climb a ladder of water, trying to get on a dock of water.
3. Apologetics is not Fideism (or the suspense of reason) but rather the giving of biblical reasoning to unbiblical thinkers.

E. Remember your own Conversion

1. Did you use your superior intellectual ability as the ultimate authority and judge of the evidence that Christ was creditable. Ridiculous!
2. We became Christians when we bowed the heart and mind in repentance to the Lordship of Christ.

F. All men have faith

1. The question becomes the content of that faith. The evolutionist has just as much faith as the Christian. He build his whole system on sheer, blind, irrational faith. Faith for him in himself -- Gen 3:5
In contrast, faith for the believer is based on the God of the Bible-- Gen 1:1
2. All reasoning is circular from one's starting point or presupposition.
What is needed is transcendental reasoning that sets one starting point over against another. There can be no flat line reasoning based on a use of so called neutral "laws of logic" or conditions of argumentation for even these are defended by one's faith.

IV. Classical Apologetics — A Misguided Approach

Also known as Evidentialism, Semi rationalism, or Empirical apologetics. It is the view of Catholics, Arminians, and inconsistent Calvinists.

Evidentialism -- A methodology that believes that there is common ground (or natural theology) between the believer and the unbeliever, holding that man's mind is neutral and is capable of judging of the credibility of truth. The evidentialist **puts God on trial using the unbeliever's mind as a neutral court**. He appeals to reason and proceeds to faith using empirical evidences or historically verifiable facts to argue a probability case for God. He argues the Christian view while assuming the "laws of logic" and so-called neutral evidences, seeking to avoid *circular reasoning* in favor of a *flat line* approach to reasoning. Evidentialists have starting points or presuppositions but seek to prove the **probability** or **permissibility** of them before presenting them. Evidentialism is reflected in the following positions.

A. Roman Catholic (Aquinas and the Scholastic Philosophers) use traditional arguments for God (including **Cosmological**, having to do with the nature of the universe; **Ontological**, having to do with the nature and relations of being; **Anthropological**, having to do with human beings as to their origin, distribution, etc; and **Teleological**, having to do with design or purpose.) to build a probability case for God. They start with reason and proceed to the probability of faith.

From Cosmology: Everything begun; whether substance or phenomena, owes its existence to some producing cause. In the case of the universe the cause must be great. i.e. God.

From Teleology: Order and useful collocation pervading a system respectively imply intelligence and purpose as the cause of that order and collocation; namely, an adequate divine will.

B. Arminian Argues that man's mind is neutral and when presented with evidences he will yield to Christ. Bishop Butler, in his famous **Analogy**, used nature to build a probability case for life after death against Deism of the 18th century. He said that a "reasonable use of reason" could interpret aright "the course and constitut nature." Butler went on to say that : "natural religion is rendered credible by analogy; revealed religion is rendered credible by analogy and the evidences of miracles and prophecy." "The whole of religion then is throughout credible" John Warwick Montgomery claimed to be "drug kicking and screaming across the threshold of grace by the sheer weight of the evidence." Clark Pinnock, Norman Geisler, Ravi Zacharias and other classic Arminians, argue in similar fashion.

C. Inconsistent Calvinism uses some form of common ground or points of agreement in appealing to the laws of logic and natural uniformity to build a case is built for God. They would present so-called neutral evidences to build a probability case for God. Charles Hodge -- "Man can judge of the credibility of a Revelation" John Gerstner, R.C. Sproul -- build a probability case for God from nature while claiming to avoid circular reasoning at every level.

J.P. Moreland -- A permissible case for God

E.J. Carnell -- Pre evangelism with evidences before the gospel can be presented.

Josh McDowell -- Calls for "faith based on fact."

D. The problem

1. Evidential apologetics grants the unbeliever too much.

We cannot grant the unbeliever the right to think as an unbeliever (autonomously) while at the same time asking him to give up his unbelief (autonomy). This theologically impossible. The unbeliever will always employ his tools of reason to reduce the contents of Scripture to naturalism'

2. Unbelievers cannot and do not give God a fair trial as it is impossible for them to do so with his blinded heart.
3. What is needed is an apologetic that will deny the unbeliever the right to question and stand in judgement of God. We must rip away the glasses cemented to his face through which he views everything he sees and hears
4. The need is for an absolute certain defense of God rather than one of probability.

E. The Need: A Biblical Apologetic

1. That takes into account the true condition of the unbeliever
2. That rests on sound doctrine
3. That focuses on starting points.

The Conflict of World Views

Creator (GOD)

Independent Creator

“in the beginning God . . .”

The clear source of all truth -- (a priori)

Creation (Man)

Dependent creation

True Knowledge (Understanding) of God and His creation Prov 1:7

True righteousness

Believers

Worship the Creator

Thinks God's thoughts after Him

In principle (noetic effects of sin)

Dependent reasoning (biblical)

Unbelievers

Worship the creature -- “self”

Reject God's thoughts but do not live that

way. They know God but do not

glorify Him as God -- “truth”

They have knowledge but not truth.

Inconsistent:

In rebellion they assert independence

(Pretended neutrality and autonomy)

In reality they continue to think

accord-

to the remaining effects of God's

image in them.

Thus: “A-theism presupposes Theism”

Depend on God for the laws of logic,

uniformity in nature, human dignity,

a invariant moral code Rom 2:14,15

Speak to unbelievers with confidence

that they are made in God image

putting the unbeliever on trial

2 Cor 10:5

Believers and **Unbelievers** are thus **Epistemologically** in complete disagreement!

Believers and **Unbelievers** are **Ontologically (Metaphysically)** in agreement

yet unbelievers are inconsistent – talking independently and living dependently!