

EVANGELISM FOR THE GLORY OF GOD

Practical Apologetics

“...but in your hearts set apart Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.” (1 Pet 3:15-16)

“The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” (2 Corinthians 10:4-5)

I. Apologetics: Review

- A. Two Ways to Deal with Bullets Flying Against the Christian Faith
 1. Learn to Dodge Bullets
 2. Take Away the Gun

II. Apologetics and “Worldview”

- Everybody has what can be called a "worldview," a perspective in terms of which they see everything and understand their perceptions and feelings.
- A worldview is a synthesis of one's presuppositions . Not everybody thinks through the content of his worldview or is consistent in maintaining it, but everybody has one nonetheless.
- A person's worldview clues him as to the nature, structure, and origin of reality. It tells him what are the limits of possibility. It involves a view of the nature, sources, and limits of human knowledge. It includes fundamental convictions about right and wrong.
- Worldviews determine our acceptance and understanding of events in human experience, and thus they play the crucial role in our interpreting of evidence or in disputes over conflicting fundamental beliefs.
- One of the primary goals of an apologetical encounter is to LOVINGLY “blow up their worldview” in order to show the futility of unbelief in the Trinitarian God of Scripture.
- One of the primary goals of an apologetical encounter is to demonstrate to the unbeliever that his or her views on the big issues in life are internally inconsistent with their foundational presuppositions.
- I.E. You LOVINGLY force the unbeliever to “take the plane to Boston.”

III. Apologetics in Action (The Problem of Evil)

The Supposed Problem: If God is willing to prevent evil, but not able, He's impotent. If God is able but not willing, He is malevolent. If God is both able and willing, why does evil exist?

The Presupposition: What Hume was arguing is that the Christian cannot logically accept these three premises: God is all-powerful, God is all-good, and nevertheless evil exists in the world. If God is all-powerful, then He must be able to prevent or remove evil, if He wishes. If God is all-good, then certainly He wishes to prevent or remove evil. Yet it is undeniable that evil exists. Therefore the Biblical God cannot exist.

The Problem with the Presupposition: But the atheistic unbeliever has a problem—for him there is no ABSOLUTE good or evil. Philosophically speaking, the problem of evil turns out to be, therefore, a problem for the unbeliever himself.

- In order to use the argument from evil against the Christian worldview, he must first be able to show that his judgments about the existence of evil are meaningful -- which is precisely what his unbelieving worldview is unable to do.
- Both the believer and the unbeliever will want to insist that certain things are evil, for instance cases of child abuse (like those already mentioned). And they will talk as though they take such moral judgments seriously, not simply as expressions of personal taste, preference or subjective opinion. They will insist that such things are truly -- *objectively, intrinsically* -- evil. Even unbelievers can be shaken from their easy and glib espousals of relativism in the face of moral atrocities like war, rape, and torture.
- But the question, logically speaking, is how the unbeliever can make sense of taking evil seriously -- not simply as something inconvenient, or unpleasant, or contrary to his or her desires.

What philosophy of value or morality can the unbeliever offer which will render it meaningful to condemn some atrocity as objectively evil? The moral indignation which is expressed by unbelievers when they encounter the wicked things which transpire in this world does not comport with the theories of ethics which unbelievers espouse, theories which prove to be arbitrary or subjective or merely utilitarian or relativistic in character. On the unbeliever's worldview, there is no good reason for saying that anything is evil in nature, but only by personal choice or feeling. (Greg Bahnsen)

The Irony: The unbeliever is forced to adopt the validity of the Christian worldview to make a moral judgment on evil. For only in a theistic worldview can there be the possibility of evil in an OBJECTIVE sense. Antitheism presupposes theism to make its case.

- It's encouraging to see unbelievers getting very indignant with some evil action as a matter of principle. Such indignation requires recourse to the absolute, unchanging, and good character of God in order to make philosophical sense.
- The expression of moral indignation is but personal evidence that unbelievers know this God in their heart of hearts. They refuse to let judgments about evil be reduced to subjectivism.

The Solution:

I. GOD IS ALL-GOOD. 2. GOD IS ALL-POWERFUL. 3. EVIL EXISTS. AND...4. GOD HAS A MORALLY SUFFICIENT REASON FOR THE EVIL WHICH EXISTS.

- When all four of these premises are maintained, there is no logical contradiction to be found, not even an apparent one. It is precisely part of the Christian's walk of faith and growth in sanctification to draw proposition 4 as the conclusion of propositions 1-3.
- God uses, and in fact ordains, the evil acts of men for His glory.

Q. Why does God allow evil?

A. For Jesus' glory. It is precisely in the context of these events that we see the glory of the cross.

- In the case of the greatest evil deed in all of history -- the crucifixion of the Lord of glory -- the Christian professes that God's goodness was not inconsistent with what the hands of lawless men performed. Was the killing of Christ evil? Surely. Did God have a morally sufficient reason for it? Just as surely.
- With Abraham we declare, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25). And this goodness of God is beyond challenge: "Let God be true, though all men are liars" (Romans 3:4).

* Much of this material is taken from Greg Bahnsen's lectures and published articles.