

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)

“Christian apologetics (which has nothing to do with ‘apologizing’) seeks to serve God and the church by helping believers carry out the mandate of 1 Pet 4:15-16. We may define it as *the discipline that teaches Christians how to give a reason for their hope.*” - John Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God*, 1.

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
- B. The Posture of Apologetics – “in your hearts set apart Christ the Lord as holy...” (v. 15)
- C. The Manner of Apologetics – “...yet do it with gentleness and respect...” (v. 15)

II. The Irrationality of Unbelief Explained

1. Due to Humanity’s Fall into Sin, Unbelieving Thought Demands Independence from God

“Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God actually say, “You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?”’” (Gen 3:1)

2. God’s Inescapable Self-Disclosure Makes Rejection of Him Inexcusable

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.” (Rom 1:18-21)

3. Unbelief Must “Borrow” from the Christian Worldview to Live Meaningfully in the World

“For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵ They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them.” (Rom 2:14-15)

4. The Result of Unbelieving Thought is Irrationality

“When turning from God, the unbeliever asserts with *absolute certainty* that the biblical distinction between Creator and His creature is false; he therefore puts on the mask of *absolute certainty*. Yet, when turning from God, the unbeliever is left in the position of having no solid ground for knowledge and must therefore wear the mask of *total uncertainty*. While an unbeliever may wear one or the other mask at different times, beneath the mask he may wear the unbeliever is caught in the unsolvable dilemma of being both absolutely certain and totally uncertain at the same time. This unmasking of non-Christian claims and the exposure of this dilemma becomes an important part of a biblical defense of Christianity.” - Richard Pratt, *Every Thought Captive*, 47.

III. Check-List to See if an Argument Will “Fly”

1. Is this argument ARBITRARY?

- A. Mere opinion offered
 - 1. “That’s your opinion. But I have a different opinion.”
 - 2. Apologetic Response: “So what?”

- B. Relativism
 - 1. “Everybody creates their own religious reality. It’s different strokes for different folks.”
 - 2. Apologetic Response: “If everybody is right, then nobody is wrong, including _____”

- C. Ignorant Conjecture
 - 1. “The Bible has undergone so many translations and copies that we can never know the original text.”
“We don’t even know if Jesus actually existed.”
 - 2. Apologetic response: “What evidence do you have to support that claim?”

2. Is this argument INCONSISTENT?

- A. Ad Hominem Fallacy
 - 1. “Christianity can’t be true because I’ve known some pretty terrible Christians.”
 - 2. Apologetic response: “Yes, but I can learn algebra from an ax-murder.”

- B. Actions Speak Louder Than Words
 - 1. “Man is just a product of mindless evolutionary change.”
 - 2. Apologetic response: “Why do you support equality for minorities?” “Are you opposed to police brutality?”

3. What are the PRECONDITIONS of this argument?

- A. “No all-powerful, all-good God could exist because of all the evil in the world.”
- B. Apologetic response: “And who, may I ask, defines what is evil if God doesn’t exist?”

“In Biblical terms, what the Christian apologist does is demonstrate to unbelievers that because of their rejection of God's revealed truth, they have "become vain in their reasonings" (Rom. 1:21). By means of their foolish perspective they end up "opposing themselves" (2 Tim. 2:25)... The aim of the apologist is to cast down their reasonings (2 Cor. 10:5) and to challenge them in the spirit of Paul: "Where is the wise? Where is the disputer of this world? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?" (1 Cor. 1:20). What the unbeliever needs is nothing less than a radical change of mind - repentance (Acts 17:30). He needs to change his fundamental worldview and submit to the revelation of God in order for any knowledge or experience to make sense. He at the same time needs to repent of his spiritual rebellion and sin against God. Because of the condition of his heart, he cannot see the truth or know God in a saving fashion.” - Greg Bahnsen, *The Heart of the Matter*

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. ² Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” (Rom 12:1-2)