



ALL SAINTS

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Defending the Faith: Presuppositional
Apologetics for the Person in the Pew
Week 3

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Overview

- Apologetics is the art of defending the faith.
- It is often associated with evangelism.
- We are going to talk briefly about why we should study apologetics, the types of apologetics, and then look in more detail at one apologetic method in particular.

Review: The Authority of Scripture

- Martin Luther famously said that Justification is the doctrine on which the church stands or falls.
- It is certainly true that it is our most central doctrine and the one we must get right.
- But without the doctrine of the inerrancy of scripture, we cannot know if our doctrine of justification is correct--we would have no authority for it.

Review: The Authority of Scripture

- To say that you believe Jesus died for your sins but to deny, e.g. creation, creates an insurmountable epistemological problem.
- The only way you can know Christ died for you, is the authority of the Bible.
- If the Bible is true, then Christ died for his people and has been raised.
- But, that means it is also true that God created the world in six days—because the Bible says that too.

Review: The Authority of Scripture

- To say that you only believe *selective parts* of the Bible is necessarily to deny its authority.
- It makes you, the reader, the supreme authority.
- It reduces down to “I know Jesus died for my sins because I said so.” *Ipse Dixit*.

Review: The Authority of Scripture

- How do I know Jesus died for my sins?
- How do I know he was raised from the dead?
- Because the Bible says so.
- This requires me to accept the authority of the Bible.
- It requires me to believe the whole Bible.
- And I believe the Bible is true because of the witness of the Holy Spirit.

Review: The Authority of Scripture

- So, at the core of our class on presuppositional apologetics, we must understand the nature of each person's ultimate authority.
- For the Christian, the ultimate authority is and must be the Bible.
- For the unbeliever, it is ultimately himself.
 - This is true even if he purports to hold to some false transcendental authority.

Review

1) 1) A worldview is a network of presuppositions which are not tested by natural science and in terms of which all experience is related and interpreted.

2) Everyone has a worldview and presuppositions whether he admits it or not.

Review

3) The worldview of your opponent is the key to defending the faith. We are learning to expose that worldview, point out its inconsistencies, and contrast it with the Christian worldview.

4) Every thought, experience, or sensation you have is seen in the context of a worldview that allows you to relate it to other thoughts, experiences, or sensations. Without this we wouldn't be able to function.

Review

5) Because Christianity is a worldview, if you are committed to Christ for any part of your life, then you necessarily must be committed to Christ in every area of your life.

6) The three main areas of philosophy that make up a worldview (whether you admit it or not), are metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics.

Review

7) Metaphysics is the study of the nature of reality, origins, who man is, and the nature of history. It asks questions like what is man? Is he good or evil? Where did man come from? Where is the world going?

8) Epistemology is the study of knowledge and how we know what we know. It asks questions about the nature of truth and objectivity, how we can truly know anything, and how we can rely on science and reason.

Review

9) Ethics is the study of right and wrong, good and bad, moral responsibility and duty. It asks questions about what is right and wrong, what is the nature of government and society, and how can we attain good moral character.

10) In the Christian worldview, God's revelation of himself to us by his Word, and specifically in the Bible, gives us the basis to answer all of these questions.

Review

11) Our most basic presupposition as Christians is that the Bible is true.

The Christian Worldview

- Christianity provides answers to the big questions of life.
- It provides a complete worldview.
- It gives us a robust **metaphysics**: God created the World, our purpose is to glorify and enjoy him, and history is moving toward the second coming of Christ and the new heavens and the new Earth.

The Christian Worldview

- Christianity gives us a robust **epistemology**: we can know that God is real and how to relate to him because the Bible is true.
- We can rely on our senses and our reason because the Bible is true.
- We can gain knowledge about the world around us because we can trust our senses and our memories because the Bible is true.

The Christian Worldview

- Christianity gives us a comprehensive system of **ethics**.
- The Bible is true. God's moral law is binding on all people at all times.
- The WLC gives us a robust exposition of it.
- We can derive additional ethical principles from God's law through our reason and experience.

Secular Materialism

- Compare Ayn Rand's version of secular materialism, which she called Objectivism. This is taken from the back of Atlas Shrugged:

Secular Materialism

- *Metaphysics—Reality, the external world, exists independently of man's consciousness, independent of any observer's knowledge, beliefs, feelings, or desires or fears. This means that A is A, that facts are facts, that things are what they are—and that the task of man's consciousness is to perceive reality, not to create or invest it. Thus objectivism rejects any belief in the supernatural—and any claim that individuals or groups create their own reality.*
- Consider that this is really just a big presupposition. We can ask the question: how does she know?

Secular Materialism

- *Epistemology—Man's reason is fully competent to know the facts of reality. Reason, the conceptual faculty, is the faculty that identifies and integrates the material provided by man's senses. Reason is man's only means of acquiring knowledge. Thus objectivism rejects mysticism (any acceptance of faith or feeling as a means of knowledge), and it rejects skepticism (the claim that certainty or knowledge is impossible).*

Secular Materialism

- Again, consider that first sentence. How in the world does she know? The belief that reason is a reliable way to integrate information provided by our senses is an assumption. It is in fact a presupposition, as is the reliability of our senses. Ms. Rand just takes it for granted, and pretty much all secular materialists have to do the same.

Secular Materialism

- *Ethics: Man—every man—is an end in himself, not as a means to the ends of others; he must live for his own sake, neither sacrificing himself to others nor sacrificing others to himself; he must work for his own rational self-interest, with the achievement of his own happiness as the highest moral purpose of his life.*

Secular Materialism

- I translate this as: it is right to do whatever makes you happy. You define your own happiness. This you define your own morality. Thus there are no absolute moral standards.
- More importantly, how do we know? By what authority are these moral truths proclaimed? Once again, there are big presuppositions here.

Secular Materialism

- Pursuing your own happiness apart from worshipping and serving God is a hopeless and futile exercise.
- There is simply no meaning to be found apart from God.

Introduction to Worldviews

- Remember that the Christian worldview has presuppositions too. But ours are consistent, and our basic presupposition is that the Bible says so.
- We should freely admit this.

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TAG

- Now we turn to the meat of the class, as we introduce the transcendental argument for God (“TAG”).
- This is both easy and powerful once you understand it.
- Everyone in the room can use the TAG effectively.
- This is my goal for this series.

TAG

- Remember: Presuppositional apologetics seeks to defend the faith by exposing the presuppositions of the unbeliever, contrasting them with those of the Christian, and demonstrating the irrationality and absurdity of the unbeliever's position.
- One powerful way to do this is via the **Transcendental Argument for God (TAG)**.

TAG

- "It is never about winning, Greg. It's about exposing their inconsistency. God does everything else. Never forget the antithesis."
Cornelius Van Til to Greg Bahnsen.

TAG

- What we are doing is setting up the Bible as a **written expression** of the Christian philosophy of life and then inviting other worldviews to be compared to it.
- We then **gently demonstrate** that the other worldview is deficient.

TAG

- What does “transcendental” mean?
- It is all knowledge that we assume to be true.
- “I entitle transcendental all knowledge which is occupied...with the mode of our knowledge of objects in so far as this mode of knowledge is to be possible a priori.” Kant, Immanuel, Critique of Pure Reason, A 12 (as quoted in Bahnsen, Greg, Van Til’s Apologetic at p. 499).

TAG

- How does the TAG work?
- “A transcendental argument begins with any item of experience or belief whatsoever and proceeds, by critical analysis, to ask what conditions (or what other beliefs) would need to be true in order for that original experience or belief to make sense, be meaningful, or be intelligible to us.” Bahnsen, Van Til’s Apologetic 501-02.

TAG

- How does the TAG work?
- In other words:
 - What is something you **believe**?
 - How do you **know**?
- This will work with any knowledge.
- But it is not intuitive to most people when you ask them how they know most facts e.g. existence of the chair they are sitting in.

Arguing From Morality

- Today we are focusing on one type of TAG, reasoning from **morality**.
- This approach will work with **almost anyone** who is honest. The person you are speaking with does not need to be particularly philosophically-minded or erudite.
- Everyone has basic ideas about **right** and **wrong**.

Arguing From Morality

- Some basic points:
- Without God, or some kind of transcendental **authority**, there is no objective **standard** of **morality**.
- All other approaches are either hopelessly inconsistent, or beg the basic question of by whose authority?
- In other words: “Says who?”

Arguing From Morality

- Part of the inconsistency we seek to expose is that all people have **moral instincts**.
- Nobody walks around seriously contending that everyone is free to do whatever he wants.
- This is because the **law of God** is written on the **hearts** of the reprobate as well as the believer.

Arguing From Morality

- Many college students will at some point, usually after taking their first philosophy class, flirt with the idea of moral **relativism**.
- This is the view that there are no moral absolutes but rather individuals are bound only by maxims that either they, or sometimes their culture, adopt.
- This is readily reducible to amoralism.

Arguing From Morality

- It also still begs the question of by whose authority.
- Popular with young people away from home who want to justify engaging in conduct they know is wrong.
- Often drunkenness and fornication.

Arguing From Morality

- “I don’t believe in absolute morality. It’s about what’s right and wrong ‘for me.’ You have your morality, and I have mine.”
- “Don’t try to impose your morality on me.”
- This is absurd.
- If there are any moral truths at all, they are necessarily universal.
- Otherwise they are meaningless.

Arguing From Morality

- “You can’t legislate morality.”
- This is even more absurd.
- The law largely consists of moral maxims given the force of the state.
- e.g. punishment for murder, rape, robbery, larceny, child pornography, racial discrimination in hiring, etc.
- Note that the proponents of such a maxim are usually advocate for legislating some version of their own morality.

Arguing From Morality

- “You can’t legislate morality.”
- What this usually really means is this: “I don’t want there to be laws that prohibit me from engaging in sexual conduct that violates the law of God.”

Arguing From Morality

- Everyone feels strongly about something.
- Get them talking. Look at the slogan on their T-Shirt or bumper sticker.
- Examples:
 - It is wrong to pollute the environment.
 - Society should care for the poor.
 - The government should leave me alone.
 - Racism is wrong/right.
 - Abortion is wrong/right.
 - Socialism is wrong/right.
 - Illegal immigration should be stopped/ allowed.

Arguing From Morality

- For anyone you are talking to, there is some moral belief he holds dear. Even if it is as basic as a rule against murder, theft, or rape.
- Whatever it is, identify something, then ask what the basis of that belief is.
- Find common ground with the Christian worldview and explain that your moral views are based on the law of God as set forth in the scriptures.

Arguing From Morality

- Example: “Laws that prohibit gender affirming care for children are immoral.”
- “What led you to that conclusion?”
- “What moral rule do you believe in that makes you say that?”
- “What is the authority for that rule?”
- “How do you know?”

Arguing From Morality

- Example: “Taxes are theft and the government has no right to take money from me at the point of a gun.”
- “What makes you say that?”
- “Are you saying taxation is morally wrong?”
- “What moral rule supports that assertion?”
- “What is the authority for the proposition?”
- “How do you know?”

Arguing From Morality

- Without transcendental authority, all moral statements are matters of **opinion**.
- The statement “Stealing is wrong” is no more meaningful than “I don’t like theft” without some outside authority to appeal to.
- Otherwise, why do you get to impose your anti-theft opinion on me?

Arguing From Morality



Arguing From Morality



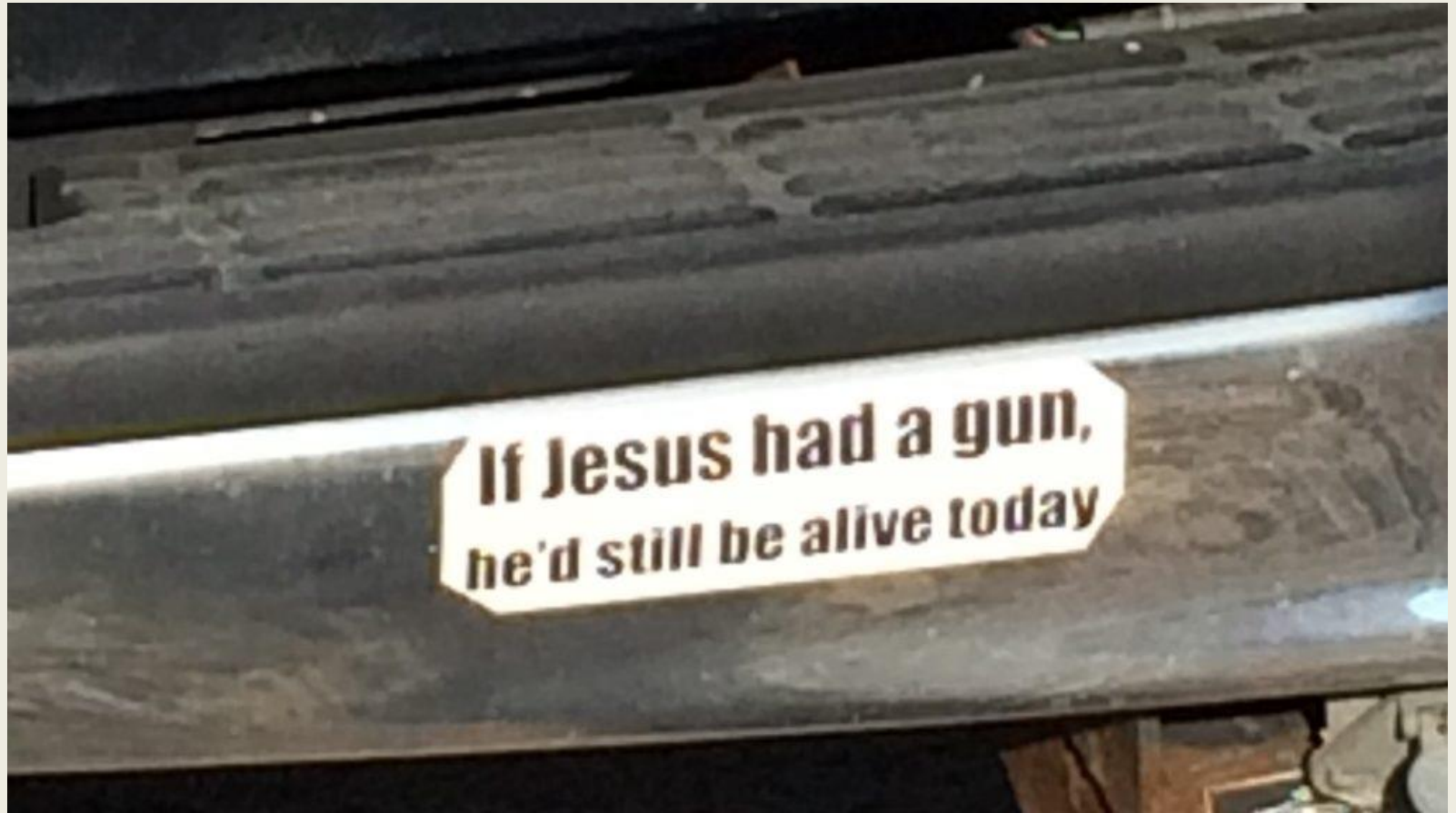
Arguing From Morality



Arguing From Morality



Arguing From Morality



What do we do with this guy?



