

05 Nuclear Strength Apologetics – Part 3 – intellectual sins

One of the great keys to confident evangelism and confident apologetic dialog is *learning the right method*. I have criticized the “evidential” approach to defending the Christian faith. I am in favor of using evidence, *but in the right way*. We can and should use evidence to demonstrate that such evidence confirms Biblical Christianity is true. Recall at the beginning of this series on evangelism and apologetics that I pointed out that the existence of information, the existence of C-14 in diamonds, and the existence of comets are very powerful indicators that the universe is young and that there is a God who is the source of the *unfathomable* amount of information contained in DNA molecules. These evidences confirm but do not prove the Bible is true. The Bible’s truth is demonstrated by the fact that without it, you could not prove or know anything in the sense of actually *justifying* knowledge. Recall that I’ve pointed out to you that unbelievers do know things and that they do not need to *profess* with their mouths a belief in God in order to know things. But they are entirely unable to *account* for how they know what they know without God.

What is our method? The “Don’t Answer, Answer” strategy. It’s really easy. Here is a real simple way of what to remember anytime you talk to any unbeliever in your life:

1. When it comes to neutrality: *They aren’t, and you shouldn’t be*. You are a Christian – and that means you love, submit to, and believe the Word of God – the Bible.
2. Share the gospel – call people to repent and believe it. We will do several sermons on a very easy, simple, and effective way to share the gospel.
3. If they object or reject your message, find out what they do believe and then use the very simple directive from the Word of God (the “Don’t Answer, Answer” strategy):

Proverbs 26:4-5 Do not answer a fool according to his folly, Lest you also be like him. [5] Answer a fool according to his folly, Lest he be wise in his own eyes.

Tonight – Intellectual sins. Learn the method – how to listen for: inconsistencies and arbitrariness. We will discuss both in detail. Once you learn how to detect these things, you will be able to successfully deal with anything people might say.

Illustration: The difference between bullet dodging and disarming your opponent. Some methods of apologetics say: *You have to become an expert on everything. You need to learn the fine details about every school of philosophy, every world religion, every cult, every –ism out there.* These are bullet-dodgers. What I’m trying to do is teach you how to disarm the guy so he has nothing to shoot with.

This is NOT to say it isn’t good to know the facts, to know details, etc about other perspectives. It is *very helpful* to know some philosophy, to know the details and faults of man’s religions etc, BUT, it is much more important for you to know the method by which you can show people that their worldviews are, in fact, false. Rather than learning how to dodge every single bullet, just walk over and take the person’s gun out of their hand and show them they have nothing to shoot with.

4 things – the key intellectual sins all men commit – even Christians, sadly. These 4 things apply *not* just to religious discourse, but to every single department of human inquiry.

1. **Arbitrary (4 sub categories).** Is this argument arbitrary?
2. **Inconsistency.**
3. **Consequences** – judging a tree by its fruit. What would this belief on the part of this non-Christian lead to if followed consistently.
4. **Pre-conditions of intelligibility.**

Learn to point out these, and you can talk confidently to anyone about anything related to the Christian faith.

1. **Arbitrary** – 4 categories. What is the definition of “arbitrary?” Noah Webster’s 1828 dictionary defines it as: “Depending on will or discretion; not governed by any fixed rules; as, an arbitrary decision; an arbitrary punishment. Arbitrary power is most easily established on the ruins of liberty abused to licentiousness.”

Illustration: Remember – the segment of our population that is by far the most arbitrary is small children. *Education* is supposed to cure this in us, but unfortunately since there has been such a colossal collapse in education, adults, professors, and professional scientists are arbitrary, like small children, all the time.

- A. Mere Opinion** – “My opinion is the following...” “You believe one way, but my opinion is...” people say to us: “Well, you believe that, but I don’t.”

- ⇒ **This is the key** intellectual sin committed by unbelievers – they are *arbitrary*.
- ⇒ **People are supposed to have** *reasons, facts, etc.* to support their assertions. In a very gentle way, we need to learn to help people understand that opinions are, in the final analysis, *worthless*. If you are in a debate with someone and they say, ‘but my opinion is this.’ You have won the argument if people say that.
- ⇒ **Consider a concrete example of arbitrariness** – Have you ever heard someone says, “Well, my God would not predestine people to heaven and let the rest go to hell.” You wouldn’t want to put it like this to them, but the reality is: *Big deal... what you do or do not like is not in any way relevant to what is true or real.*
- ⇒ **Illustration: Bahnsen v Tabash** on the existence of God. Tabash’s argument was basically: *I do not think the idea of hell is a punishment proportionate to the crime, this is not the kind of God we would want to worship, therefore God does not exist.* Bahnsen tried to be as gentle as possible, but he basically said to Mr. Tabash, “your argument is as silly as the child who pulls the covers over his head because he is angry that his dad is making him go to bed on time and says, ‘well, you don’t exist because I don’t like you.’”

- B. Relativism** – The relativist simply says, “That’s true for you, but not for me. You probably have really good reasons to believe what you do and I’m glad it works for you.”

- ⇒ **If we all create our own reality**, then the most wicked people in history can create *their own reality too* – including Hitler, Stalin, Ho Chi Min, etc.
- ⇒ **When someone tells you that you create your own reality and your own truth, and that everybody is right**, we simply respond by saying: If everybody is right in your perspective, then clearly nobody is *wrong either* – including tyrants, murderers, child abusers, thieves, and etc.
- ⇒ **Relativism** is its own worst enemy. Reality is not a smorgasbord – reality is not like that – God is not like that. When people tell us *what they want God to be like* without any argumentation, facts, etc to support their ideas. The fact is: **if God is whatever we want Him to be, then He is not God! (or she, or it, or whatever). God is what He reveals Himself to be in His Word.**
- ⇒ **Application:** Is it not amazing that people believe they can *make God into whatever they want?* There are churches doing that all over the place – church who reject God’s Word and create a God who will affirm their form of sexual perversion, their selfish lifestyle, etc.
- ⇒ **“True for you, but not for me”** is an absurd statement.
- ⇒ **“No one can know anything for sure.”** Do you know what’s wrong with that statement? If it is true, then it is false – therefore *it is false*.
- ⇒ **When you get into conversations with folks, even if you are able to stand your ground and defeat your opponent’s worldview** you’ll still be told that there are “other perspectives, other universes, and other ideas you need to explore, etc.” That is relativism.
- ⇒ **Thus, relativism is another form of arbitrariness.** Educated people (and I’m not saying

that to sound snobbish at all) know that it is invalid to be arbitrary. But I will tell you that in the secular university I went to, this was the mindset of the majority of professors I had – at Ohio University. They were relativists. People, long ago, used to be committed to various schools of philosophical thought and that was their foundation. Today, people are just arbitrary – strange times...

⇒ **People can get a piece of paper from a college – and no know how to think, not know how to research, not know how to put together a single decent paragraph of an argument.** The reason people don't think much anymore is they have gotten used to being arbitrary – offering mere opinion in the place of well thought out argumentation. And when the mere opinions conflict, instead of investigating who can and cannot make a case and defend their view, they default to *relativism*. And that is why public discourse in general is not worth listening to. If you're a relativist, you can go to cocktail parties and be welcome. As long as you don't say, *Jesus is the only truth – you are welcomed and respected*.

Application: Let us remember the world into which the apostles of Jesus Christ were first sent. The Roman empire, sort of like we talked about this morning, had established itself as a global power by brutal subjugation of the Italian peninsula followed by a 125-year long blood-soaked, 3 wars long campaign against their bitter rivals the Carthaginians. The Roman policy toward the victims they conquered *was not* re-education in the philosophies and religions of Rome but rather *assimilation*. Rome did not care what its subjects believed as long as they were *relativists* about it. The incarnate truth of God, Jesus Christ, then steps into this with an absolutely uncompromising truth claim that offended to their core this relativistic society – at every level. To the early followers of Jesus Christ, His teachings regarding allegiance to Him and His teachings had special relevance.

Luke 14:26-27 "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. [27] And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

When Peter stood up at Pentecost, his courage was bold and inspiring:

Acts 4:12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

The Lord Jesus was absolute and clear:

John 8:24 Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."

Application: *We are not relativists.* As much as everyone around us would like us to be. And this means, if we are faithful, there will be times that are very uncomfortable for us. But we must learn to recognize relativism for what it is – a form of arbitrariness.

There is always the temptation to be "secret agents" for Christ – but that is NOT what God's Word calls us to be. And let us always remember that no one, in their heart of hearts, can really be a relativist. If you'd like proof of that, take a strong stance for your Christian faith, be a faithful witness for the gospel of Jesus Christ, and you will soon find that those who claim to be the most tolerant are, in fact, the most intolerant. And once again, this simply shows that we can't escape ourselves. The human mind was not created by God to stay open. It was created to close on something – to close on the truth and then to stay closed. People who contradict each other cannot both be right. They might both be wrong, but they cannot both be right – *and everyone knows that*.

Frankly, this is the primary thing you will deal with in trying to witness to people – mere opinion and relativism. Opinions are academically worthless. And relativism and self-refuting.

C. Ignorant conjecture – People often put forth elaborate, interesting claims... but they have no facts to back them up. For example: "The Bible was written so long ago, has been copied and recopied so many times, etc. that it has probably been changed many, many times and who knows what the original documents said. Surely scribes have altered, changed, added, deleted

things... and who knows who really wrote the originals or what they said. And for all we know, some monk living in Siberia on top of a mountain made the whole thing up!"

- ⇒ **Bill Nye said in his debate with Ken Ham: "Anyone here ever played the phone game?"** I thought, "You have got to be kidding me, Bill." Any atheists watching who have *any* knowledge of the Bible and the history of its transmission, etc. had to be just utterly embarrassed by such nonsensical statements. That was a grand example of "ignorant conjecture."
- ⇒ **It may seem likely that such would be the case after all these years.** Here are the prejudices:
- **The Biblical text is no different from any other document in our possession.** People tell us that we can't just assume the Bible is supernatural. But one of our presuppositions as Christians is that the Bible is indeed an extraordinary book. And the unbeliever will tell us: "*you're just arguing in circles because you believe it is an extraordinary book and I'm trying to convince you that it is not.*" And we then say, "yes, that's the nature of the debate before us." **People assume** – if it happens when you play "telephone," then it follows that it would happen with the Bible. **Our response is that if the Bible is what it claims then we have God's promise that His Words will not pass away.**
 - **There is no concrete evidence that the text of the Bible has been tampered with – and they can't show you any.**
 - **Facts we know about the Bible's transmission:** OT text, copies were verified down to the individual letter before old copies burned. NT text because of the great commission went out into multiple, independent lines of transmission *all over the place*. And yet, 85% of the text of the NT shows no variation at all. 97% of the remaining 15% of the text, we know *exactly* why those textual variants are there – most are spelling differences, movable nus, or word order differences. The handful of places where there are difficult variants, they have no bearing on anything we believe as Christians.
 - **More facts we know about the Bible's transmission:** Plato's works – we only have copies of his works – our earliest copy of a work by Plato dates just prior to AD 900. Plato lived 350 years before Christ. That means, the *earliest* copy of Plato available to us was copied 1,250 years *after* the time of its original writing. What's ironic is that philosophy professors hardly blink an eye about the reliability of that text. And these very same people will question the reliability of the text of the NT – and we have pieces of the NT that date to within *50 years* of their original writing.
 - **FACT:** To question the reliability of the text of the NT is to say that we know absolutely *nothing* about the ancient world. Sir Fredrick Kenyon, a British [paleographer](#) and [biblical](#) and [classical](#) scholar who occupied from 1889 to 1931 a series of posts at the [British Museum](#) said, "The Christian can take the whole Bible in his hand and say without fear or hesitation that he holds in it the true word of God, handed down without essential loss from generation to generation throughout the centuries." No one who has spent *any time* studying the history of the transmission of the text of the Bible would ever make these kinds of ignorant conjectures.... Like Bill Nye just did in front of millions of people listening to him on-line.
 - **Application to your evangelistic and apologetic conversations** – learn to ask this simple question when you hear things like this: "Is that conjecture or *is there evidence that would show such a thing?*"
- ⇒ **People will say, 'We don't even know if Jesus existed!'** People will actually say, there is

no literary evidence that Jesus was ever a real person. When people say this, you need to learn to hold up your Bible and say, “there’s quite a bit in here.” And they’ll say, “that doesn’t count because the people who wrote it liked Jesus and favored his cause.” To which you will then respond: “There are biographies of Martin Luther King written by people who like him and favored his cause too. I guess he didn’t exist either.”

Remember the: **AICP** test: Arbitrariness, Inconsistency, Consequences, and Preconditions of Intelligibility. And we’ll press forward with more on these things in the coming Sunday nights.

Comments on the Nye Ham debate: One thing was crystal clear to me – Ken Ham owned his worldview, was aware of his worldview, and put it right on the table while Bill Nye owned his worldview and put it right on the table was comprehensively *unaware* that he had it. Remember “the pretended neutrality fallacy.” If you watched the debate, there was a part where Nye actually stood there with cameras rolling and said, “If you discover something that challenges accepted scientific theories and laws, you are embraced by the scientific community!” Uh, yeah right. Anyone here see the movie “Expelled”? What happens to qualified scientists and professors who dare to even suggest they think there might be something to the idea of “intelligent design” in the origin of life question? They are fired and blacklisted. Nye seems to be unaware of his own worldview – he really does believe he is neutral. And remember, Ham, being a good biblical Christian recognizes that when it comes to neutrality: “They aren’t, and you shouldn’t be.” Nye thinks he is neutral. Is he? Remember what he said about what would convince him that there might have been a global flood? “Something fossilized swimming up through the layers.” We have to be sharp enough to recognize that such statements are simply throwing up dust and mirrors. There is *nothing* that would cause Bill Nye to interpret what he sees in the natural world in a different way *except having his worldview changed*. But clearly, he could not see that.

Always remember, that debate was not about ice-core layers, fossils, or radiometric dating. It was about starting point, foundational commitments about reality, and worldviews. And when Ken Ham challenged Nye to justify his use of science by giving an account of the uniformity of nature, laws of logic, and more absolutes, Nye ran for the hills. There never has been an answer forthcoming from the atheistic worldview on those issues and the fact is, there never will be.

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2. Share the gospel – call people to repent and believe it. We will do several sermons on a very easy, simple, and effective way to share the gospel.
3. If they object or reject your message, find out what they do believe and then use the very simple directive from the Word of God (the “Don’t Answer, Answer” strategy):

Jude 1:24-25 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, [25] To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen.