



ALL SAINTS

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Defending the Faith: Presuppositional
Apologetics for the Person in the Pew
Week 2

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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

1) Apologetics, simply put, is the **defense** of the **Christian faith**.

2) “Apologetics is the vindication of the Christian **philosophy of life** against the various forms of the non-Christian **philosophy of life**.”

Review

3) Philosophy: “the most basic **beliefs, concepts,** and **attitudes** of an individual or group.”
Merriam-Webster Dictionary.

4) We can't **talk** someone into **believing** in Christ. **Faith** must come from God.

Review

5) 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.

6) Presupposition: “an **elementary assumption** in one's reasoning or in the process by which opinions are formed . . . a personal **commitment** that is held at the most **basic level** of one's network of beliefs.”

Review

7) 1 Peter 3:15 gives us a **command**: “in your hearts honor 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.” This command is for **all** Christians.

8) Our weapons are not **of the flesh**.

Review

9) To do apologetics well we must first learn to **think** like a Christian.

10) We must take **every** **though** **captive** to obey Christ.

11) We need to learn to **regiment** our thinking so that what God has revealed in his word becomes **foundational** and **presuppositional** for us in all that we do.

Review

12) The Bible is the **standard of truth** against which everything else must be judged.

13) They aren't **neutral** and you shouldn't be either.

Review

14) It is a fallacy that you have to start the conversation by assuming **not God**. To do so is to concede the unbeliever's presupposition.

15) Beginning with the **not God** assumption is also not a neutral position. It is an **anti-Christian** position which defies the very nature of reality. It defies the truth that is written on our hearts and on the face of creation itself.

Review

16) Remember: Nothing is **neutral**. Every proposition or idea or truth claim made by anybody in the history of the world is either grounded in **Biblical truth** or contrary to it.

17) Remember the world is at **war** with God. Peace only comes through submission to Christ. There is no **middle ground**.

Excursus: The Authority of Scripture

- The most basic presupposition we hold as orthodox Christians is that the Bible is true.
- The WCF begins with a chapter about the authority of scripture. This is logical, because scripture is the basis of the truths that the WCF goes on to explain.
- For over 100 years now, modernism and later secular materialism have challenged the authority of scripture.

Excursus: The Authority of Scripture

- Secular materialism just denies the authority of scripture outright. Not much to say about this other than that the atheist who claims the Bible has no authority knows better in his heart.
- We will learn how to answer such a person by exposing the glaring and unfounded assumptions of his worldview.

Excursus: The Authority of Scripture

- Modernism is different.
- Beginning in the late 19th century, as new scientific revelations emerged, exemplified by Charles Darwin's theories of evolution and descent of the species, some church leaders felt the need to reconcile Christian doctrine with these new ideas.

Excursus: The Authority of Scripture

- We started to see teaching elders in the presbyterian church denying the inerrancy of scripture as well as the bodily resurrection of Christ, the virgin birth, and other “super natural” elements of Christian doctrine.
- Note that once you abandon the inerrancy of scripture, the rest of those ideas tumble.

Excursus: The Authority of Scripture

- In 1910, 1916, and again in 1923, the General Assembly of the PCUSA (at the time the northern church), required that teaching elders hold to five doctrines in order to be ordained: the truth of Holy Scripture, the factuality of the virgin birth of Christ, his miracles, his sacrifice on Calvary to satisfy divine justice and reconcile us to God, and his resurrection.

Excursus: The Authority of Scripture

- In 1924, a meeting was held in Auburn, New York, which resulted in a heretical manifesto entitled the Auburn Affirmation.
- The Auburn Affirmation denied that it was necessary to believe the five doctrines in order to be a minister of the Word.
- It was ultimately signed by 1274 PCUSA teaching elders.

Excursus: The Authority of Scripture

“Furthermore, this opinion of the General Assembly attempts to commit our church to certain theories concerning the inspiration of the Bible, and the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection, and the Continuing Life and Supernatural Power of our Lord Jesus Christ. We hold most earnestly to these great facts and doctrines; . . . Some of us regard the particular theories contained in the deliverance of the General”

Excursus: The Authority of Scripture

“Assembly of 1923 as satisfactory explanations of these facts and doctrines. **But we are united in believing that these are not the only theories allowed by the Scriptures and our standards as explanations of these facts and doctrines of our religion**, and that all who hold to these facts and doctrines, whatever theories they may employ to explain them, are worthy of all confidence and fellowship.” Auburn Affirmation p.5.

Excursus: The Authority of Scripture

“The doctrine of inerrancy, intended to enhance the authority of the Scriptures, in fact impairs their supreme authority for faith and life, and weakens the testimony of the church to the power of God unto salvation through Jesus Christ. We hold that the General Assembly of 1923, in asserting that "the Holy Spirit did so inspire, guide and move the writers of Holy Scripture as to keep them from error," spoke without warrant of the Scriptures or of the Confession of Faith.” Auburn Affirmation p.3

Excursus: The Authority of Scripture

So if the scriptures are not inerrant, what would that mean?

It would mean that they are not authoritative.

It would mean they are not reliable.

It would mean they cannot be believed.

It would mean we cannot attain knowledge of God by the scriptures.

1 Co. 15: 14-17

14 And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. 15 More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.

John Calvin

“Not in vain, therefore, has he added the light of his Word in order that he might make himself known unto salvation, and bestowed the privilege on those whom he was pleased to bring into nearer and more familiar relation to himself. . . For as the aged, or those whose sight is defective, when any book, however fair, is set before them, though they perceive that there is”

John Calvin

“something written, are scarcely able to make out two consecutive words, but, when aided by glasses, begin to read distinctly, so Scripture, gathering together the impressions of Deity, which, till then, lay confused in their minds, dissipates the darkness, and shows us the true God clearly.” John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book I, ch. vi, para 1.

WCF 1:1

“Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men unexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of his will, which is necessary unto salvation. Therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal himself, and to declare that his will unto his church;”

WCF 1:1

“and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing: which maketh the Holy Scripture to be most necessary; those former ways of God’s revealing his will unto his people being now ceased.”

Excursus: 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.

Excursus: 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.

Excursus: 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*.

Excursus: 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.

WCF 1:5

“We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scripture. And the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is, to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man’s salvation, the many other incomparable”

WCF 1:5

“excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God: yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.”

Excursus: 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.

Introduction to Worldviews

- Everyone whether believer or unbeliever, takes things for granted.
- Everyone has those things which they no longer question but which they just assume.
- Standards by which they think they can discover more truth about the world.
- Everybody has a philosophy of life that tells them what the limits of reality, standards of discovery are, and what our methods should be.

Introduction to Worldviews

- In other words, everybody has got a **worldview**.
- The first week, we defined a worldview as another term for a philosophy of life. Today we are going to expand that definition a bit.
- First, let's remember what a presupposition is: “an elementary assumption in one's reasoning of in the process by which opinions are formed. . . a personal commitment that is held at the most basic level of one's network of beliefs.”

Introduction to Worldviews

- Here are some examples of presuppositions:
- There is a God (or not).
- Humans have a soul (or they don't)
- We can meaningfully know about God and how to relate to him.
- We can trust our senses to give us true information about what is going on around us.
- The physical world is going to operate the same way today that it did yesterday (e.g. gravity, laws of motion, etc.).
- Various moral beliefs (e.g. it is wrong to murder someone else).
- We can trust our memories (i.e. the world wasn't created this morning with false memories implanted).

Introduction to Worldviews

- So, given that, 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.**
- Everyone has a worldview and presuppositions whether he admits it or not.
- Consider that if you deny you have presuppositions, that probably just means they are even more deeply held.

Introduction to Worldviews

Imagine if you woke up this morning without any presuppositions. You would be asking yourself a lot of questions, and you would be unable to function:

- 1) Who am I?
- 2) What is real?
- 3) How do I know 1 and 2?
- 4) How should I live my life?

Introduction to Worldviews

- Everyone has presuppositions and worldview.
- 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. The **antithesis**.
- 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, and sensations. Without this we wouldn't be able to function.

Introduction to Worldviews

- E.g. when you take a bite of a hamburger, the taste reminds you of other, similar meals you have had. You have memories of those prior meals being pleasurable and nourishing, so you decide to take another bite. If the burger tasted rotten or foul, you would not take another bite.
- This all assumes that you can trust your senses to reliably communicate information to your mind about the world, and that the same sort of things taste the same way every time. A good burger always tastes like a good burger.
- You are also assuming that it is ethically acceptable to eat the flesh of an animal.

Introduction to Worldviews

- Because Christianity is a worldview, then 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.
- The claims of Christianity do not allow inconsistency.
- It is fundamental. It affects everything.

Introduction to Worldviews

So what are the questions a worldview needs to answer?

Three categories of philosophical questions: metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics.

Introduction to Worldviews

1) **Metaphysics**—the nature of reality, origins, who man is, and the nature of history.

a) What is man? Is he basically good or bad? What is his purpose?

b) What is the origin of the Universe?

c) What is the nature of history? Where is it all going?

Introduction to Worldviews

2) **Epistemology**—the study of knowledge and how we know what we know.

a) What is the nature of truth and objectivity?

b) How can we know anything? What does it mean to believe or know something?

c) What is the nature of science and reason? Can they be relied on?

Introduction to Worldviews

3) **Ethics**—the study of right and wrong, good and bad, moral responsibility and duty.

a) What is good? What is the standard of good and evil?

b) How do we evaluate our actions?

c) What are the nature of feelings of guilt, atonement, and personal peace?

d) What is the nature of the state and the social order and what should they be?

e) How does one attain and maintain good moral character?

Introduction to Worldviews

- These are the broad categories and topics that secular philosophers think about.
- God's revelation of himself to us by his Word and specifically in the Bible, gives us the answers to these questions.
- Our most basic presupposition is that the Bible is true.
- Read WSC questions: 1-21.

WSC

Q.1.What is the chief end of man? *A.Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.*

Q.2.What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him? *A.The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.*

WSC

Q.3.What do the Scriptures principally teach?

A.The Scriptures principally teach, what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.

Q.4.What is God? *A.God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.*

WSC

Q.5.Are there more Gods than one? *A.There is but one only, the living and true God.*

Q.6.How many persons are there in the Godhead? *A.There are three persons in the Godhead; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost;u and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.*

WSC

Q.7. What are the decrees of God? *A. The decrees of God are, his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.*

Q.8. How doth God execute his decrees? *A. God executeth his decrees in the works of creation and providence.*

WSC

Q.9.What is the work of creation? *A.The work of creation is, God's making all things of nothing, by the word of his power, in the space of six days, and all very good.*

Q.10.How did God create man? *A.God created man male and female, after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures.*

WSC

Q.11. What are God's works of providence? *A. God's works of providence are, his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions.*

Q.12. What special act of providence did God exercise towards man in the estate wherein he was created? *A. When God had created man, he entered into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of perfect obedience; forbidding him to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, upon pain of death.*

WSC

Q.13. Did our first parents continue in the estate wherein they were created? *A. Our first parents, being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the estate wherein they were created, by sinning against God.*

Q.14. What is sin? *A. Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God.*

WSC

Q.15. What was the sin whereby our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created? *A. The sin whereby our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created, was their eating the forbidden fruit.*

Q.16. Did all mankind fall in Adam's first transgression? *A. The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity; all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression.*

WSC

Q.17. Into what estate did the fall bring mankind?

A. The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery

Q.18. Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell? A. The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called original sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.

WSC

Q.19.What is the misery of that estate whereinto man fell? *A.All mankind by their fall lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever.*

Q.20.Did God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery? *A.God, having out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer.*

WSC

Q.21. Who is the Redeemer of God's elect? A. The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continueth to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one person, forever.

The Christian Worldview

- It is arbitrary to stop at question 21, but see the point: 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.

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.

