

Christ the Presuppositional Apologist

Introduction

In the previous two studies in this series on presuppositional apologetics, the first study introduced the main ideas and then, in the second study, the foundation of the Christian worldview was established. There are various approaches to apologetics but all others besides presuppositional boil down to the “evidence that demands a verdict” approach to apologetics that sets up the unbeliever as judge and jury of the evidence – which he is bound to misinterpret -- we know that he is bound to interpret all evidence in light of the presuppositions of his worldview. Other forms of apologetics end up presenting more and more evidence hoping to persuade the unbeliever at some point. But this approach never addresses the root of the problem. It is the unbeliever’s false presuppositions that are the problem.

That is, in the last analysis, the real question is: what are one's ultimate presuppositions? When man became a sinner, he made of himself instead of God the ultimate or final reference point. And it is precisely this presupposition, as it controls without exception all forms of non-Christian philosophy, that must be brought into question. If this presupposition is left unquestioned in any field, all the facts and arguments presented to the unbeliever will be made over by him according to his pattern. [Van Til. Christian Apologetics, Second Edition, p. 98]

In not challenging his basic presupposition with respect to himself as autonomous and well-qualified to interpret evidence, the cause of his misinterpretation is never addressed. And any god whose existence might be demonstrated by human reasoning is necessarily something other than the infinite, eternal, holy Triune God of Scripture. How can arguments from a fallen creation prove the existence of a holy God? By such an approach, then, we must understand, that we are placing the creature in the position of judge and jury over the truth of the existence of God and the truths of the gospel. Our approach must be to argue in reverse – because it is the unbeliever’s presuppositions which must be dealt with:

But this God cannot be proved to exist by any other method than the indirect one of presupposition. No proof for this God and for the truth of his revelation in Scripture can be offered by an appeal to anything in human experience that has not itself received its light from the God whose existence and whose revelation it is supposed to prove. One cannot prove the usefulness of the light of the sun for the purposes of seeing by turning to the darkness of a cave. The darkness of the cave must itself be lit up by the shining of the sun. When the cave is thus lit up each of the objects that are in it "prove" the existence and character of the sun by receiving their light and intelligibility from it. [Van Til, Cornelius. Christian Apologetics, p. 139]

And so, the Biblical method of apologetics is done in a two-step process based on Proverbs 26:4-5,

- (4) Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him.
 - (5) Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.
- (Proverbs 26:4-5)

In the second study we considered the foundation of the Christian worldview – the inerrancy of the original manuscripts – as the only necessary and sufficient ground for the Christian worldview which allows man to know God, himself and the creation. Paul wrote to Timothy that “All Scripture is QEOPNEUSTOS, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in

righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). I mentioned briefly that the doctrine of the inerrancy is only really consistent with the Reformed worldview because it presupposes the absolute sovereignty of God over the will of man. This is what we might call "jot and tittle sovereignty", as Jesus said that not one jot nor one tittle will by any means pass from the law till all is fulfilled (Matt 5:18). Also implicit in the idea of a written revelation are the twin ideas that God is the God of truth who reveals truth and that man is a creature capable of receiving, understanding and believing that revelation. Thus, from the idea of an inerrant Scripture we presuppose that we are made in His image and can think God's thoughts after Him.

It is Christ as God who speaks in the Bible. Therefore the Bible does not appeal to human reason as ultimate in order to justify what it says. It comes to the human being with absolute authority. Its claim is that human reason must itself be taken in the sense in which Scripture takes it, namely, as created by God and as therefore properly subject to the authority of God... The two systems, that of the non-Christian and that of the Christian, differ because of the fact that their basic assumptions, or presuppositions differ. [Van Til. A Christian Theory of Knowledge, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1969, pp. 15, 18, 43.]

And so, given our presuppositional approach, which is to begin with Scripture, we really are obligated to begin with Scripture in order to validate our understanding of the approach. If our considerations so far are not borne out by the examples given to us in the Bible, then we've gone beyond what is written. But if the apologetic examples we find in the Bible are of a presuppositional nature, then we have the most solid confirmation that this is the way, and that we should walk in it. And so we must consider the series of confrontations in which the Master Apologist – the Lord Jesus Christ – engages in apologetic discourse with his adversaries. We will be able to look at four examples of Jesus' apologetics which covers the majority of them. The format will be to examine the context, consider and analyze the accusation or argument brought in terms of its structure and presuppositions, and then consider Christ's response.

Case 1: Matt 12:1-7

The context: At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were hungry, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, "Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day." (Matthew 12:1-2)

The Jews had developed 39 categories of activities prohibited on the Sabbath (https://www.ou.org/holidays/the_thirty_nine_categories_of_sabbath_work_prohibited_by_law). Category 16 covers "reaping" and the prohibitions include "cutting or plucking any growing thing." And Category 18 covers "threshing" and the prime example given is the threshing grain to remove it from its husk.

The attack: The Pharisees said, "Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day." The main presupposition of the argument is that it is absolutely unlawful to pluck and eat grain on the Sabbath. The presupposition was not based on the Scriptures but on the traditions which had come from the elders. And the action of the disciples was explicitly allowed, in general, as the Scriptures clearly state that, "When you come into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbor's standing grain" (Deut 23:25). So the act itself

is not unlawful. On the other hand, the Pharisees would quote the law which says, “Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; in plowing time and in harvest you shall rest” (Exodus 34:21) which is an obvious call to rest from ordinary labor but does it directly address the situation at hand?

There is conflict here at a couple of levels – the first is a very important battle over the meaning and purpose of the Sabbath which was conducted over the entire ministry of Christ. But there is a deeper conflict in which the self-assumed authority of the Pharisees comes into conflict with the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The argument:

- P1: All plucking and eating of grain on the Sabbath is unlawful
- P2: Jesus’ disciples were plucking and eating grain on the Sabbath
- C: ∴ Jesus’ disciples were doing what was unlawful on the Sabbath

The further accusation is that, by not rebuking His disciples, the Lord was complicit in their unlawful behavior. Obviously, the ultimate target of the attack was Christ Himself and they called His sinlessness into question with an argument something like this:

- P3: Everyone who approves law-breaking is a law-breaker
- P4: Jesus approves of the law-breaking of His disciples
- C: Therefore, Jesus was a law-breaker

Their attempt is first and foremost an attack against the Lord. However, their attack is nothing but a house of cards since it depends on the assumed authority of men.

The Lord’s response:

The Lord directly confronts the false premise of their argument by giving two cases in which a given commandment’s jurisdiction was limited by another command of greater weight. He begins with the words, “Have you not read ...?” and then brings two cases in which there is an apparent conflict between a ceremonial commandment and a moral commandment. In both cases the conflict must be resolved in the context of an inerrant Scripture – that is, the Word of God is not “yes and no” but “yes and Amen” such that the law is ultimately one and self-consistent.

The story of David and his men coming to Ahimelech takes place on the Sabbath as is indicated by the fact that the fresh bread had been placed, 1 Samuel 21:5-6. David and the men with him had probably been without food for a few days since they had fled in haste from Saul without being able to take provisions with them. The showbread was replaced every Sabbath day and the removed bread itself was intended to be eaten by Aaron and his sons, the priests (Lev 24:8-9). So, there is an apparent conflict between the ceremonial law of the showbread and the moral law which requires the preservation of life. By refusing to give the bread to David and his men, Ahimelech would be violating the sixth commandment. Given that the showbread was ceremonial law and merely a shadow of good things to come but not the very image of the things (Heb 10:1) – not the thing itself – it gives way before the eternal moral law.

This first part of the Lord’s response, then, takes the presupposition of the Pharisees for the sake of argument and shows that the Scriptures condemns their conclusion. According to their presupposition,

they would have refused the showbread to David and his men and allowed the men to go hungry on the Sabbath rather than provide them with the food needed to support life. Scripture does not condemn David or Ahimelech for doing what would ordinarily be unlawful, whereas these men were condemning the disciples for doing what was ordinarily perfectly lawful. This is a brilliant answer to a fool according to his folly.

In the second part of his response, the Lord sets forth an even more devastating argument. He said, “Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?” (Matthew 12:5) The law appointed daily morning and evening sacrifices which were to be carried out on the Sabbath day as well. Numbers 28:9-10 required that “on the sabbath day two lambs of the first year without spot” were to be sacrificed and this is understood as the explicit command of God made with full-understanding of the Fourth Commandment. Thus, the very Word of God gives explicit commandment which for ordinary people would be sinful but not for the priest who performs the sacrifice. This argument has more force than the previous one because it is based on a principle embedded in the Word of God and not an individual case: temple worship observance takes precedence over ordinary Sabbath observance. This demonstrates to the Pharisees that, if their presupposition was strictly applied, temple worship could not take place on the Sabbath day in violation of the express commandment of God.

This first half of the response – these two Biblical arguments – answers a fool according to his folly by assuming the truth of the foolish presupposition and showing how it leads to unacceptable conclusions. But the Lord does not stop there. He proceeds to answer the fools NOT according to their folly by plainly asserting His own glory into the response. His argument runs like this: if the service of the temple is so great that the ordinary Sabbath rules are suspended for those who serve on the Sabbath, then if, as He proceeds to assert, “I say unto you, that in this place is *one* greater than the temple” (v. 6) how much greater is the privilege of his disciples to do what is necessary to serve Him on the Sabbath. He leaves the conclusion unstated but it is this: if priest who serve in the earthly temple are guiltless for doing what is ordinarily unlawful on the Sabbath day, these men who serve the Incarnate Son of God, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, could not possibly have guilt for doing out of necessity on the Sabbath that which was perfectly lawful on any day.

And this answer is not according to their folly. The Lord prefaces his remarks with the emphatic, “I say unto you ...” and bases His response on His own Incarnate Deity. For the temple is only great because of the presence of God within, and Christ reveals that He is the new temple, and then reveals that the law of the greater temple is based on grace, “I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.”

Case 2: Matt 12:22-29

Context: Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David? But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. (Matthew 12:22-23)

The accusation: Here, after the Lord casts out a demon from a man, the people were amazed and wondered out loud whether Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of David. The Pharisees heard the people in the crowd and rejected the idea that Jesus was the Christ. However they could not deny that a notable

miracle had occurred. The evidence was right before their eyes and it demanded a verdict. Evidence requires interpretation and interpretation is performed within a worldview. The Pharisees hated Christ and this is evident in the accusation they make against Him: “This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.”

The argument:

- P1: This man has cast out a demon
- P2: Only a greater power can cast out a lesser one
- P3: God and Satan are greater than all demons
- P4: This man casts out demons by either God or Satan
- P5: We reject that the man casts out demons by God
- C: Therefore, we say that this man casts out demons by Satan

Their logic is impeccable—they cannot deny that Jesus can heal the sick and cast out demons, and at the same time they cannot admit that God might be behind him. There is only one recourse: it is black magic. [Osborne, Grant R.. Matthew (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary), p. 675]

The Lord’s response:

The Lord does not become defensive when attacked. When he was reviled, He did not revile in return. When we are attacked, we either retaliate, become unresponsive or run away. This is the fight-or-flight response and you are probably familiar with it. We usually choose one of those three. This occurs to us in confrontations in marriage, for instance, and we often mishandle those situations because we succumb to the fight-or-flight impulse. But the Lord’s response is utterly marvelous in its application of presuppositional apologetics. He doesn’t become defensive and deny the accusation but rather assumes the truth of the offensive premise for the sake of argument. In other words, he steps into the worldview of his accusers in order to point out to them the absurd implications of their faulty presupposition.

Here the Lord begins His response by stating a basic truism, a neutral point, an elementary piece of wisdom: that “every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand” (Matthew 12:25). This is self-evident in that insofar as an entity is fighting against itself, it is destroying itself. There is no way to disagree with this statement and so the Lord proceeds: “And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?” (Matthew 12:26)

His first argument is as follows:

- P1: Every entity divided against itself destroys itself
- P2: If Satan casts out Satan, then Satan destroys his own kingdom
- P3: Satan does not destroy his own kingdom
- C: Therefore, Satan does not cast out Satan

This response begins with an acceptance of their premise for the sake of argument and proceeds to show the consequence of that premise. It implies that Satan is intentionally trying to destroy his own kingdom – an absurdity that the Pharisees could not accept.

His second argument is like the first in that it entertains the truth of the presupposition for the sake of argument. “And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore

they shall be your judges” (Matthew 12:27). “‘Let us suppose for a moment that you are right,’ he is saying, ‘then what follows in the case of the exorcists?’ There were apparently many who claimed to cast out demons and some of them could be characterized as *your sons*.” [Morris, Leon. The Gospel According to Matthew, pp. 315-316]. By accusing Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Satan, they were also accusing their own people of the same. But those would be able to testify that casting out demons was not a work of Satan. Therefore, they would judge the foolishness of the Pharisees’ outrageous accusation against Christ. It was utterly irrational and motivated by hatred.

And now, as in the previous case, he turns to the positive demonstration of the truth – the stage of not answering a fool according to his folly lest you also be like him (Prov 26:4). Jesus continues with an emphatic reference to Himself – “But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you” (Matthew 12:28). This conclusion follows from impossibility of the contrary – as He just patiently demonstrated – such that it is necessarily true that He casts out demons by the power of God.

And finally, the Lord finishes off this apologetic discourse with a very intriguing statement about the binding of Satan in order to plunder his house – “or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house” (Matthew 12:29) which is as if Christ had said, “the power by which I cast out demons is sovereign over Satan and the fact that I am plundering His house proves that he is bound.” And this asserts the truth of the sovereign propagation of the gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Case 3: Matt 22:15-22

Context: Jesus was in the temple teaching the people but the leaders of the Jews insisted on testing Him with various arguments to see if they could entrap Him with words into saying something that could be used against Him. That’s what we read, “Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk” (Matthew 22:15). In this case, the disciples of the Pharisees came with the Herodians to simulate a disagreement between two parties, one supporting Roman taxation and the other against the idea. The Jews were generally deeply nationalistic and rejected the idea of a foreign tax imposed on them. The Zealot, Judas the Galilean, had led a revolt against this tax in 6 AD. And it was this same nationalistic pride that led to the rebellion against Rome and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

The dilemma: Their idea is to present the Lord with a situation in which either way He answered would put Him in a bad light. This argument form is called a dilemma. They came to Him to ask, “Tell us therefore, What do you think? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?” (Matthew 22:17) They think that if Jesus answered “yes” the people could be turned against Him, since the Roman taxation was generally thought of as illegitimate. Jesus even had a Zealot among His disciples. But if He answered “no” then the Herodians would have been able to accuse Him of opposing Roman taxation and sedition.

The argument:

- P1: Either it is lawful to pay tribute to Caesar or it is not.
- P2: If Jesus says, “it is lawful” the people will resent Him
- P3: If Jesus says, “it is not lawful” we will accuse Him to Herod
- C: We got Him either way!

The Lord's response:

As before, "Jesus perceived their wickedness" and He let them know that He was aware that they were not asking their question honestly. He said, "Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?" (Matthew 22:18) His response indicates that it is not at all unlawful to pay the Roman tax, but he frames the answer in such a way as to remove the offense to the Jewish nationalists and rather turn it to His favor. For, the fundament presupposition of the Zealots is one of holiness to God and so Jesus asks to be shown a denarius.

Jewish copper coins did not have the emperor's likeness on them because the Jews were opposed to such images and inscriptions as idolatrous. However, silver and gold coins, such as needed to pay the Roman tax, contained the likeness of the emperor with the inscription, "Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus," which is idolatrous and offensive to the holiness of God and so to all God-fearing Jews. Jesus replied in a way that compressed the two parts of the apologetic response into a single statement: "Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22: 21).

And so, a careful analysis of the presuppositions of the Pharisees shows that they are inconsistent with their practice – no Jew separated unto holiness would keep such coins on Himself and such vile things are better returned to the source than kept in hand. Jesus expressed the truth of Rom 13:1, "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God" (Romans 13:1).

His reply, far from separating human obedience into two realms rather brings the realm of Caesar under the realm of God. In other words, Jesus' reply includes the idea that God is sovereign over Caesar. Jesus agrees that it is right to pay the tax because the coins themselves are idolatrous artifacts which the Jews should not even use. But, as Luke 16:14 says, "the Pharisees were lovers of money" and so, for them, to render all their Roman coins to Caesar would be to render unto God the glory that is His rightful due. So, with this response, Jesus completely turned the tables on the Pharisees by turning the presupposition of their argument against them.

Case 4: Matt 22:23-33

Context: Jesus was still in on the temple grounds where he had put the Pharisees to shame and we read that "the same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection" (Matthew 22:23). The Jewish historian, Josephus (b. 37 AD), wrote that the Sadducees reject everything that is not written in the Law of Moses [Antiquities of the Jews, XII, 10, 6], which is the Pentateuch, that is, the first five books of the Bible. Josephus also wrote that that the Sadducees "take away all forms of determinism entirely, and suppose that God is not concerned in our doing or not doing what is evil; and they say, that to act what is good, or what is evil, is at men's own choice, and that the one or the other belongs so to everyone, that they may act as they please. They also take away the belief of the immortal duration of the soul, and the punishments and rewards in Hades. [Wars of the Jews, II, 8, 14]

The dilemma: They present an argument which is intended to show the absurdity of the concept of the resurrection. Their argument is based on Deut 25:5 which they weave into a story of a woman who is successively married to each of seven brothers in accordance with the commandment of Moses. Their

main thrust is to suggest that since this woman was legally married to each of the seven brothers that the resurrection therefore requires polygamy (technically it is called polyandry where one woman has multiple husbands) which is contrary to the Law of Moses. Earlier in Matthew Jesus had interpreted the law of marriage to define marriage as between one man and one woman (Matt 19:4-6). Paul confirms that polyandry is excluded in Romans 7:2, where we read, “the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to *her* husband as long as he lives.” There is no allowance for multiple husbands per one wife.

So, the Sadducees’ argument presumes this stance against polygamy, which Jesus also accepted and by basing their argument on what Moses commanded, the Sadducees are trying to force Jesus into a no-win situation. They think that he must either deny the afterlife or accept polygamy.

The argument:

- P1: If there is a resurrection, a woman who had multiple husbands sequentially on earth (Deut 25:5) would have multiple husbands at once in the resurrection.
- P2: Polygamy is contrary to the Law of Moses
- C: Therefore, there is no resurrection.

They thought Jesus could by no means tell whose wife she should be and so imagined that they had set forth an invincible argument. However, we should note that there are some hidden presuppositions in this argument, which need to be made explicit:

- (i) that the resurrection biological life is to be just like this life;
- (ii) that marrying and giving in marriage will continue into that period.

These the two presuppositions are absolutely not found in Scripture and certainly nothing in the passage in Deut they appeal to supports it. The fact that marriage and children are needed in this life to continue the existence of the human race but, since there is no death following the resurrection, the idea of marrying and having children is inconsistent with the nature of that realm of existence.

The Lord’s response:

It is important to note what is different between this argument and the previous ones. In the earlier cases, the arguments had an explicit false presupposition which could be assumed by the apologist for the sake of argument. This argument begins with the Sadducees assuming the truth of Scripture “Moses said ...” and the truth of the resurrection for the sake of argument. The false presuppositions are smuggled in and need to be addressed directly – which is exactly what Jesus did. First, he addressed their most fundamental problem; Jesus said to them, “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God” (v. 29). For a people who had taken the Word of God to be the foundation of their worldview, their main problem was their incorrect interpretation of Scripture and their low view of God.

But he continued on to address the specific false presuppositions in their argument, “For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven” (v. 30). And with that assertion He defeats their argument completely. The assertion is the only possible position consistent with the reality of the resurrection which He goes on to demonstrate from Scripture.

Jesus graciously demonstrates the resurrection from the Law of Moses since the Sadducees did not recognize the Psalms and the Prophets as authoritative. The verse Jesus chose may seem surprising and even perplexing but the verse itself can be shown to presuppose the idea of the immortality of the soul.

But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. (Matthew 22:31-32)

God speaks in the present tense to Moses saying that He is the God of Abraham, etc. If He had said, I was the God of Abraham, etc., that would be a different story but He said I am the God of Abraham. This may seem subtle but if you heard someone say, “this is So-and-So’s house” you would have to presume that So-and-So is currently alive because dead people do not have possessions. If you heard “this was So-and-So’s house” you might ask whether So-and-So had moved or died because both are possible explanations for the past tense. But there is no other explanation of Scripture’s use of the present tense in this verse than the continued existence of the patriarchs. And so when God identified Himself at that moment as the God of Abraham, then the existence of Abraham – in covenant relation with God as a conscious person yet separated from his body – was absolutely asserted as well. As the Lord said in conclusion, “God is not the God of the dead but of the living.”

Jesus was able to defeat the clever argument of the Sadducees by examining the presuppositions which lay buried beneath the surface. Given that their argument was based on Scripture (Moses said ...) and also presupposed the truth of the resurrection (in the resurrection, whose wife will she be?), the conclusion that there is no resurrection would actually follow if their false premises were granted for the sake of argument. So that way is not open to the apologist. And so the Master Apologist proceeded directly to expose and contradict their false assumptions. That is how the Lord answered the fool according to his folly in this case. Then he proceeded to not answer the fool according to his folly and demonstrated from a portion of Scripture that the Sadducees would accept as authoritative – in an unexpected but powerful way. It is again a presuppositional argument – it doesn’t say explicitly anything about the resurrection. Nevertheless, exegetically, we must presuppose that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, etc. were alive to God – as the parallel verse in Luke puts it, “he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him” (Luke 20:38). This is an amazing argument that shows Christ’s use of Scripture and His “jot-and-tittle” form of inerrancy. It also shows His marvelous grace to those who oppose Him and therefore oppose themselves.

Conclusion

The general contention of presuppositional apologetics, that Scripture is sufficient and that the correct way to proceed is not to put the unbeliever in the judges seat and present more and more evidence to him so that he can make a verdict. We have examined four cases of Christ in confrontation with the leaders of His time to see what sort of apologetic approach Christ used. I have tried to make the case that the Lord was a master presuppositional apologist who brilliantly illuminated the approach outlined in Proverbs 26:4-5, as I have pointed out throughout the study. And this finding is consistent with our view of inerrant Scripture as the necessary and sufficient foundation of the Reformed worldview. We must model our apologetic after Christ – such that we think His thoughts after Him and walk as He walked in this world (1 John 2:6).

Jesus’ method of reasoning may be said to be indirect rather than direct. He does not make a direct appeal to evidence in order to resolve any disputes because, as we saw in the casting out of the demon, the interpretation of the evidence was the very thing in dispute. The Lord refused to present evidence in order for people to believe and certainly didn’t present MORE evidence to the Pharisees when they

blasphemously claimed that He was allied with Satan. As Van Til has helpfully pointed out, questions of this sort “must, in the last analysis, be settled indirectly. The Christian apologist must place himself upon the position of his opponent, assuming the correctness of his method merely for argument’s sake, in order to show him that on such a position the ‘facts’ are not facts and the ‘laws’ are not laws. He must also ask the non-Christian to place himself upon the Christian position for argument’s sake in order that he may be shown that only upon such a basis do ‘facts’ and ‘laws’ appear intelligible.” [Van Til, Cornelius. *Defense of the Faith*, pp. 144-145]

That is exactly what Jesus did when he engaged in apologetics – when He was attacked or arguments were brought against some aspect of the gospel. And this is what we must learn to do if we are to think His thoughts after Him. We must learn to do this when someone affirms something contrary to the gospel. With this approach Jesus’ opponents were all silenced, as it says in Matt 22:34, “the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence.” We might think that it is too hard for us to be able to rise to the level of the Master but, dear child of God, realize the weapon that is in your hand --

(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; (2 Corinthians 10:4-5)

Scripture says that we possess the weapons of our warfare and that these weapons are mighty to pull down stronghold and cast down imaginations. But we must learn how to use our weapons to accomplish these things. What we’ve seen from the approach of the Lord is that He does not attack the top of the high tower but pulls out the foundation of the ungodly stronghold and it collapses of its own weight.