

Understanding Christian Apologetics

Lesson 7: Taking the Roof Off

I. Testing a Person's Worldview¹

- A. It is often helpful to press an idea to its logical conclusions
 - 1. Some perspectives will lead to unusual or even absurd conclusions
 - 2. "If you help someone see in advance that the route his map recommends will actually lead him off a cliff, he might consider changing his course. He might even discover he is using the wrong worldview map altogether and exchange it for one that is more reliable." [143]
 - 3. Is the person really willing to live in a world where their ideas were consistently applied?
- B. Also known as *reductio ad absurdum* (reducing a point to its absurd conclusion or consequence)
- C. Using reality as our ally
 - 1. Anyone who rejects God is living on "borrowed capital" from the Christian worldview
 - 2. "No matter what a man may believe, he cannot change the reality of what is. As Christianity is the truth of what is there, to deny this, on the basis of another system, is to stray from the real world... It is impossible for any non-Christian individual or group to be consistent to their system in logic or practice... A man may try to bury the tension and you may have to help him find it, but somewhere there is a point of inconsistency... Down inside of himself man finds it easy to lie to himself. We, in love, looking to the work of the Holy Spirit, must reach down into that person and

¹ This lesson is drawn from chapter 10 of Gregory Koukl, *Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions*.

try to find where the point of tension is.”²

3. “Regardless of a man’s system, he has to live in God’s world... Every man has built a roof over his head to shield himself at the point of tension. At the point of tension the person is not in a place of consistency in his system, and the roof is built *as a protection against the blows of the real world*, both internal and external... The Christian, lovingly, must remove the shelter [the roof] and allow the truth of the external world and of what man is to beat upon him. When the roof is off, each man must stand naked and wounded before the truth of what is... He must come to know that his roof is a false protection from the storm of what is.”³

II. The Tactic of “Roof Removal”

- A. Three steps to follow in order to expose absurdity
 1. Step 1: adopt the other person’s position for the sake of argument
 2. Step 2: give the idea a “test drive” and try to determine where it would lead you if you followed it consistently
 3. Step 3: if you encounter a problem, point this out to the person and urge them to consider a different starting point
- B. Examples
 1. Mother Theresa appealed to governor of Californian to stay the execution of a double murderer, arguing that the governor should forgive because Jesus would do so
 - a) The basic claim in this argument is that it is wrong to execute criminals since Jesus would forgive them
 - b) If this line of reasoning was consistently applied, no crime could ever be punished

² Francis Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, in *The Complete Works of Francis Schaeffer*, 1:132, 133, 135.

³ Francis Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, in *The Complete Works of Francis Schaeffer*, 1:138, 140, 141.

- c) Shows that while it is true that Jesus offers forgiveness to anyone who will come to him, this does not mean that it is wrong for the state to punish criminals
2. Read Matthew 12:24-28
- a) The Pharisees claimed that Jesus was casting out demons by the power of Satan
 - b) If this is true, then Satan is casting out Satan and opposing his own kingdom
 - c) Shows that Jesus' power must not come from Satan but from God, since God opposes Satan
3. It is becoming increasingly popular to argue that homosexuality is morally acceptable because some people have a natural "orientation" toward homosexuality
- a) The basic claim here is that any natural tendency is morally acceptable
 - b) If this is true, then it is okay for people who have natural tendencies toward gay-bashing or pedophilia or alcoholism to act on such impulses
 - c) Shows that the claim that a person has a natural impulse toward a behavior does not make that behavior morally justifiable
4. Proponents of abortion sometimes argue that abortion should be kept legal in order to prevent future child abuse
- a) The basic claim here is that the likelihood of child abuse justifies taking the life of an unborn child to prevent him from having to experience that abuse
 - b) If this is true, then it should also be justifiable to take the life of a two-year old child in order to save him from future

abuse

- c) Shows that the same moral rules apply to all children, whether they are inside or outside the womb
5. Some people argue that those who contend that homosexuality is wrong are guilty of creating a climate of hate that leads to violence against homosexuals
- a) The basic claim here is that anyone who says that a particular behavior is wrong is encouraging people to act violently against anyone who engages in that behavior
 - b) If this is true, then those who condemn people who contend that homosexuality is wrong are guilty of creating a climate of hate that leads to violence against such people
 - c) Shows that it is impossible to live in a world where people are not permitted to make any moral distinctions
6. People sometimes argue against arguments based upon biblical passages by saying, 'That's just your interpretation'
- a) The basic claim here is that all interpretations are equally valid
 - b) If this is true, then you would be justified in "interpreting" the claim that all interpretations are valid to mean that this person thinks that all Jews and homosexuals should be executed
 - c) Points out that we all believe that some interpretations are clearly better than others
 - d) Don't let the 'That's just your interpretation' argument shut down the conversation; ask the person to show you what he believes to be the error in your interpretation of the particular passage under consideration