



ALL SAINTS

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Defending the Faith: Presuppositional Apologetics for the Person in the Pew *Week 5*

July 2, 2023

Matt Fender

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.

In a Nutshell

“We don’t conclude God, we start with God.
And we show them that if you don’t start with
God, your worldview is absurd.” Sye Ten
Bruggencate

https://youtu.be/aQKjUzotw_Y

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: Worldviews

- 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.
- 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.

Review: Worldviews

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

Review: 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.

Review: 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 then how they know most facts e.g. existence of the chair they are sitting in.

Review: Arguing From Morality

- In this class, 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**.

Review: 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?”

Review: 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.

Review: 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.

Review: 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.
- Perhaps 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.

Review: 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?

Review: Proverbs 26:4-5

- 4 Answer not a fool according to his folly,
lest you be like him yourself.
- 5 Answer a fool according to his folly,
lest he be wise in his own eyes.

Colossians 2:6-10

6 Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, 7 **rooted and built up in him** and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. 8 See to it that no one takes you captive by **philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.** 9 For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, 10 and you have been filled in him, who is the **head of all rule and authority.**

The Problem of Evil

- “Is God impotent, or is he a sadist?”
- This is a capsule summary of the problem of evil.
- To spell it out more, we can ask it like this: If God is real, and if he is all powerful, and if he is perfectly good, why is there evil in the world?
- This is a very common objection from the skeptic/atheist.

The Problem of Evil

- We will demonstrate that the problem of evil is not really a logical problem for the Christian.
- It does not expose some kind of logical flaw in the Christian worldview.
- But for many people it may be a psychological and emotional one.

The Problem of Evil: Bahnsen

“In my experience, the most popular argument urged against Christianity is ‘the problem of evil.’ Unbelievers declare the the Christian worldview is logically inconsistent since it holds that God is powerful enough to prevent evil, that God is good enough not to want evil, and yet that evil exists. Suppose one asks, ‘How can you believe in a God who permits child molestation to take place?’ The believer and the unbeliever apparently agree that molesting innocent children is morally outrageous and objectively wrong. But Van Til would ask what ‘reference point’ (final standard, authority) is necessary to make this moral judgment ‘intelligible.’”

The Problem of Evil: Bansen

“Surely no autonomous or unbelieving presupposition or fundamental outlook will suffice, since each one, upon analysis, reduces to subjectivism in ethics, in which case child molestation could not be condemned as absolutely or objectively immoral, but simply taken as generally not preferred. Notice also that the usual presentations of the apparent contradiction within Christian premises about God omit the equally important premise that God always has a morally sufficient reason for the suffering and evil He foreordains. With the addition of that biblical premise, there is no *logical* problem of evil left.”

The Problem of Evil: Bansen

“Everyone struggles *psychologically* to take God on his word here, to be sure, but that is different from there being an intellectual incongruity within the Christian faith. Unbelievers will not give up their psychological resistance to that premise until God offers his rationale for evil to them for inspection and approval—which is subtle but incontestable evidence that they beg the question, holding that God cannot be proven to be the final authority” until *they* are first acknowledged as the final authority.” Greg Bahnsen, *Van Til’s Apologetic* 525-26 n.127.

The Problem of Evil

1. God is all powerful.
2. God is perfectly good.
3. **God always has a morally sufficient reason for the suffering and evil he foreordains.**

Once we line these three premises up, there is no logical problem of evil.

The Problem of Evil

- But the skeptic will find this unsatisfying.
- He won't believe unless he himself can examine God's rationale.
- The skeptic won't concede the existence of a God who is the ultimate authority of truth until the skeptic himself gets to judge whether God's rationale is sufficiently good.
- This makes the skeptic his own ultimate authority.

Job 31

In Job 31, Job makes his complaint for the evil that has befallen him.

4 Does not he see my ways
and number all my steps?

5 “If I have walked with falsehood
and my foot has hastened to deceit;

6 (Let me be weighed in a just balance,
and let God know my integrity!)

Job 38

Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said:

2 “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?

3 Dress for action like a man;

I will question you, and you make it known to me.

4 “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?

Tell me, if you have understanding.

5 Who determined its measurements—surely you know!

Or who stretched the line upon it?

6 On what were its bases sunk,

or who laid its cornerstone,

7 when the morning stars sang together

and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

Job 40

3 Then Job answered the LORD and said:

4 “Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer you?

I lay my hand on my mouth.

5 I have spoken once, and I will not answer;
twice, but I will proceed no further.”

Job 41

Then Job answered the LORD and said:

2 “I know that you can do all things,
and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

3 ‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’
Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.

4 ‘Hear, and I will speak;
I will question you, and you make it known to me.’

5 I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear,
but now my eye sees you;

6 **therefore I despise myself,
and repent in dust and ashes.”**

The Problem of Evil

- The other argument we must never forget when answering the problem evil is the TAG.
- The skeptic's argument looks like:
 - Christians claim God perfectly good and powerful enough to prevent evil.
 - But there is evil in the world.
 - Therefore the Christian claims about God are false.
- We must respond by asking what presuppositions must be true for “there is evil in the world” to be meaningful.

The Problem of Evil

- What presuppositions must be true for “there is evil in the world” to be meaningful?
- It requires there to be some standard by which to measure what is evil.
- Otherwise one person’s perceived evil might be someone else’s asserted good.
- And without ultimate authority (which must be transcendental) there is no standard by which to judge.



tj @tj10001110101 · 45m



Replying to [@DrFrankTurek](#)

There's no such thing as sin, the sinful nature, original sin, ... Sin is a fictional concept designed to make people feel weak. The Bible is nothing more than a collection of campfire stories and legends passed down for generations before people finally wrote them down.





Dave Langer

@davelanger2k


Replying to @ChristianDexy and @GodlessLiz

All morality is subjective. Even if you believe your morality comes from a god, gods morality is still that gods subjective opinion.

10:45 PM · 26 Jan 23 · **322** Views

1 Retweet **9** Likes

God does not exist

I've always been an atheist as I was born into an atheist family and thank  for that, but in recent years I've got further to the point where I even get annoyed/sometimes angry when people mention their belief in god and I think they are stupid. Especially when I combat them and they say I'm "lost". Idk if I'm justified in this hatred. You could say I'm not but I don't really care. Just thought I'd give my thoughts.



86



47



Share



Award



Outlaw11091 11h


Religion causes harm. Granting a-moral people an excuse to lie about being normal. Like, "Oh, I could kill you, but then I'd go to Hell."

That's not the reason you shouldn't murder someone. If you need a sky wizard to tell you that, then there's something wrong with you.

Further, a lot of religions allow sinners in if they 'just accept' x God. Imagine all the death row inmates that got their last rites. They're all going to heaven, too.

Like I said in another post, I look forward to the void.



AlanaEvans....  @alanaeva... · Nov 7 ...

Replying to @TaylorRMarshall @ShefferHeffer
and @elonmusk

Ban Religion on Twitter. @elonmusk



10



9



129



Scott Cranny @ScottCranny · Nov 7 ...

Replying to @alanaevansxxx
@TaylorRMarshall and 2 others

Religion 1 of the 3 biggest evils in the world
that makes some people become so
pompous & righteous that they think they
have the right to judge others as they believe
what they're doing is the "right" way or
"god" way.



Tony Soprano

@OhhGabagool

Replying to [@AtheistsL](#) and [@gas_drinking2](#)

Yet Christians still can't prove the existence of god.

Your entire religion is built upon a woman cheating on her husband, and claiming it was a gift from god. Think about it.

12:41 PM · 30 Nov 22 · [Twitter for Android](#)



Abraham Piper

@abrahampiper

An argument means having premises that lead to a conclusion, right?

If you offer premises that lead to the conclusion of god, then you've made god contingent.

Uh-oh.

5:57 PM · 29 Nov 22 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)

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Beat the Cult

@BeatTheCult



The Bible tells a story of two sisters who couldn't find husbands to impregnate them, so they got their father drunk and had sex with him instead.

12:54 PM · 23 Nov 22 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)

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HUNTER AVALLONE

@HunterAA6



God hasn't made himself known in any provable way

To be a Christian faith is necessary

Faith is unjustified belief

Clinging to unjustified belief is irrational

Therefore, to be a Christian means to be inherently irrational



sid



@lilbabygandhi



Therapy has stripped religion of any remaining utility. Stop finding God and start finding a therapist to help you grapple with the despair that arises from being alive.

7:05 PM · 3/25/22 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)

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Christopher Hitchens

@Hitch_Slapping

Follow

"When someone stands up and says, 'I am a person of faith,' they shouldn't get respect for it. They think that's a respect-producing statement: 'I am a person of faith.' In other words, 'I am a person who will believe practically anything on no evidence at all.'"



7

↻ 3

♡ 192





Leigh Zemski @LeighZemski · 1d

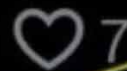


Replying to @TDisputations @henri_mourant and @Jaydon225

Oh, so the ark tale is 'just a story'?

Great work, you just opened up the possibility of the entire bible being 'just a story' or otherwise not literally true.

How do you tell the difference between the 'true' parts and the 'just a story/metaphor' parts?



Matt Fender

@matidfender



Atheist since 2017



@2017Ath... · Jun 10



Cor

Mod

Mess



Critical Thinking FTW

@Critical_FTW



Organized religion is, by far, the greatest evil ever invented by man.

12:51 AM · Jan 24, 2023 · **929** Views

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✕

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Occam's Battleaxe @OccamsBattleaxe · Apr 5, 2022

Being an "expert" theologian is basically like being an expert in Lord of the Rings. Yes, it's rather impressive that you actually understand the fine details of the Silmarillion, and yes, I see you are a recognized expert, but ultimately it's all a glorified book report.

 72

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THE ROAD TO ATHEISM

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