

# APOLOGETICS: GIVING A REASON FOR OUR HOPE

TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (PCA)  
FALL 2017

# REVIEW & PREVIEW

- What Is Apologetics?
- What are the three aspects of apologetics?
- Why do apologetics?
- Biblical foundations for apologetics
- The importance of worldviews in apologetics

# BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR APOLOGETICS

- The Bible and apologetics
  - Who should engage in apologetics and how
  - What we're defending in apologetics
  - What our goals should be in apologetics
  - What are methods should be in apologetics
  - What our attitude should be in apologetics
    - Much more than simply, "Do apologetics!"

# BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR APOLOGETICS

- The Biblical Mandate for Apologetics: Does the Bible require us to do apologetics?
  - Argument: The Bible exhorts Christians, in so far as they are able, to do apologetics.
    - Two exhortations to do apologetics
    - Two examples of apologetics

# BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR APOLOGETICS

- Exhortation #1: 1 Peter 3:15: *“but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense [apologia] to anyone who asks you for a reason [logos] for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect...”*
  - What is the exhortation?
  - What do the words “being prepared” [ready] imply?
  - What characterizes our apologetic?
  - What is the context? *Christians suffering for their faith, persecuted for their beliefs: “Why do you believe this?” (3:14-17)*
  - Who is the intended audience of the defense? Unbelievers who ask why you have hope despite the suffering you experience.

# BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR APOLOGETICS

- What is the exhortation?
- What do we contend for?
- What is the significance of the phrase “*the faith*”?
- What is the context? *The threat of false teachers within the church.*
- Who is the audience? *Believers. Protecting the church against false teachers.*

# BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR APOLOGETICS

- Summary of the two exhortations
  - Apologetics is mandated by Scripture
  - Apologetics involves honoring Christ the Lord in our hearts
  - Apologetics requires being prepared to make a defense
  - Apologetics is giving a reasoned defense of Christian hope in the face of suffering

# BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR APOLOGETICS

- Summary of the two exhortations (cont.)
  - Apologetics is characterized by gentleness and respect
  - Apologetics is directed to unbelievers
  - Apologetics involves struggling and fighting
  - Apologetics defends the faith once for all delivered to the saints
  - Apologetics combats false teaching in the church
  - Apologetics guards the church from dangerous doctrine



# BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR APOLOGETICS

- Example #1: John 20:30-31: *“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup> but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”*
  - What is John’s purpose?
  - What is the evidence John uses? The apostolic testimony to Jesus’ miracles (signs), teaching, death and resurrection.

# BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR APOLOGETICS

- Example #2: the Apostle Paul
  - Summary of Paul's example: he reasoned with Jews and Gentiles in order to persuade them to believe the gospel.

# BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR APOLOGETICS

- Example #2: the Apostle Paul
  - Acts 17:2, 17 [Thessalonica]: “And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, [opening up completely and demonstrating] that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and rise from the dead, and saying ‘This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.... So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there.”

# BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR APOLOGETICS

- Example #2: the Apostle Paul
  - Acts 17:21-34 [Athens]
    - Note: Paul's approach was person variable (Jews & Gentiles)

# BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR APOLOGETICS

- Example #2: the Apostle Paul
  - Acts 18:4: “And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.”
  - Acts 18:19: “And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there, but he himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.”

# BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR APOLOGETICS

- Acts 19:8-9: “And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. <sup>9</sup> But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus.”
  - When Paul’s message was rejected, he didn’t change his methods. He went elsewhere and tried to reason with and persuade others.

# BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR APOLOGETICS

- Acts 24:25: “And as he reasoned about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment, Felix was alarmed and said, "Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity I will summon you.”
  - Paul’s method was not just to preach, but to reason with his audience
  - His method of reason varied: sometimes directly from Scripture, sometimes from general revelation (Acts 17)

# BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR APOLOGETICS

- 2 Corinthians 10:4-5: “For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. <sup>5</sup> We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ...”
  - Apologetics is a spiritual battle which takes place on the intellectual level; Paul engaged and destroyed *arguments* and *opinions* raised against God.
  - Discussion: Where do you see defense and offense in these verses?



# BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR APOLOGETICS

- Summary of the two examples
  - Apologetics is done so that others may come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God
  - Apologetics offers positive reasons to believe (John's Gospel, "signs")
  - Apologetics involves reasoning from Scripture
  - Apologetics involves reasoning from general revelation

# BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR APOLOGETICS

- Summary of the two examples
  - Apologetics is person variable
  - Apologetics seeks to persuade people, not just win an argument
  - Apologetics will involve speaking boldly about the kingdom of God
  - Apologetic weapons are not physical, but have divine power
  - Apologetics plays offense and defense
  - Apologetics takes thinking captive to obey Christ the Lord

# WORLDVIEWS IN APOLOGETICS

- What are we defending? The Christian worldview
  - Why this is important: We need to understand the Christian worldview for two reasons
    - (1) We need to know what we're defending
    - (2) We need to conduct our defense in a distinctively Christian manner, within the context of a Christian worldview and consistent with a Christian worldview

# WORLDVIEWS IN APOLOGETICS

- What's a worldview?
  - *James Anderson, "A network of ultimate beliefs, ideas, values and assumptions about the universe and our place in it that shapes how a person understands their life and experiences (and the lives and experiences of others) and how that person acts in response."*
  - *A worldview is a person's intellectual framework for understand and interpreting the world*

# WORLDVIEWS IN APOLOGETICS

- Some things to know about worldviews
  - Everyone has a worldview – whether they know it or not
    - Often a person's beliefs are unrecognized or unarticulated; they are often background assumptions that predispose a person (“belief dispositions,” something you are disposed to believe if an issue confronted you)
    - Part of the task of apologetics is to bring these beliefs to the surface and examine them

# WORLDVIEWS IN APOLOGETICS

- Some things to know about worldviews
  - A worldview involves “big question” beliefs
    - Is there a God? What is God like? What is the origin of human life? What is the meaning of life? What is good?
    - By implication, your answers to those big questions reveals your worldview

# WORLDVIEWS IN APOLOGETICS

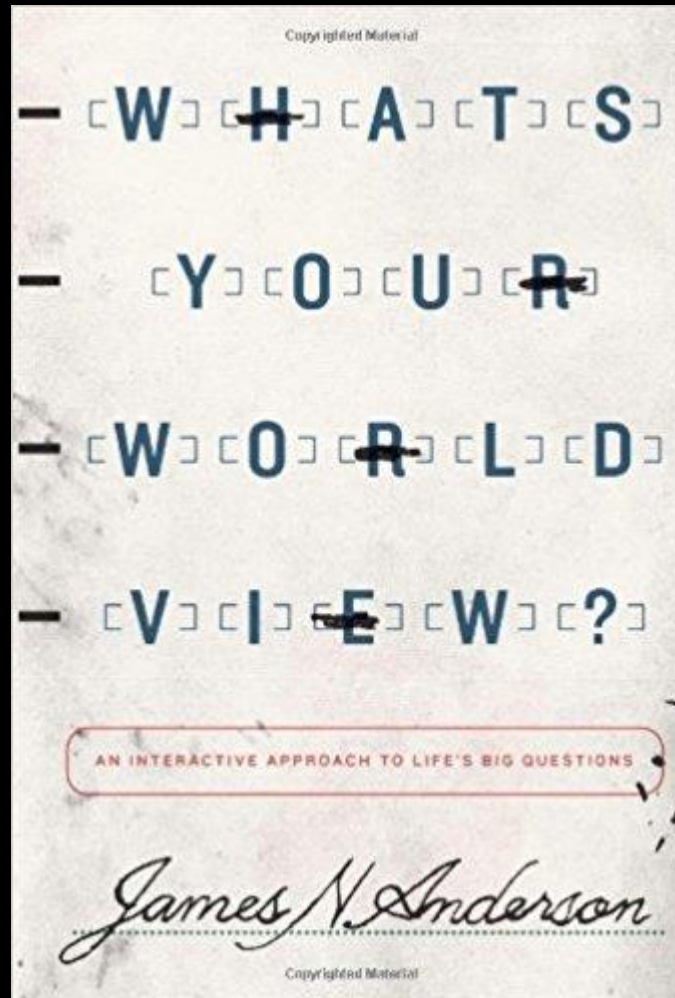
- Some things to know about worldviews
  - A worldview functions like an intellectual filter or a pair of spectacles
  - People form beliefs by relying on their worldview
    - Example: the evolutionists vs. creationists examining the same evidence
      - How is it that you can have intelligent, well-informed people who interpret the data so differently?
      - Answer: fundamentally different worldviews (a worldview that rules out a personal, supernatural God, then inevitably you're going to end up with something like the theory of evolution)
      - Worldviews affect how people evaluate something as "objective" as scientific theories

# WORLDVIEWS IN APOLOGETICS

- Worldviews largely determine a person's beliefs and opinions
  - Example: a member of the church is critically ill and doctors don't know what the problem is.
    - What does the church do?
    - The member recovers, doctors can't explain it.
    - How do Christians interpret the recovery?
    - How does your atheist friend interpret the recovery when you tell them about it?
      - "There is a scientific explanation for what happened; we just don't know what it is."
  - Note: the facts are agreed, but the conclusions are radically different. What explains the difference?
    - Worldview! Background beliefs about God, the nature of the universe, why things happen the way they do



# BOOK RECOMMENDATION



# WORLDVIEWS IN APOLOGETICS

- Some things to know about worldviews
  - Worldviews can be categorized and analyzed according to basic types
    - Worldviews can be categorized according to their major tenets and themes (analogy: models of a car)
      - The Christian worldview, the Atheist worldview, the Muslim worldview, etc.

# WORLDVIEWS IN APOLOGETICS

- Some things to know about worldviews
  - A person's worldview can change, but large scale changes are difficult
    - To change minor parts of your belief system is relatively easy, but to change the entire framework of your belief system is hard
  - Worldviews are like houses
    - Moving furniture around isn't a big deal, but moving to another house is a dramatic change
    - The longer you live in the same house, the more comfortable you get
    - The task of apologetics: showing the unbeliever that the house they're living in is unfit and dangerous to live in (crumbling foundation)

# WORLDVIEWS IN APOLOGETICS

- Some things to know about worldviews
  - A conversion to the Christian faith involves an entire transformation of worldview and requires ongoing transformation

# WORLDVIEWS IN APOLOGETICS

- Some things to know about worldviews
  - A comprehensive worldview includes its own standards for evaluating truth claims
    - A view of the world will include beliefs and assumptions about: How can we know something is true? How should we evaluate evidence? How should we analyze truth claims? What is reasonable and what is unreasonable? What is possible and what is impossible? What is probable and what is improbable?

# WORLDVIEWS IN APOLOGETICS

- Some things to know about worldviews
  - A comprehensive worldview includes its own standards for evaluating truth claims
    - Another way of putting it: The ultimate standards for evaluating truth claims are not independent of a person's worldview; they are part of worldview itself.
      - A world-and-life view contains ideas about what is rational, true, or even possible

# WORLDVIEWS IN APOLOGETICS

- Some things to know about worldviews
  - A comprehensive worldview includes its own standards for evaluating truth claims
    - Some implications
      - Apologetics encounters are really two opposing worldviews in conflict
      - Therefore, simply pointing to “the facts” doesn’t get to the main issue – the person’s faulty worldview
      - Facts and evidence are interpreted through a person’s worldview, so at some point apologetic discussions have to address that person’s worldview and therefore the very way they evaluate truth claims
      - Apologetics shows that non-Christian worldviews fail by their own standards

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# THE IMPORTANCE OF WORLDVIEW AWARENESS

1. Worldviews serve as the necessary foundation/framework for our thoughts and actions
2. Our worldviews are the single greatest influence on the way we interpret our experiences and respond to those experiences
  - Example: Planned Parenthood – a great service to women and defender of women’s rights or an institution that provides a killing service?

# THE IMPORTANCE OF WORLDVIEW AWARENESS

3. Christians are called to think 'Christianly'—to apply a Christian worldview to all of life
  - We are called to think in a Christian way about everything; discipleship involves learning a Christian worldview and what it means to apply Christianity to all of life
4. Every religion reflects a worldview and every secular ideology reflects a worldview
5. One of the most fruitful and effective ways to engage with non-Christian religions and ideologies is to think of them in terms of the worldviews they reflect

# WHY THINK IN TERMS OF WORLDVIEW?

1. It helps us to understand why people see the world as they do
  - Everyone recognizes there are fundamental disagreements about important issues. The question is why? Why do some people think evolution is certain while others reject it? Why do some think abortion is a basic human right and others think it is murder? Why do some celebrate a transgender person competing in the Olympics while others think it is insane?
2. It helps us to make meaningful comparisons between different religions and ideologies
3. It helps us to make reasoned evaluations of different religions and ideologies
4. It helps us to have constructive conversations with unbelievers

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# WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE A WORLDVIEW: ANALYZING WORLDVIEWS (JAMES ANDERSON)

- **Theology:** fundamental beliefs about God and about ultimate reality
- **Anthropology:** fundamental beliefs about *humans* (origins, nature, purpose)
- **Knowledge:** fundamental beliefs about *knowledge and truth* (how, whether, what)
- **Ethics:** fundamental beliefs about *goodness and morality* (source, nature, goal)
- **Salvation:** fundamental beliefs about the *basic human problem and its solution*

# WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE A WORLDVIEW: ANALYZING WORLDVIEWS (JAMES ANDERSON)

- Theology: fundamental beliefs about God and about ultimate reality
  - Is there God? What is God like? How does God relate to the world (transcendent, in the world, pantheism)? How does God relate to human beings? How does God relate to me?

# WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE A WORLDVIEW: ANALYZING WORLDVIEWS (JAMES ANDERSON)

- Anthropology: fundamental beliefs about *humans* (origins, nature, purpose, etc.)
  - Where do we come from? What are human beings (image of God or unintended products of evolution)? Are we just physical beings or embodied souls? Are we special or unique in any way? Do we exist for a particular purpose? Are we basically good, basically bad or something in-between?

# WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE A WORLDVIEW: ANALYZING WORLDVIEWS (JAMES ANDERSON)

- **Knowledge:** fundamental beliefs about *knowledge and truth* (whether, what, how, etc)
  - Can we know anything at all? What can we know about God? What can we know about the universe? How do we know what we know? What is the best kind of knowledge (scientific or its not true)? Are there any limits to knowledge? What are the best ways to improve and expand our knowledge?

# WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE A WORLDVIEW: ANALYZING WORLDVIEWS (JAMES ANDERSON)

- Ethics: fundamental beliefs about *goodness* and *morality* (source, nature, goal, etc.)
  - What is the highest and ultimate good? Is morality real or illusory (claim of evolution)? Is morality objective or subjective? Are there any moral absolutes? If morality is always relative, what is it relative to? How do we know what is right or wrong? Why should we try to be good anyway? Are we accountable to anything or anyone for the way we live?

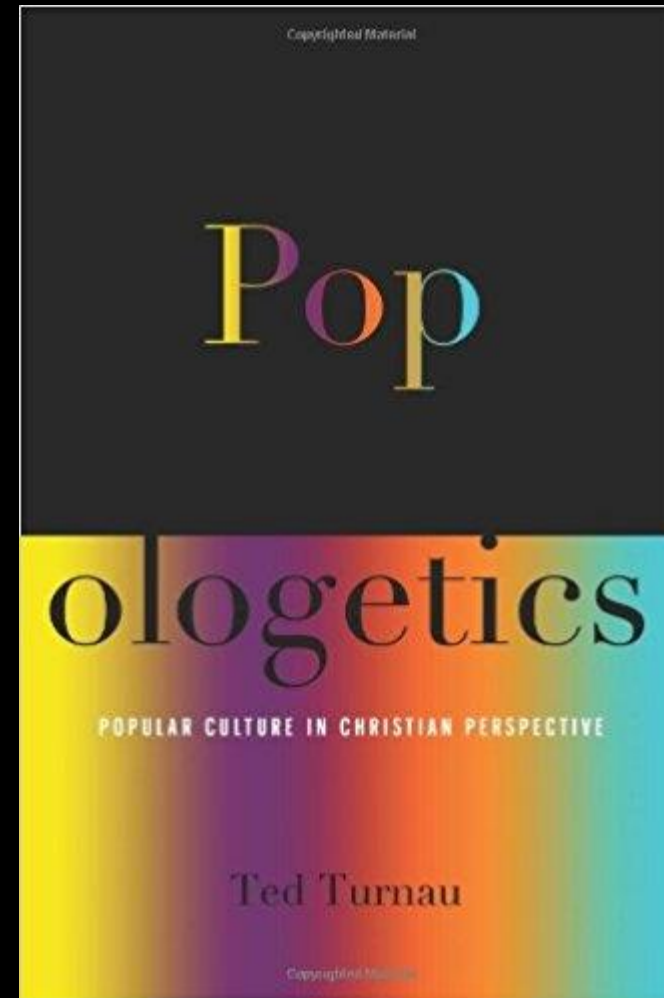
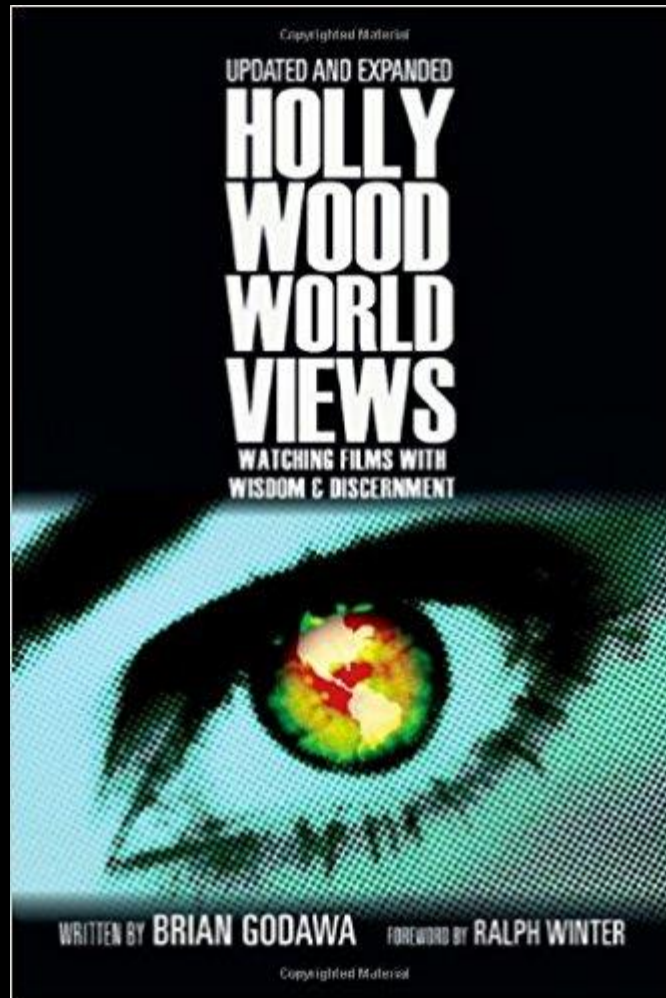
# WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE A WORLDVIEW: ANALYZING WORLDVIEWS (JAMES ANDERSON)

- **Salvation:** fundamental beliefs about the *basic human problem and its solution*
  - What is humanity's most serious problem (extinction, hatred and bigotry)? What (if anything) is the solution? Are there multiple solutions? What part (if any) do we have to play? What part (if any) does God have to play? What are the prospects for the problem being solved?

# ANALYZING WORLDVIEWS

- Note that these five areas are closely interrelated
  - Discussion: How does your understanding of God shape the other areas?
- Four ways to identify a person's worldview
  1. Pay close attention to what the person says
  2. Pay close attention to how the person lives
  3. Consider the person's upbringing and education
  4. Ask direct questions in a wise way

# BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS





# PREVIEW OF NEXT WEEK

- The Christian Worldview
  - Theology
  - Anthropology
  - Knowledge
  - Ethics
  - Salvation
- Implications of a Christian worldview for apologetics