

APOLOGETICS: GIVING A REASON FOR OUR HOPE

TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (PCA)

FALL 2017

CLASS OUTLINE

- What Is Apologetics? Why Do Apologetics?
- Biblical Foundations for Apologetics
 - Understanding Worldviews
- Approaches to Apologetics
- The Reformed-Worldview Approach to Apologetics
 - Principles & Practice
- Specific Issues in Apologetics
 - The Existence of God
 - The Authority of the Bible
 - The Problem of Evil and Suffering
 - The Resurrection of Jesus Christ
 - The Sexual Revolution
 - Science and Faith

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*
- Knowledge: fundamental beliefs about *knowledge and truth*
- Ethics: fundamental beliefs about *goodness and morality*
- Salvation: fundamental beliefs about the *basic human problem and its solution*

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Big Idea: The Christian worldview has implications both for *what* we defend (the content of our apologetic) and for *how* we defend it (the method of our apologetic).
 - We want to defend the Christian worldview with a Christian worldview. Our apologetics should be distinctly Christian.
 - Some apologetic approaches turn out to not be consistent with the Christian worldview.
- What it TAKES to make a Christian worldview
- Why think about a Christian worldview?
 - (1) Not everyone is used to thinking about Christianity as a comprehensive worldview
 - (2) So that we know exactly what we are defending
 - (3) So that we can think about how the Christian worldview affects how we do apologetics

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Anthropology (created, fallen, redeemed, glorified)
 - The Christian worldview has a distinct view of man (origin, purpose, problem, solution)
 - *Created humanity*: we were created by God in his image (Gen. 1:27; 9:6).
 - *Created purpose*: “to glorify God and to enjoy him forever” (Isa. 43:7; Rev. 21:3-4).
 - *Discuss*: How does your belief that God created humanity with a purpose relate to ethics?
 - *Tip*: test the coherence of a person’s anthropology and ethics

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Anthropology (created, fallen, redeemed, glorified)
 - We are both bodies (physical) and souls (spiritual).
 - Matthew 10:28: “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”
 - Some worldviews say we are purely material beings.
 - Some say we’re spiritual beings trapped in physical bodies.

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Anthropology (created, fallen, redeemed, glorified)
 - *Fallen humanity*: we are fallen in sin and separated from God (Gen. 3:6-8; Isa. 59:2).
 - Condition: We are in bondage to sin and death (Rom. 3:9-20; 5:12-21; 6:1-23).
 - Sin affects every aspect of our being: body, will, intellect, emotions, etc.
 - Result: Our sin has resulted in both *physical* death and *spiritual* death (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:1, 5).
 - Our existence doesn't end at physical death.
 - Hebrews 9:27: "And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment."

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Anthropology (created, fallen, redeemed, glorified)
 - *Redeemed humanity*: we can be restored in the image of God through Christ (2 Cor. 3:17-18).
 - We are released from bondage to sin and death (Rom. 6:1-23).
 - We will enjoy eternal life—both *physical* life and *spiritual* life (John 5:24; 10:10).
- Some implications of biblical anthropology for apologetics:
 - Apologetics should be done without fear.
 - Apologetics should recognize the noetic [intellectual] effects of sin.
 - Apologetics has a point of contact with unbelievers *because of their very nature*
 - Lots of common ground because despite what the unbeliever denies, they are still made in the image of God.

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Knowledge (what we can know and how we can know it)
 - All human knowledge is grounded in divine revelation.
 - *Natural* revelation: available to *all* humans through *natural* means (creation, conscience, and providence)
 - *Special* revelation: available to *some* humans through *supernatural* means.

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Knowledge

- Humans can (and do) have *knowledge of God* through:

- Nature (Ps. 19:1-6; Rom. 1:18-32; 2:14-25)

- The existence and attributes of God are clearly displayed in nature (Romans 1:20).

- The law of God is written on human hearts (Rom. 2:14-15).

- Therefore, all people have a natural knowledge of God, though this knowledge is denied and suppressed (Rom. 1:19, 21, 32).

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Knowledge

- Humans can (and do) have *knowledge of God* through:

- Scripture (Matt. 4:4; John 5:39; Rom. 15:4)

- Scripture is God's Word: *what Scripture says, God says* (Matt. 19:4-5; Gal. 3:8).

- Scripture is sufficient, clear, authoritative, and necessary (Matt. 4:4; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

- Scripture is the ultimate standard of truth.

- John 17:17: "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth."

- Isaiah 8:20: "To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn."

- Scripture is self-attesting and self-authenticating (Isa. 8:20; Heb. 6:13).

- Attestation: Scripture testifies to its own origins and authority

- Authentication: God's word does not rely upon human confirmation for its authority

- Hebrews 6:13: "For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself."

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Knowledge

- Human beings are in one of two states

- Unregenerate unbelievers

- Regenerate believers

- 1 Corinthians 2:14-15: “The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵ The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. ¹⁶ “For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.”

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Knowledge

- A person's knowledge and understanding depends crucially on their spiritual state.

- Unregenerate unbelievers...

- suffer from the noetic (i.e., intellectual) effects of sin.
- suppress their natural knowledge of God in their unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18).
- yet still have no excuse for their unbelief (Rom. 1:19-20).
- will not and cannot submit to God's Word (Rom. 8:7-8).
- are liable to the "futility of unbelief" (Rom. 1:21; 1 Cor. 3:20; Eph. 4:17).
- are kept by common grace from the full consequences of their sin and unbelief.

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Knowledge

- A person's knowledge and understanding depends crucially on their spiritual state.

- Regenerate believers...

- are healed (at least partially) from the noetic effects of sin (1 Cor. 2:10-16).
- have a saving knowledge of God (John 17:3).
- readily submit to God's Word (Ps. 1:1-2; 40:8; Rom. 7:22).
- should think in a distinctively Christian way (Matt. 22:37; Rom. 12:2; Col. 2:6-8).
 - Colossians 2:6-8: "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."

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

• Knowledge

• Some implications for apologetics:

- Apologetics involves an appeal to what has already been revealed.
- Apologetics should be conducted in a way that acknowledges the self-authenticating authority of Scripture.
 - The way we do apologetics should never question, compromise or play down the authority of Scripture.
- Apologetics must be conducted on the basis of a distinctively Christian view of knowledge [how we know what we know].
 - We don't have one theory of knowledge for apologetics, and then another for everything else we do.

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

• Knowledge

• Some implications for apologetics:

- Apologetics involves appealing to what unbelievers *already know* (but suppress).
- Apologetics with unbelievers involves a clash of entire worldviews.
 - The difference between unbelievers/believers is not that we basically have the same outlook and understanding of the world, but we just disagree on some important facts. The difference is an entire worldview which governs our beliefs, values and assumptions.
- Apologetics cannot convert an unbeliever apart from a work of the Holy Spirit. Apologetics may be necessary for a person to come to Christ, but it's not sufficient.

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

• Ethics

- Morality is real, objective, and universal (Ps. 19:7-13; 96:10; Isa. 5:20; Judg. 21:25).
 - An objective moral *standard*: the law of God (1 John 3:4).
 - An objective moral *goal*: the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31).
 - An objective moral *motive*: the love of God (John 14:15, 21; 1 John 5:3).
- Morality is grounded in God's character and will (Matt. 5:48; Isa. 61:8; 1 John 4:7-8).
 - 1 Peter 1:15: But as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.
 - We should behave a certain way because we are [re]made in the image of God.
- Morality is not independent of God and not intelligible apart from God.

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Ethics
 - Moral accountability is grounded in divine judgment (Rom. 14:10-12; Acts 17:30-3).
 - 2 Cor 5:10: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. “
 - Moral truths can be known through both *natural* revelation (esp. conscience: Rom. 2:14-15) and *special* revelation (esp. Scripture: Ps. 119:9, 11; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).
 - Objection: *People are moral without Scripture.*

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Ethics

- Some implications for apologetics

- Apologetics is subject to ethical norms like any other human activity.

- We must do apologetics by the right *standards*.

- We must do apologetics for the right *goals*.

- We must do apologetics with the right *motives*.

- Apologetics can appeal to the moral knowledge that all humans possess.

- Apologetics can challenge the unbelievers basis for morality.

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Salvation

- The *basic problem*: human sin that invites divine wrath and judgment (Gen. 3; Rom. 3:9-20; 5:12-21; 6:23; Eph. 2:1-3; Col. 1:21).
- The *only solution*: divine salvation through the death and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 3:21-26; Eph. 2:16; 1 Pet. 3:18; John 14:6; Acts 4:12).

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Salvation
 - God's part in salvation: incarnation and atonement (Phil. 2:6-8; Gal. 4:4-5).
 - Galatians 4:4-5: "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons."
 - Our response: faith and repentance—not meritorious works, divine gifts! (John 3:16; Acts 20:21; Rom. 3:22, 27-28; 4:4-5; Eph. 2:8-9)

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Salvation
 - Some implications for apologetics:
 - Apologetics must proclaim and defend the gospel as part of the Christian worldview.
 - Apologetics should aim not merely for *belief in God* but for *faith in Christ*; we're not aiming to turn atheists into theists. We want people to be *Christians*.
 - Apologetics *cannot* succeed *apart from* divine grace (1 Cor. 15:10).
 - Apologetics *will* succeed *because of* divine grace!

NEXT WEEK

- Survey of Contemporary Apologetic Methods
 - Classical Apologetics: “Faith based on reason.”
 - Evidentialist Apologetics: “Faith based on evidence.”
 - Fideist Apologetics: “Faith beyond reason.”
 - Presuppositional Apologetics: “Reason based on faith.”
 - Eclectic Apologetics: “Take the best, leave the rest.”