



ALL SAINTS

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Defending the Faith: Presuppositional  
Apologetics for the Person in the Pew  
*Week 6*

July 9, 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](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 them 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.



# Review: 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.

# Review: The Problem of Evil

- 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.

# Review: 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.

# Review: 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.

# Review: Job 42

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.”**

# Review: 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.
  - There 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.

# Review: 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.

# The Origin of Evil

- We have dealt with the problem of evil and demonstrated how it is not a valid criticism of Christianity or the Christianity or the Christian worldview.
- Today we deal with a related but more difficult question: what is the origin of evil? Where does sin come from?



## WCF 5:4

The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God so far manifest themselves in his providence, that it extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men; and that not by a bare permission, but such as hath joined with it a most **wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering, and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to his own holy ends;** yet so, as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, **neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin.**

# James 1:13-15

13 Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. 14 But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. 15 Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

# 1 John 2:15-17

15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. 17 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

## Acts 4:27-28

27 for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 **to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.**

# Genesis 50

8 His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, “Behold, we are your servants.” 19 But Joseph said to them, “Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? 20 As for you, **you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good**, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.


# Chad Van Dixhorn

“True, in some way God permits sin and governs it, and there is much about this that we do not understand. But the dismal reality, as James makes clear, is that ‘every man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed (James 1:14). This is just what happened to Satan, and then Eve, and then our forefather Adam. How this all began, we shall never know. But we know where it led: to the death of God’s Son on the cross. Just think of that. Some say that God’s permission of the first sin is a great mystery, and so it is. But it is a small mystery indeed when compared with the real wonder of God’s providence—that he would provide his only Son to bear our sin and suffer our punishment.” Chad Van Dixhorn, Confessing the Faith p. 76.

# Deuteronomy 29:29

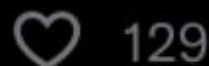
<sup>29</sup> “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.



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

Replying to @TaylorRMarshall @ShefferHeffer and @elonmusk

Ban Religion on Twitter. @elonmusk



**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

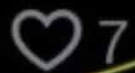


Replying to @TDisputations @henri\_mourant and @Jaydon225

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?





**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

**12** Retweets

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**Occam's Battleaxe** @OccamsBattleaxe · Apr 5, 2022

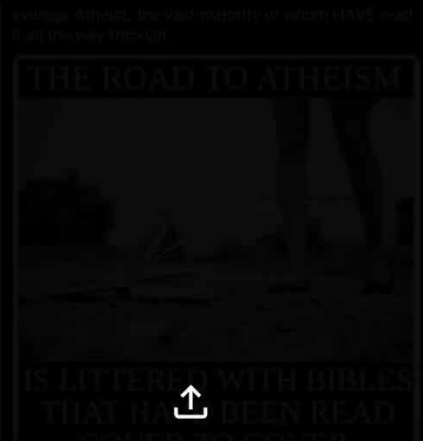
Being an "expert" theologian is basically like being an expert in Lord of the Rings. Yes, it's rather impressive that you actually understand the fine details of the Silmarillion, and yes, I see you are a recognized expert, but ultimately it's all a glorified book report.

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More Tweet

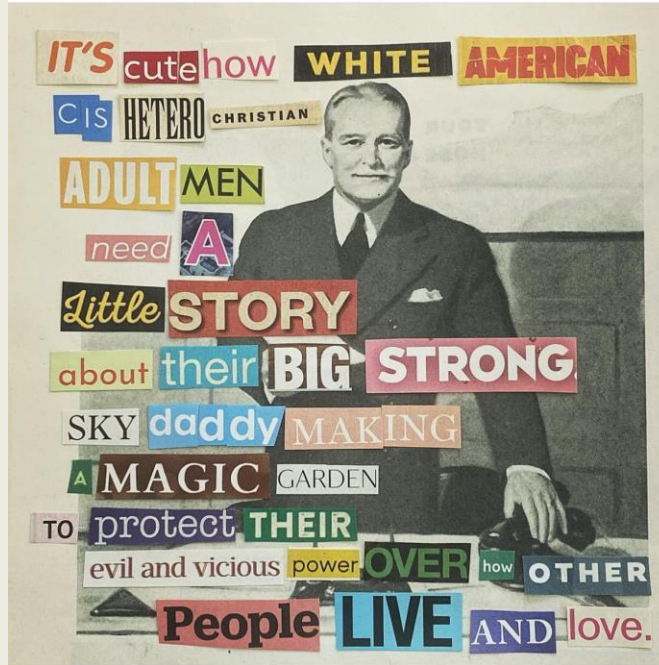
Matt Fender @mattdfender

Retweets 11 Likes 361





#pcaga libby\_newell



21 likes

libby\_newell It's like they're scared little boys shouting through tear filled eyes, "I get to decide who can exist, my (invisible) Daddy said so!"

Hey #pcaga and any other #christianmen who feel sad about other people making choices for themselves, why don't you all go to therapy and talk about your fears over losing your place as the absolute center of power rather than making other people's lives miserable with

