

HOW TO ANSWER AN UNBELIEVER FROM SCRIPTURE
By Sherry Cumby
“So you don’t believe in God...or the Bible as Scriptural truth?”
Why?

The word of God is the ultimate authority of the Christian’s worldview with Jesus Christ as the Rock of their foundational presuppositions (II Timothy 3:16-17; Deut. 32:15; Ps. 19:14; Isaiah 26:4; Matt. 7:24). The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the Creator of mankind and everything that exists (Genesis 1-2; Hebrews 1:1-3). God created man in His image and breathed into him the breath of life (Genesis 1:27; 2:7). Yet, because of man’s sin, all of creation is under a curse and is awaiting restoration (Genesis 3; Acts 3:21). Unbeliever’s exchange the truth of God’s word for lies and form their worldview based on shifting sand (Romans 1:25; Matt. 7:26-27). The clash of the two intrinsically, diametrically opposed worldviews will spark friction from the belief-systems of both parties when an apologetic is given for the defense of the truth based on God’s word from within the heart of a Christian. We must be willing to present truth and not remain neutral.

Paul warns Christians that there is a heavenly realm of demonic activity ruled over by Satan. Therefore, we are to remember that we do not war against mankind but against the evil spiritual powers of darkness in the heavenlies (Ephesians 6:12). The lying god of this world who deceived Eve in order to get to Adam is the deceiver who has caused the unbelievers not to be able to see the glorious light of God’s only begotten Son who came in the exact image of His Father bringing good news to all the earth (Genesis 3: 1-7 and II Corinthians 4:4).

Jesus is the omnipotent resurrected Christ who is alive forevermore. His Holy Spirit lives within the heart of the believer who walks humbly before Him; clothed in His righteousness. God equips the believer in this way to become a stronger man than his opponent even though he is armed with powerful weapons of worldly views (Luke 11:21). The Holy Spirit-filled Christian questions the lies of the strong man yet overcomes him with the truth of Sacred Scriptures leaving him stripped of his shield of comforting, self concocted distortions and having to deal

with the truth spoken by someone with *gentleness and reverence*. (Acts 1:8; Galatians 2:20; Luke 11:22; I Peter 3:15).

A judgment day awaits every person who has breathed the breath of life (Acts 17:30-31; Romans 3:19). God began history and has revealed His plan for the future in His word. His mercy and grace are for today. God loved mankind and all of His creation; therefore, He provided salvation through Jesus Christ His Son for all men by allowing Him to lay down His life, be nailed to a cross, so that His blood could absolutely atone for the sins of the ages (John 3:16; Luke 19:10; Zechariah 9:1-7). He was buried in a rich man's tomb, resurrected from the dead on the third day (Matthew 27:57-60; 28:6; Mark 15: 43-46; 16:6; Luke 23:50-53; 24:6; John 19:38-42; 20:11- 18), and ascended to the right hand of God (Acts 1:9; 2:33).

Premillennialist await the Rapture, or catching away, of the Lord who will appear in the clouds with a shout and a blast of a trumpet that will literally raise the dead as well as those who are alive where we will be with Him for all eternity (I Thessalonians 4:16-18).¹ After seven years the Lord Jesus Christ will return with the saints to the earth to set up His earthly millennial reign (Ezekiel 37:15-28; Zechariah 14:9-11; Rev. 4-18; Rev. 19; Rev. 20). For all eternity, we will live in the glory of the presence of the Lord God (Revelation 21-22).

The biblical worldview includes moral absolutes concerning ethics.² It addresses right and wrong; good and evil; reasonable and unreasonable actions; matters of the heart (*As a man thinks in his heart, so is he* (Proverbs 23:7; James 4:17). Man is faced daily with challenges yet God tells us in His word that we are to *avoid even the appearance of evil* (I Thessalonians 5:22). Jesus teaches that we are to forgive others and treat them as we want to be treated (Matt. 6:12; 7:12). The worldview clashes at this point arguing that there are no moral absolutes and allows for abortion on demand which includes partial-birth abortion, stem-cell research using human embryos to find scientific technology to enhance the physical health of others, marriage between same sex individuals, etc. Worldviews are on display when left-wing radicals

¹ Mal Couch, *The Dictionary of Premillennial Theology*, pg. 349.

² Apologetics Syllabus, "A Biblical Worldview"

demand their rights concerning these issues and then insist that endangered species of plants and animals be protected against human encroachment. The unbeliever has an ethical problem.

The Lord has given Christians a mandate; a charter³ for offering up an apologetic when the opportunity presents itself in I Peter 3:15: “...*sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to every one who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.*” The Christians presuppositions, as outlined briefly in the beginning of this paper, will be the foundational rock to stand on as a defense is given to an unbeliever.

Theologians holding to the Presuppositional Apologetic include Cornelius Van Til, Gordon Clark, Greg Bahnsen, John Frame, and in some respects, Francis Schaeffer.⁴ Because of the depravity of man since the fall, there is no neutral territory on which to stand between a Christian’s biblical worldview and an unbeliever’s worldview; fabricating it is a sin against God. Any argument offered by the Christian must presuppose the truthful view of the self-attesting scriptures.

John Frame explains this approach to offering an apologetic in *Five Views on Apologetics* by stating, “*We should present the biblical God not merely as the conclusion to an argument but as the one who makes argument possible.*”⁵ Guide the unbeliever to see that he cannot live without using the resources the God of creation has provided, that he is unable to reason apart from Him, that he cannot function without presupposing God; therefore, his worldview is irrational; it makes no sense.⁶ The Christian’s biblical worldview is the only one that can make sense in this life.

Dr. Greg Bahnsen author of *Always Ready* leans upon the presuppositional argument of Cornelius Van Til who used a two-step approach to apologetics. Following a silent prayer of humility before God asking for His help and thanking him for what He will do, Van Til encourages Christians to begin with a brief outline of Bible doctrine with the unbeliever based on facts. God has always existed. God created all that exists and formed man in His own image.

³ Class notes: Apologetics, Syllabus, pg. 4.

⁴ <http://www.catholic.com/thisrock/2004/0410fea2.asp>

⁵ <http://www.catholic.com/thisrock/2004/0410fea2.asp>: *Five Views on Apologetics*, pg. 220.

⁶ Class notes based on *Always Ready*

Adam's original sin separated him from God and all creation fell under a curse. God has provided Jesus Christ as our redemption. We are to argue from a biblical standpoint because the word of God is the *divinely inspired, ultimate authority*⁷ of absolute truth. We are to use a transcendental argument challenging the unbeliever to offer the believer justification for his knowledge and opinions he claims to have.

For argument's sake, the believer is willing to stand in the unbeliever's worldview in order to take an indirect approach to reach the unbeliever. The believer's goal is to show the unbeliever the futility of his thinking. Since he has been willing to step inside the unbeliever's worldview, he then asks the unbeliever to step inside the biblical worldview and shows him that the only faith that makes any sense at all is the reality of Christianity: the biblical worldview. All other apologetic approaches are probabilistic except for this presuppositional model.⁸ In order to be effective in offering an apologetic to the unbeliever, it is important to *challenge and debate* at his most basic levels concerning his interpretation of *reality, knowledge and ethics*.⁹ Wise believers know that the Bible tells us that "*The mind of the sinful nature is at enmity with God, for it is not subject to the law of God, nor can it be*" (Romans 8:7).

Prayer for the individual that his heart would be opened to the truth of the gospel, making him attentive to the word of God, is the responsibility of the believer. II Corinthians 10:4-5 says, "*...for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.*"

Just as God revealed Himself to Adam in the Garden of Eden and gifted him with an ability to think for himself, to reason in his heart, and to communicate with Him through the gift of language, God continues to gift mankind and desires that all men everywhere would use their gifts for His glory with thankful hearts. The reality of the world since the fall is that Romans 1:18-22 has continued to be repeated throughout the generations:

⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cornelius_Van_Til

⁸ Class Notes and *Always Ready*

⁹ Greg Bahnsen, *Always Ready*, pg. 120.

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools.”

God has placed worship of Himself in the heart of every man (Romans 1:19-20) yet man distorts the truth and concocts his own interpretation of how he will worship and what he will worship; therefore, *he is without excuse* (1:25). God has revealed Himself to man throughout the ages by the perfect attributes of His divine nature and the revelation of His omnipotence, yet man has suppressed the truth by opposing the righteousness of his creator (1:18). The man who has become foolish in his own thinking must be offered an apologetic in order to right his wrong thinking. The apologist must remember that the unbeliever has knowledge yet his knowledge is not based on justified true belief.¹⁰ The biblical worldview is at this level and he has an ethical problem with this level of reasoning by rejecting truth for his worldview.¹¹

Paul was given a divine opportunity to present an apologetic to the Greeks in Acts 17 by appealing to their general knowledge in order to bring them to consider the biblical worldview. In verses 16 - 18 he reasoned with those who lived in a city full of idols by preaching Jesus and His resurrection. When confronted publicly, he presented the biblical worldview to the people by beginning with God’s divine transcendence before he created the world and all that exists. He pointed out that God sustains and maintains His creation (vs. 25) existing in His completeness apart from His creation needing nothing (aseity). In verses 26-27 he points out that God is the God of all nations and is immanent. In verses 28 -29 he reminds men that God in His Divine Nature is to be worshiped, not formed into an image. Paul warns them that all men on earth must

¹⁰ Ibid, pg. 120 and class notes.

¹¹ Class notes and *Always Ready*

change their way of thinking (repent) because a day of judgment is coming for all men through the Man - Jesus Christ who was raised from the dead (verses 30-31).¹² The responses of the listeners were varied. Some sneered; some procrastinated making a decision deciding to wait until another time to listen to his preaching; Paul walked away; some joined him and believed (verses 32-34).

Natural Theology is a choice some have made as a defense of their worldview. Naturalists hold to the mindset that if natural man cannot come to know God because God's revelation is not clear enough to him, then it is God's fault for not giving him enough revelation in order for him to know God. They claim that man cannot be held responsible if God has failed to make Himself known to individuals.¹³ Natural Theology's claim is an insult to God and nothing could be further from the truth. According to James F. Sennett & Douglas Groothuis - editors of *In Defense of Natural Theology*, the definition of Natural Theology is "*the attempt to provide rational justification for theism using only those sources of information accessible to all inquirers, namely, the data of empirical experience and the dictates of human reason.*"¹⁴ This ideology is a defense of the knowledge of God without consideration of His special revelation.

In defense of General Revelation, John M. Frame, author of *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, says, "*It is God's normative revelation concerning a wide range of matters that are not explicitly discussed in the Bible, and that wide range is broad enough to cover all human actions and attitudes and all human knowledge.*"¹⁵ God can be trusted to reveal Himself to mankind as His word claims in Romans 1:19-20.

To answer an unbeliever by stepping into his secular worldview is to be reminded that we were once alienated from God by our sinful choices of being an enemy of God (Colossians 1:21). God revealed Himself to us by His general revelation and by His special revelation drawing us to Himself by the Holy Spirit. We replaced the foolish words of our worldly belief system for the

¹² Apologetics Syllabus

¹³ Class notes, session 5

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Ibid

word of God and it became the bedrock of our foundation.¹⁶ Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit built upon His word, not ours (I Corinthians 6:19). Knowing this beyond a doubt gives the believer confidence that since God revealed His Word to us, the unbeliever must know the truth of God's word over his distorted words which he has come to accept. The believer has faith in the Christian God.¹⁷ It is his desire and responsibility to speak on behalf of the Christian God who lives within His heart speaking the word clearly with authority. The Christian must remain aware of the warning in Proverbs 26:4-5 "*Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him. Answer a fool as his folly deserves, lest he be wise in his own eyes.*" Listen for value-laden words. Do not allow the unbeliever to define Christianity nor Christian terms apart from the biblical worldview. The light of God's self-attesting word will penetrate the darkness of unbelief.

An Example of Offering An Apologetic to an Unbeliever Using the Two-Step Approach:

(Father in heaven, by the power of the Holy Spirit, I ask you to cleanse me of all unrighteousness and speak through me as I offer a defense of the gospel of Jesus Christ for Your glory and honor. I thank you for what you will do in the heart of this person.

In Jesus' name,

Amen)

An unbeliever says: **"I believe in God; I just don't believe Jesus was who he said he was."**

The believer might say, "Well, if you don't believe in the biblical God, tell me about the god in whom you believe and then I will tell you why I do believe Jesus is who He claims to be." (He is willing to step inside the worldview of the unbeliever.)

¹⁶ Idea from "beliefs are based on words" from session 5.

¹⁷ Class notes, session 5.

“I believe God used the Big Bang to put the universe in motion and left the rest to chance. Evolution makes perfect sense to me; after all, the National Geographic carries stories from time to time about new species of life just now being discovered. The very idea that a man claimed to be born of a virgin and was the son of god blows my mind. I can’t believe anyone would even start to believe that xoxoxoxox. “

“Your claims do not line up with the word of God. On what authority do you base your reasoning?”

“I have reasoned this myself! I don’t have to have someone else to tell me how to think. It has just come to my mind.”

“The God of the Bible has always existed even before creation in the one essence of God yet in three persons: God the Father; God the Son; and God the Holy Spirit. This is the God who created the heavens and the earth by speaking them into existence. He formed man from the dust of the earth in His own image and breathed life into him and revealed Himself to his creatures. Since the first man sinned against God by reasoning in His own heart apart from God’s will bringing about the fall of man, God promised that One would come that would bruise Satan on the head and that Satan would bruise Him on the heel (Genesis 3:15). God gave His inspired word to the prophets of old to tell us through His special revelation of who, what, when, where, why, how He would bring this to pass. He told us that the Promised One would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; Micah 5:2; Matt. 1:23) , in the city of Bethlehem (Matt. 5:2), and that He would open blind eyes, heal the sick, feed the hungry, heal the lame, bind up the brokenhearted, and raise the dead (Is. 61:1-3; Luke 4:18-19; Luke 13:13; Luke 18:42). He came to pay the penalty for our sins because without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins (Hebrews 9:22). Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled all of these prophecies (Hebrews 1:1-3). Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). The Bible says that Jesus died on a cross for the sins of the world (Matt. 1:21; Isaiah 53), He was buried in a tomb, and on the third day, He rose from the dead and was seen by as many as five hundred believers. His followers watched as Jesus Christ ascended into heaven with the promise that He is coming back again. It is appointed unto man once to die and after

that we face the judgment of God. We will either spend eternity with the God of the Bible or we will be separated from Him even as the rich man was (Luke 16:19-31). After His thousand year reign upon the earth, the promise given in Genesis will be completely fulfilled when Satan is thrown into the lake of fire along with all of those who have enmity with God (Rev. 20:10).”

“Now you’re preaching to me. How can you believe what is written in the Bible?”

One reason I believe it is because it addresses your very argument. In Romans 1 Paul describes the unbeliever as one who suppresses the truth (Romans 1:18). You know the God of whom I speak yet you choose to disbelieve. You use the resources God has provided for mankind yet you refuse to honor Him and give Him thanks (Romans 1:21). The Bible says that is sin. It says, *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction”* (Proverbs 1:7). Yet you have no fear. As you think about what we have discussed today, realize that you cannot live without the biblical God. You cannot reason in your own mind without presupposing the Christian’s worldview.

Do you not see that your irrational thinking will only lead to futility and your foolish heart will be darkened as the Bible warns (Romans 1:21)?

(Father God, may he ask, “What must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30))

CONCLUSION:

The Christian’s biblical worldview is based upon the absolute truth of the self-attesting Sacred Scriptures; therefore, it is our responsibility to study the word and hide its truths in our hearts in order to be ready to give a sound presuppositional apologetic to the next unbeliever we engage in conversation . May we walk humbly before God leaving the results to Him.

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