

Day 3/4

**A. Evidential Apologetics – corresponds to a Empirical epistemology - Continued**

For Christians, the best place for evidence is as a confirmation of the Christian worldview because it is the worldview that interprets the evidence, as well as the science behind the evidence. Not the other way around. Evidence in court is for the purpose of establishing reasonable doubt or belief but not absolute certainty. It is good when evidence rises to the level of “convincing.” But each person is convinced at a different level. Christians need to know that “God’s world agrees with God’s word” in a remarkable way. The Word is first. The Word tells us how to interpret the science and history of the world and to have an increasingly well-developed biblical Worldview.

However, we need to be able to show evidences in response to honest questions. Evidence cannot prove anything but can be used to demonstrate or confirm that there are other powerful, positive interpretations of science about the natural, historical world that agree with God’s word. This is what I was impressed with when the team came from the Institute for Creation Research of Dallas, TX to University of Wyoming. The atheists, evolutionists were beside themselves with absurd objections. Part of our job is to silence the critics, to show how they would rather be absurd and irrational than accept the truth of the history!

Denying the existence of Jesus doesn’t make Him go away, it merely proves that no amount of evidence will convince you.

Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ*.

Jesus did exist, whether we like it or not.

Bart Ehrman, Agnostic NT Scholar and historian

One of the most certain facts of history is that Jesus was crucified on orders of the Roman prefect of Judea, Pontius Pilate.

Bart Ehrman, Agnostic NT Scholar and historian, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to Early Christian Writings*, 261-262.

[There is not the] slightest doubt about the fact of Jesus’s crucifixion under Pontius Pilate.

John Dominic Crossan of the Jesus Seminar, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, 375

Jesus's death as a consequence of crucifixion is indisputable.

Gerd Lüdemann, Atheist NT scholar, *The Resurrection of Christ: A Historical Inquiry*, 50

Consider the quotes above. They sound great to the Christian but will probably not even phase the person that is committed to materialism and hostile to God. This is really the weakness in the evidential method, that it doesn’t touch the root faith level of the truly committed sceptic, the “true believer.” No amount of evidence will shake their faith. They can, and will, come up with “rescuing devices” which are in reality supports for their tenets of faith. To be sure, the committed Christian does the very same thing.

If an ossuary or bone box were discovered with the inscription “Jesus of Nazareth” and all the research labs concluded it was authentic, it would be rejected by all such Christians. We know that Jesus is still using His bones and took them with Him when He left.

### **Luke 24:38-43**

38 And He said to them, “Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have **flesh and bones as you see I have.**” 40 When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. 41 But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, “Have you any food here?” 42 So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. 43 And He took it and ate in their presence.

### **Luke 24:50-51**

50 And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. 51 Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven.

Jesus is very much alive and has interacted with people over the last 2000 years. It is not beliefs that holds Jesus’s Ecclesia together but Jesus Himself. That is why His Church can never be destroyed.

So, a method is needed to drill down and expose the irrationality of the faith foundation of the unbeliever. By the way, the most common reaction when the faith level is breached is anger because you are entering a sacred space and threatening issues of identity and worth that they don’t want disturbed, Rom 1:21. Don’t be surprised if the person with whom you are talking blows up. Convincing the person concerning the truth of things often requires time, but we need to be able to show the irrationality and hopelessness of the unbeliever’s position and the rock-solid nature of ours, with confidence and patience, humility and boldness.

The faith of God (Eph 2:8, Gal 2:20) can withstand the most rigorous scrutiny.

### **B. Classical Apologetics – corresponds to a Rational epistemology.**

A very powerful case is built showing that reason and reality demand the existence of the God of Scripture. This track goes back to the early Church and Augustine is often credited as being the father of Classical Apologetics, hence the name. Classical Apologetics is more philosophical and essentially starts with the human mind. This should not be confused with the humanistic fallen mind, a common criticism. Built to take fallenness into account, attention is given to reason that is not, by definition, limited to the fallen world, as is humanistic thinking.

Some components of the classical method are discussed by R.C. Sproul in his 25-part Classical Apologetics class on YouTube.com. Also, a book by the same name. Briefly, the physical universe can **only be one** of these:

- An Illusion. “Cogito ergo sum.” means it’s not.
- Self-Created. Impossible; a thing cannot create itself.
- Self-Existent. Impossible, matter & energy (i.e., contingent objects cannot exist forever.)
- Caused by an eternal Self-Existent something. God cannot not exist; He is necessary being.

Thomas Aquinas saw it this way; the universe could be:

1. Uncaused
2. Self-caused
3. Caused by another

In the end, reality and rationality requires an eternal, all-powerful, intelligent “Being”: God.

### **C. Presuppositional Apologetics – corresponds to a Revelational epistemology**

“It is never about winning, Greg. It is about exposing their inconsistency. God does everything else. Never forget the antithesis.”

—Cornelius Van Til to Greg L. Bahnsen (1985)

“We do not want to trim the unbeliever’s tree; we want to dig it up by its roots.”

**Presuppositions** – our most basic or fundamental beliefs, believed by faith, held religiously, unverifiable by natural science. Presuppositions cannot be “proved” as such but can be evidenced. When it comes to these most basic faith commitments argumentation between presuppositions is qualitatively different.

In most attacks on Christianity, presuppositions are rarely brought into play. An opponent’s reasoning may be consistent with his starting point, but the goal is to show the irrationality of the starting point itself, and thus the house of cards collapses under its own weight. This is the power of this method. The opponent may keep talking but his foundation is in shambles.

As a culture becomes more consistent with its own presuppositions it either stabilizes, if it is founded on truth, or disintegrates, if it is founded on anything else. Which do we see in the world today?

Here are some aspects of the Presuppositional Argument:

- i. **Internal Critique.** Show the irrationality, incoherence of the system by using its own standards and exposing the internal inconsistencies and/or incoherence, and failure to meet preconditions for human experience.
- ii. **Impossibility of the Contrary.** Impossible to be otherwise. Without God, you can’t prove anything, and nothing has meaning. God cannot not be the answer.
- iii. **Preconditions for Intelligibility.** Asks what things must be true in order for our reasoning and experience to be meaningful. God Himself is the ultimate precondition. He alone provides meaning. The ultimate proof is that without Him, you can’t prove anything, and without God nothing has meaning. Only the biblical worldview is rich enough to answer all the tough questions of life and function as the foundation for the resources for the meaningfulness of anything.
- iv. **Image of God - Imago Dei.** Human beings are made in the Image of God (Gen 1:26-27, 9:6) and thus express analogous characteristics of God Himself. AIIUs are some of those characteristics. This is the point of contact. You are the ultimate proof of God’s existence.
- v. **Existence of Transcendentals.** Abstract, Immaterial, Invariant, Universal objects, or AIIUs. Transcendentals exist outside of time, space, matter and energy. See below.

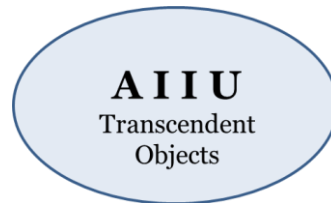
Presuppositional Apologetics is a worldview analysis on its own terms. What the worldview says about itself. Does it or can it stand on its own, without court intervention? Use the AICP test.

Presuppositional Apologetics is also an apologetic method based on biblical authority which deals with our most basic starting points, like Gen 1:1. Presuppositions form the basis of worldviews. It is not merely the recognition that we all have presuppositions that control our interpretation of evidence and experience. Presuppositional Apologetics also makes use of the Transcendentals, which deal with the source of absolute, immaterial, invariant, universal objects and is sometimes called the Transcendental Argument. At its core, the Presuppositional Argument says that God is the necessary precondition for intelligible human knowledge and experience.

### The Transcendental Argument

**AIIUs or Transcendent objects are:**

- **Abstract:** in or of the mind, not observable
- **Immaterial:** not material, nonphysical
- **Invariant:** does not change with time
- **Universal:** does not change with place



### Here are some Abstract, Immaterial, Invariant, Universal Objects:

Life, logic, reason, thought, laws, truth, beauty, love, ideals, values, morals, ought, virtues, forms, ideas, imagination, mathematics, intelligence, free will, belief, faith, number, dignity, liberty, justice, music, creativity, information, talent, consciousness, soul, mind (subjectivity, objectivity, rationality, intentionality, teleology, unity, causation) and more.

Funerals, Jewelry

Everyone can observe and use these things but how to justify them is the issue.

Plato (and Kant) had realm of ideas, ideals, essences, forms; separate from the realm of material world.

It is philosophically and scientifically impossible to derive immaterial, invariant entities from matter alone.

At the core of Christianity is a personal, immaterial, invariant, and universal entity – God! God is a transcendent person. The Christian worldview has a place for transcendental objects. The materialist worldview cannot even allow that they exist. But the fact that transcendentals do exist shows by the “Impossibility of the Contrary” that they must have a transcendent source. Something outside space and time, outside Nature’s Box.

Transcendental reasoning “is concerned to discover what general conditions must be fulfilled for any particular instance of knowledge to be possible; it has been central to the philosophies of thinkers such as Aristotle and Kant, and it has become a matter of inquiry in contemporary, analytically minded philosophy. Van Til asks what view of man, mind, truth, language, and the world is necessarily presupposed by our conception of knowledge and our methods of pursuing it. For him, the transcendental answer is supplied at the very first step of man’s reasoning—not by autonomous philosophical speculation, but by transcendent revelation from God.”

(Dr. Greg Bahnsen, *Van Til’s Apologetic*, 5–6, note 10)

Transcendentals are used by every human being every day. AIIUs are mostly taken for granted, in that they are necessary for everyday living, but most people give them little thought and cannot account for their existence. These things are the spice of life.

All transcendentals exist in the world but have no material substance. Materialistically AIIUs can only be accounted for in DNA or experience. Both are unsatisfactory by the very nature of the AIIU’s transcendence, showing the Impossibility of the Contrary. AIIUs cannot exist apart from God.

The Uniformity of Nature is also an example of a transcendental. There is nothing in constantly changing nature that requires it to behave in a uniform way. But if it didn’t, science would be impossible.

Some common responses to the Uniformity of Nature are:

- “Everyone knows that.”
- “It always has behaved that way.”
- “That’s just how it is.”
- “The inherent properties of matter cause it to behave in a uniform way.”

The question to all of these statements is always the same, “Why?” Why, in a random universe, should nature behave in a uniform manner? Why do natural laws (a product of the human mind) describe so well and so consistently how nature will behave? Why is it possible that the human mind can even understand these things? But God!

Questions are a great way to get at presuppositions and show underlying inconsistencies. Consider several common statements and some questions that expose presuppositional tension:

- “Nobody can know anything for sure.”
  - Are you sure nobody can know anything for sure?
  - How do you know nobody can know anything for sure?
- “There is no such thing as absolute truth.”
  - Is it absolutely true there is no such thing as absolute truth?
  - How do you know there is no absolute truth?
  - Is it true could  $2 + 2$  be something other than 4?
- “Evolution is a fact, and survival of the fittest is true.”
  - Why are we trying to save endangered species?
  - Why are we trying to keep people from getting sick?
    - If they are not fit enough to survive, why try to keep them alive?
  - Why allow the unfit to breed?

This is a great inconsistency in the evolutionary worldview: the aggressive preservation of animal life while killing unborn human babies. Human life has no inherent value. As the followers of materialistic/evolutionary

theory become more self-consistent, we will increasingly see them answering the questions above. A hint of things to come as they gain more political power.

- “The cosmos is all there is or all there was or ever will be” (The late Carl Sagan).
  - How did Carl know the cosmos “is all there is”?
  - How did Carl know the past, “all there was”?
  - How did Carl know the future, “ever will be”?
  - How did Carl know the future will be like the past?
  - What scientific experiment was performed to show “the cosmos is all there is”?
  - What scientific journals published the results of such experiments?
  
- “No human being has ever seen a living dinosaur.”
  - What are the presuppositions?
  - What do you think? Why?
  
- A materialist criticizes Christianity for being illogical and wants you to give an explanation. Before you answer make sure to confirm that he believes the materialist universe is all there is. Confirm that he believes that there are no non-material forces. Then ask how he can believe in logic or call something illogical, when logic itself is a non-material, transcendent object. How can he demand from you what he claims doesn’t exist?

## 12. Don’t Answer/Answer Strategy – Apologetic Conversation

The biblical “fool” is someone that is foolish in the use of reason and action, in particular.”

**Psalms 53:1** The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God.”

**Proverbs 26:4** Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him.

If we try to use the fool’s methodology, we become like him. We must voice our disagreement.

The response is something like this: “I disagree with your statement, but...”

**Proverbs 26:5** Answer a fool according as his folly deserves, lest he be wise in his own eyes.

We can’t just walk away “agreeing to disagree” or nothing has really changed.

The response is something like this: “I disagree with your statement, but for argument sake, let’s suppose what you are saying is true...” What is the outcome? Where does it lead?

Using “logical conclusion” and “reducing to the absurd” and “impossibility of the contrary” we show that the fool’s ideas lead to absurdity, inconsistency, incoherence or worse.

## Divine (Horns of a) Dilemma

The supposed divine dilemma from the Euthyphro Dilemma of Plato (428-348 BC)

"Is the pious loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is loved by the gods?"

Modern: "Is something commanded by God good because it is good, or is it good because it is commanded by God?"

From Epicurus (341-270 BC):

Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then He is not omnipotent.

Is God able but not willing? Then He is malevolent.

Is God neither willing nor able? Then why call Him God?

Is God both willing and able? Then whence comes evil?