

Doctrine of Christian Apologetics

Presuppositionalism

1. Evidentialism tries to leave people without any moral escape hatch. The burden of proof in history is beyond a reasonable doubt.
2. In contrast to the Evidentialist is the Classical Apologist. Like the Evidentialist, the Classical Apologist presents arguments for the existence of God but with this difference. Whereas the Evidentialist leaves the battlefield with a high degree of probability of there being a God, the Classical Apologist says conclusively the existence of God is provable.
3. Presuppositionalism, a third category of apologetics, argues that Christian Apologetics must begin with the assumption that God exists and that the Bible is the ultimate source of all true knowledge.

Special Note.

A Dutch Reformed scholar by the name of Cornelius Van Til, a former professor at Westminster Seminary, made presuppositionalism popular. He argued that in order to arrive at the conclusion that God exists, in order to prove that God exists, you must start with your first premise, being, the presupposition being the existence of God. Unless you start by presupposing the existence of God, you will never get to the conclusion of the existence of God.

4. There is an objection and that is, that by starting with the thesis that God exists in order to get to the conclusion that God exists involves a classical fallacy of circular reasoning. The fallacy of circular reasoning appears when the conclusion appears in one of your premises. The conclusion is already assumed.
5. Van Til was aware of this fallacy of logic whereby the conclusion appears in one of the premises and counter argued that all reasoning moves in a circular fashion in so far as its starting point, its middle ground, and its conclusion are all involved with each other.
6. This is to say that if you start with a rational premise and reason consistently in a rational way, your conclusion will be of a rational sort. Van Til argued in essence that all reasoning is circular.
7. Again, the objections to presuppositionalism comes in two forms.
 - First objection. The fallacy of circular reasoning.
 - Second objection. The fallacy of equivocation whereby a term changes its meaning in the middle of the argument.

Special Note.

When Van Til justifies circular reasoning by saying that all reasoning is circular in the sense that its starting point, middle ground, and conclusion are of a similar sort – that is NOT what is meant by circular reasoning.

A rational argument, if it is to be consistently rational throughout. Why call that which is linear a circle?

You begin with a rational premise,
 You state another rationale premise,
 And you move or advance to a conclusion.

8. Granted, there is a presupposition in rational argument and it is the presupposition of reason.
 - There is the presupposition of the law of non-contradiction.
 - There is the presupposition of causality.
 - There is the presupposition of the basic trustworthiness of sensory perception.
 - There is the presupposition of the analogical usage of language.
9. Defenders of Van Til argue that what he was trying to say is that if you assume the existence of rationality you must assume the existence of God for without Him there is no foundation for being rational. There is no foundation for trusting the Law of Causality or Sense Perception.
10. Van Til was saying that even if the non-Christian does not admit it, by assuming there is a ground for reasoning, that Ground is none other than God Himself.
11. Classical Apologetics agree with the presupposition that if there is rational and if the presuppositions of trustworthy sensory perceptions are true then it all cries out for the existence of God – which it tries to prove. If you want to be rational then that demands the existence of God. But that has to be proven.
12. A person who says you must start with God to prove God can be countered by a person who says they will start without the premise of God and will end up in meaningless. Now we have a philosophical tie and no discussion.
13. Here is the truth. No one can start with God to prove the existence of God except God.
14. The Classical Apologists starts with self-consciousness. From self-consciousness movement is made to the existence of God.
15. The objection to this starting point of the Classical Apologist is that it capitulates to secular paganism thought. The charge is assuming the “Autonomy of the Self” rather than the Sovereignty of God which is what Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden.

16. The response to this accusation is this:

“If the first premise of the Classical Apologist in reasoning was the Autonomy of Self, then the charge would stand of all that was being accused.

However, if the first premise of defense for the Classical Apologist is self-awareness, then it makes sense that a person asks self, “How did I get here?” It is not the autonomy of self that is the starting point; it is the consciousness of the self.

Augustine said that with self-consciousness comes immediately an awareness of infinitude. The moment you know you are aware of yourself, you know within yourself that you are not God.

17. The idea of autonomy is not contained within the idea of self-consciousness. If it were, it would be sinful to start at that point.

18. What the Classical Apologist insists is that for a person to start with their own creatureliness is the only starting place possible. No one can start in their mind with someone else’s thought.

19. Every person must start with their own thought, not someone else’s and not God’s thoughts.

20. However, if a person starts with self-consciousness and reasons correctly they will of necessity end with God.

21. The Presuppositionalist fears that the Classical Apologist gives too much away. And the Classical Apologist fears the Presuppositionalist gives too much away by giving the non-Christian a rationalist the opportunity to charge the Christian with the fallacy of circular reasoning.

22. What both can agree on is that the existence of God is the most important

23. The first lie the non-Christian embraces is that God exists. Romans 1 explain how this person suppresses this truth. And the more brilliant the non-Christian is the further away from God and the truth he will move.

24. God is first in the order of Being. The debate is what comes first in the process of knowing? Self comes first in the order of knowing for that is all self knows.