Apologetics 101 lesson 6 Integrated Approach

**How these approaches differ in some key elements**

Scripture

* Classical – Conclusion. Rationally verified authority of God. God gave us our faculty of reason and directed his revelation to it.
* Evidentialist – Source. Factually verified story about Christ. Credible and reliable. Prophecies, Israel, Jesus
* Reformed – Foundation. Self-attesting authority of God.
* Fideism – Witness. Self-attesting story about Christ.

Religions

* Classical – Disproving other worldviews. There are finite number of worldviews. Shows non-Christian worldviews are logically self-contradictory.
* Evidentialist – Uniqueness of Christianity. Not all religions are same. Jesus were the only one raised from the dead.
* Reformed – Antithesis between Christian and non-Christian religion. Christianity alone presents an absolute and personal God.
* Fideism – Christianity not another religion, but a relationship

Existence of God

* Classical – Proving God’s existence. Ontological, cosmological, teleological, moral arguments.
* Evidentialist – Scientifically and historically presenting a case for God.
* Reformed – Belief in God as basic and foundational to all knowledge and proof.
* Fideism – Insulting trying to prove the existence of God, it’s a relational matter.

Evil in the world

* Classical – deductive. Proving the coexistence of God and evil in the world through metaphysical, moral and physical aspect
* Evidentialist – Inductive. How likely is it that God exists in light of how much evil there is?
* Reformed – Theological. How can God be the author of all and not be the author of sin?
* Fideism – Personal. How can I trust God despite evil?

Miracles

* Classical – Credentials of revelation. If God exists then miracles are possible. Miracles reveal the nature and purpose of the true God.
* Evidentialist – Evidence for God.
* Reformed – Prophetical. Revealed by God. Philosophy of facts vs facts alone.
* Fideism – Given by God in response to faith.

Jesus as God

* Classical – alternative
* Evidentialist – Evidence. Resurrection.
* Reformed – self-attesting Christ of scripture.
* Fideism – Get to know him and you will see.

**Strength and weakness of each approach**

Classical Approach

* Strength: 1) Affirm the universal applicability of reason; 2) Raises awareness of the role of worldviews; 3) recognizes common ground with non-Christians
* Weakness: 2) Overestimates the adequacy of reason; 2) Depends on arguments of debated validity and value; 3) Doesn’t address the personal dimensions of knowledge of belief

Evidentialist Approach

* Strength: 1) Recognizes probability cannot be avoided; 2) Uses methods of inquiry that are appealing to non-Christians; 3) Emphasizes the importance of factual evidence
* Weakness: 1) Doesn’t provide worldview context needed to access probability; 2) His hidden presuppositions; 3) Diminishes the role of personal factors

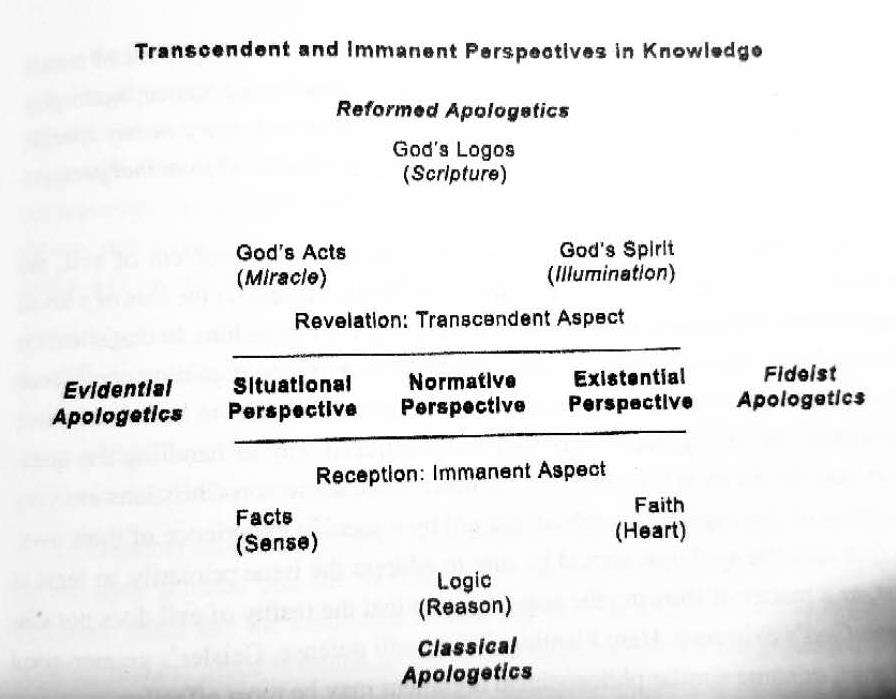
Reformed Approach

* Strength: 1) Establishes relationship between apologetics and theology; 2) raises epistemological awareness; 3) presents strong rational challenges to unbelief
* Weakness: 1) narrow form of Calvinism; 2) Underestimates facts; 3) Limits apologists to restrictive apologetic

Fideism Approach

* Strength: 1) Emphasizes the personal dimension of God; 2) humble view of human reasoning; 3) centers apologetics on Christ
* Weakness: 1) Undervalues Propositional knowledge; 2) over criticism of reason; 3) critical view of Bible

**How do we integrate the 4 approaches?**



* One body, many gifts: The primary and regular way God gifts his people is not overtly supernatural. Instead, God’s main ministry gifts to the church are the use of natural abilities that Spirit-motivated and Spirit-enhanced. There are 2 different and basic kinds of apologists: evangelists and teachers.
* One world, many individuals: apologists should use common sense and try to match their apologetic to the person with whom they are speaking.
* One process, many stages: The validity of the apologetics doesn’t depend on its success, but on its utility in facilitating success through the hidden illuminating work of the Holy Spirit within non-Christians. It should provide basis for a non-Christian to move closer to embrace the Christian faith.
* One faith, many questions: different approaches are effective depending on the kinds of questions even on the same subject. For example, problem of evil.
* SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Common Questions from Unbelievers** | **Possible Apologetic Arguments** |
| It doesn’t matter to me if God exists or not. | If God exists, it matters. (F) |
| God may be real to you, but he’s not to me | Is Jesus real enough for you? (F)  You live everyday as if God exists. (R) |
| How do you know there is a God? | Without God, there is no meaning. (R)  No other worldview makes sense. (C)  There are many lines of evidence. (E) |
| The stories in the Bible are hard to believe. | If God exist, nothing is too hard for him. (C) |
| Why must we believe in the God of the Bible? | God fulfilled prophecy and did miracles. (E) |
| How do we know Jesus rose from the dead? | The tomb was empty and people saw Jesus. (E) |
| Wasn’t Jesus just a great prophet? | Great prophets don’t claim to be God. (C) |
| Why is Christianity alone the truth? | The God of Christianity is the only true God. (R)  Christ is the truth; Christianity points to him. (F) |
| I’d like to believe, but I’m not sure. | Read the Gospels and get to know Jesus. (F) |
| (C) Classical; (E) Evidential; (R) Reformed; (F) Fideism | |