

APOLOGETICS - DEFENDING OUR FAITH AGAINST ALL OPPOSITION

LESSON 1: NEUTRALITY

I. **BASICS:**

apologetics: “*apo*” (back) + “*logos*” (word): “to give a word back”,
“to respond in defense”

Acts 22:1 “Brothers and fathers, hear the defense [Ἐπολογίας] that I now make before you.”

1 Peter 3:14b-16

“Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense [Ἐπολογία] to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect...”

Cornelius Van Til: “*Apologetics is the vindication of the Christian philosophy of life against the various forms of non-Christian philosophy of life.*”

Our method: The *presuppositional method* of Holy Scripture

II. **NEUTRALITY:** (important!!!)

1. **SHALL WE BE NEUTRAL?** Prov 1:7; Prov 26:4;

We must be committed to **biblically-warranted** procedures for apologetics. Because Jesus Christ must be the *starting point* in our reasoning.

2. **IS THE UNBELIEVER NEUTRAL?** Rom 1:18; Prov 26:5;

The “neutrality principle” is the alleged operating assumption in all unbelieving argumentation (also in many evangelical apologetic systems). It’s twin-sister is doubt (Bahnsen).

3. **Enlightenment:**

Enlightenment according *Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Encyclopedia*: “European intellectual movement of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in which ideas concerning God, reason, nature, and man were blended into a worldview that inspired revolutionary developments in art, philosophy, and politics. Central to Enlightenment thought were the use and celebration of reason. For Enlightenment thinkers, *received authority*, whether in science or religion, was to be *subject to the investigation of unfettered minds.*” (Emphasis added).

Neutrality and its twin, doubt, have long been unchallenged principles in the modern world's conflict with Christianity.

+ **David Hume**: "Nothing can be more unphilosophical than to be positive or dogmatical on any subject."

+ **William Hazlitt**: "The great difficulty in philosophy is to come to every question with a mind fresh and unshackled by former theories."

+ **Oliver Wendell Holmes**: "To have doubted one's own first principles is the mark of a civilized man."

Neutrality as the **general operating principle** of the modern mindset.

2 influential applications:

a. EVOLUTION:

- Shows the hostility against absolutes - required in the Christian system
- Evolution not only influences biological and earth sciences, but also psychology, anthropology, sociology, politics, economics, the media, the arts, medicine, education etc.
- Evolutionary theory resists stability and certainty as demanded in the Bible
Oliver Wendell Holmes: "Nothing is certain but change."
Heraclitus: "Nothing endures but change."

b. DECONSTRUCTIONISM:

- At first theory of interpreting literature: Yale School of Deconstructionism
- Attempts to "deconstruct" texts to remove all biases and traditional assumptions: "No written text communicates or conveys any reliable or coherent message."
- Everything is subject to interpretation (biased by culture, language etc.)
- Is a form of Relativism and Nihilism.

Scripture answers: Ps. 12:6; 2Tim 3:16-17

4. Is the unbeliever neutral? NO! "Do dead people bleed?"

5. Shall we be neutral? NO (Get rid of Greek dichotomy Form/Matter!)

Presuppositional apologetics in a nutshell: Believer and unbeliever have presuppositions (most basic assumptions which they hold **by faith**). We have to show the unbeliever that he has such presuppositions and we have to push him to their absurd conclusions. At the same time we openly show the unbeliever our biblical presuppositions (which we never abandon) and prove that without them he cannot explain anything. → Proverbs 26:4-5

"For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ..." (2 Cor 10:4-5)