

Apologetics

A Summary of Positions

	Classical Apologetics	Evidentialism	Presuppositionalism	Reformed Epistemology
Starting Point	Reason, especially the classical theistic proofs: deduction	Empirical data, especially the Resurrection: induction	Negatively, the inconsistency of alternatives; positively, the Scriptures as necessary for even the unbeliever's rationality: presupposition	Belief in God, like other beliefs (including belief in the existence of others, the reliability of the senses, etc.), is "properly basic." That is, one is warranted in believing in God because the "sense of God" is common to everyone.
Main Emphasis:	Sound reason will lead to the truth	Sound reason will lead to the truth	Acceptance of the authority of Scripture will lead to the truth	Proper function (viz., of one's sense of God) will lead to the truth
The Chief Goal of Apologetics:	To establish the reasonableness of theism	To establish the reasonableness of Christianity	To establish the sovereignty of God over human autonomy	To expose the captivity of demands for evidence as unwitting capitulations to modernity
The Chief Philosophical Influences:	Plato, Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas: Rationalism	Aristotle, Bacon, Locke, Butler, Scottish "common sense realism" (Thomas Reid), B.B. Warfield and "Old Princeton": Empiricism	Hegel, Bradley, and British "absolute Idealist" thought, Kuyper, Van Til: Idealism	Anselm, Calvin, Kuyper, Bavinck, contemporary critics of "classical foundationalism" (e.g., A. Plantinga, N. Wolterstorff, W. Alston): Post-Foundationalism
Arguments Drawn From:	Philosophy	History/Science	Scripture	Philosophy
Typical Criticisms By Rival Schools:	Too deductive/rationalistic (says the "inductivist" evidentialist); too naive about the sinfulness of the fallen mind and heart, sacrificing God's sovereignty by trying to preserve Enlightenment autonomy (says the presuppositionalist); too committed to classical foundationalism (says the "Reformed epistemologist").	Too optimistic about the powers of the senses, since observation is never neutral and the presuppositions which select, organize, and judge relevant data are never suspended so that one could appeal to a "zero point" of unbiased reflection; can only provide probabilistic arguments, while faith requires certainty.	Too pessimistic about the efficacy of common grace in providing shared convictions about rationality, sense-experience, and the innate sense of God; confusing apologetics (a pre-evangelistic activity of clearing away objections) with evangelism (sharing the Gospel), Presuppositionalism tends to deny the value of arguments and is founded on circular reasoning.	Sense of the divine is insufficient as it is neither an argument for Christianity (says the evidentialist), nor for the Scriptures (says the presuppositionalist).

Points of agreement among all four schools:

- Arguments are useful, but are not themselves salvific.
- There is common ground of some sort between believers and unbelievers, but not neutral ground
- Sin has so darkened the mind and heart that we all, by nature, suppress the truth
- There is a place for reason, evidences, and Scripture in apologetics
- Only by the proclamation of Christ in the Gospel does one actually come to faith

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