

Classical Apologetics

I. Introduction.

A. There are three basic approaches to Apologetics:

1. Evidential Apologetics.
 - a. Josh McDowell and ICR use this method.
 - b. It is based on the use of evidences found in various fields of study that vindicate statements found in the Bible.
 - c. Once the Bible is shown to be reliable, then everything it says should be accepted as truth.
2. Classical Apologetics.
 - a. Anselm, Thomas Aquinas, Puritans, Edwards, Gerstner and Sproul use this method.
 - b. It is a more philosophical approach to showing the existence of God and validity of Scripture using logical proofs, usually based on causality.
 - c. Once the reality of God is demonstrated, then the Scripture is argued to be His Word based on the fact that it reveals this God.
3. Presuppositional Apologetics.
 - a. Cornelius VanTil, Greg Bahnsen and John Frame use this method.
 - b. It begins with the existence of God and the validity of Scripture and argues the impossibility of the contrary.
 - c. It focuses on showing the absurdity of other systems of thought and then shows the absolute reasonableness of the Christian life and world view.

B. This morning, we will be looking at Classical Apologetics.

1. We will look at some of the proofs for God's existence.
2. Then we will argue from His existence to the validity of Scripture.

II. Theological Proofs for God's Existence.

A. Anselm's argument.

1. God is the greatest conceivable Being.
2. This Being must exist in reality as well as in my mind, for if He didn't, He wouldn't be the greatest conceivable Being.

B. Edwards' argument.

1. Something must necessarily exist.
2. That necessary Being is God.

C. A typical Classical approach.

1. Something exists now, therefore something has always existed.
 - a. If something exists now, something must have always existed, because something cannot come from nothing.

- b. It is impossible that there ever could have been nothing, therefore something must always have been.
2. This eternal something must be infinite, independent, immutable and only one.
 - a. It must be infinite because it is impossible that nothing could be anywhere.
 - b. It must be independent because there is nothing else upon which it could depend for its existence.
 - c. It must be unchangeable/immutable because there was nothing that existed beside it to cause any change.
 - d. It must also be one/simple because you cannot have two infinities. They would necessarily limit each other.
 3. This eternal, infinite, independent, unchangeable and simple Being must be something other than what appears.
 - a. What we see is not eternal, but has a beginning.
 - b. What we see is not infinite, but has limits.
 - c. What we see is not independent, but dependent on something else.
 - d. What we see is not unchangeable, but is constantly changing.
 - e. What we see is not one, but many.
 - f. The only exception to this is space. For this reason, Edwards believed that God is the space in which we live, as Paul also tells us, "For in Him we live and move and exist" (Acts 17:28).
 4. This Being must be the Creator of what we see, because there are no other candidates for the job.
 5. This Being must be conscious, personal, intelligent, volitional, moral, benevolent and angry.
 - a. The greater cannot come from something less than itself.
 - b. We see in the creation consciousness, personality, intelligence, volition, and morality. The cause must therefore have these characteristics.
 - c. He must also have them in limitless measure, because He is infinite.
 6. This Being is benevolent, for we see His goodness throughout the Creation.
 7. This Being is also angry, for we see the effects of His anger in the creation.
 8. This Being must also be the author of the Bible because the Bible is the only book that reveals this Being.
- D. A simpler approach.
1. God tells us that He reveals Himself through His Creation.
 - a. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:18-19).

- b. We call this General Revelation: it is a revelation of God that is given to all.
 - c. It began with the Creation, “since the creation of the world.”
 - d. It gets through to man: it is “clearly seen, understood through what has been made” (v. 20). “They knew God” (v. 21).
 - e. They are inexcusable for their unbelief: “So that they are without excuse.”
2. God reveals Himself in the creation and that revelation gets through. But how does God reveal Himself?
- a. First, to see this clearly, we need to accept the simple principle that the greater can’t come from the lesser.
 - (i) Whatever is the cause of what we see must be greater than what we see.
 - (ii) Just as we don’t expect a man to hatch out of a chicken egg, or to spring spontaneously out of the ground, so we know that whatever made the universe and everything in it must be greater than the universe.
 - (iii) What do we see in the Creation?
 - b. Let’s start with the things that are closer to home before we begin to look at the larger things.
 - (i) The first thing we see if life all around us: plants, insects, animals, and man. Whatever made us must be alive, because life can’t come from something that is dead.
 - (ii) Now I would remind you that the evolutionist believes that a large rock exploding in space made everything we see. But could this be true, no matter how much time might have passed? No. Life doesn’t come from non-life.
 - (iii) What else do we see? We see design: we see systems of things working together. We are a good example of this.
 - (a) We see that we have a *pulmonary* system that allows us to get oxygen from the air, an *alimentary* system that allow us to digest food, a *circulatory* system that allows this food and oxygen to get to our cells and to carry off waste, a *skeletal* system that gives structure and support to our bodies, a *muscular* system that allows us to move, a nervous system that allows our brains to control what we do, and an *immune* system that fights off bacteria and viruses so that we will continue to survive. And it does all of this through cells working independently, yet collectively.
 - (b) We also see this design in the plants, insects and animals.
 - (c) And we see design on a cosmic scale.
 - (d) Whatever made us must be infinitely wise and skilled at building.
 - (iv) What else do we see? We see that we have a mind – intelligence, memory, the ability to know that we are, the ability to make decisions, to reason, purpose. We have personality – likes and dislikes. Whoever made us must have all these things. Again, the greater doesn’t come from what is less.

- (v) The fact that we are able to reason shows that a reasonable and rational Being must have made us.
 - (vi) We can also see, hear, smell, taste, and touch. Whoever made us must have these abilities and must have a reason for giving us these abilities.
 - (vii) Look at the variety of sizes, shapes, colors. Look at the variety of plants, insects and animals. This Being must like variety.
 - (viii) And look at how He made us – symmetry, eye color, hair color, facial features. Look at the flowers – their color and design. Look at the animals. The One who made us has a sense of beauty, of aesthetics.
 - (ix) Consider also the variety of foods in the world – fruits, vegetables, nuts and berries, grains, meats, fish and fowl. The One who made us takes care of us (Acts 14:14-17), which means He is good.
 - (x) But look also at the natural dangers in the world – earthquakes, tornados, hurricanes, volcanoes, diseases, etc. He must also be very angry.
 - (xi) What is He angry at? Our conscience tells us that it's something we've done that's wrong. And conscience is universal – an innate understanding of what is right or wrong. He wants us to know what is good and bad, and that He will hold us accountable for what we do.
- c. Now these are just some of the things we see on our level. There is also the microscopic level – the things happening within our cells that makes life possible. This also shows amazing design.
- d. And what about the universe itself?
- (i) The universe shows the same design, but on a much grander scale.
 - (ii) The universe shows us the Designer's power, His immensity and His eternity.
 - (iii) Only infinite power could make something so vast.
 - (iv) He couldn't make something greater than Himself, therefore He must be infinitely large.
 - (v) And since the Creator of all these things must have existed before what He made, He must also be eternal, because it's impossible that there could have been a time when there was nothing.
 - (vi) The evolutionist believes that all these things came about by accident – a big rock exploded and made everything we see.
 - (vii) But this doesn't explain how the big rock got there. It doesn't explain anything. Order, design, beauty, life, intelligence, consciousness, memory, will, and purpose, don't come from chaos. Explosions destroy things, they don't create.
 - (viii) If you threw a bomb into a print shop, it wouldn't create a book, or if into a lumber yard, it wouldn't build a house.
 - (ix) Unless you're willing to believe that an explosion in a printer's shop and book bindery could produce a word perfect Bible with a Smyth-sewn leather binding, gold edging, complete with the publishers name and date, and your name on the outside in gold letters, you can't believe an explosion made what we see, because what we see is far more complex.
 - (x) God must have done all these things.