

# THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

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## The Apologetics of Jesus and Paul

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In recent centuries, practitioners of Christian apologetics have paid little attention to the apologetics of Jesus and Paul, preferring to learn their principles and methods from pagans such as Aristotle or from semi-pagans such as Thomas Aquinas. Some practitioners might even deny that Jesus and Paul "did" apologetics at all. But a willingness to read the Scriptures as they require us to read them reveals that not only did Jesus and Paul "do" apologetics, they presented us with all the necessary principles and methods of apologetics, and with many illustrations of the principles and methods being used in actual debate and argument. The general failure of the apologists to appreciate this fact explains the general failure of apologetics, and is itself explained by the general failure to understand—or to believe—Scripture in recent centuries.

If we believe, as we profess to believe, that "The Bible alone is the Word of God written, and therefore inerrant in the autographs," and if we believe that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work," then we are logically compelled to obtain our principles and methods of apologetics from the Bible alone. The only source of Christian theology is the Bible, and Christian apologetics is, or ought to be, a part of Christian theology. One of the "good works" for which the

Scriptures completely and thoroughly equip us is apologetics. Indeed, Paul seems to have apologetics directly in mind in this passage, for he refers explicitly to teaching, reproof, and correction. The failure of conventional apologists to adhere to *sola Scriptura* in apologetics has resulted in a great deal of confusion and heresy masquerading as Christian theology.

Very few contemporary apologists seem to understand either Christianity or the proper stance of the Christian intellectual with regard to so-called non-Christian wisdom. There is an enormous number of books in print on apologetics—more are being printed monthly—and many of them fail on both counts. For example, conventional apologists focus on so-called proofs for the existence of God—an issue with which the Scriptures are completely unconcerned. The apologists do so because they do not understand that the only way of knowing truth is neither unaided logic nor sensation, nor both together, but propositional revelation alone. Conventional apologists, it seems, do not even believe—perhaps cannot even conceive—that propositional revelation is a way of knowing; they are so enthralled or deceived by human philosophy that they apparently can conceive of only two possible ways of knowing: reasoning and sensation. Conventional apologists conceive of apologetics as a discipline that can be and ought to be done apart from Scripture. They might use a few verses of Scripture to put a Christian veneer on their otherwise pagan systems, but Scripture does not

provide them with either the content or the method of apologetics—it provides them neither the grammar, nor the logic, nor the rhetoric of apologetics—and the doctrinal chaos and reigning error in churches, schools, colleges, and seminaries claiming to be Christian testify to the enormity of their error.

Benjamin Warfield's definition of apologetics, with certain important emendations, is the definition we shall use: "It is . . . the function of apologetics to investigate, explicate, and establish the grounds on which a theology—a science, or systematized knowledge of God—is possible. . . . It necessarily takes its place, therefore, at the head of the departments of theological science and finds its task in the establishment of the validity [Warfield should have said truth] of that knowledge of God which forms the subject-matter of these departments. . . ." Apologetics, to be clearer than Warfield, is the discipline that establishes the exclusive truth of Christianity, on the basis of the information given to us in Scripture.

Most contemporary apologists do not believe in the exclusive truth of Christianity. They do not believe that the Bible has a systematic monopoly on truth. They do not believe that the Bible is the only source of truth. The result is that their books on apologetics, far from being defenses of the Christian faith, turn out to be defenses of science, or sensation, or common sense, or human philosophy, or some combination of these things. The one thing they are not is a defense of the Christian faith; they are defenses of something else, something non-Christian—defenses of competing faiths presented under the guise of Christian apologetics. It is "the faith once for all delivered to the saints" for which we are commanded to contend. It is the "pattern of sound words" which we are to keep. It is "the teaching" and "the faithful word" which we are to defend. Apologists who defend something other than what the Bible specifies are not engaging in Christian apologetics. They are simply fooling themselves. Ironically, it turns out that the nineteenth-century Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard was half-right when he attacked apologetics: The Bible needs no defense other than

itself. All other so-called defenses are analogous to donning Saul's armor, not the Lord's.

## *The Principles and Methods of Christian Apologetics*

The foundation of Christian theology and apologetics is propositional revelation alone, and if there is both written and oral revelation, written revelation is the foundation. All the content of apologetics, including the laws of logic, are found in propositional revelation. Apologetics rests on Scripture alone.

The methods of Christian apologetics may be divided into two parts, logical and rhetorical. The logical methods are sometimes stated, most often illustrated, by Jesus and Paul (and the other Biblical writers as well), as are the rhetorical methods. The logical methods include deduction in the forms of immediate inference, syllogism, and sorites; apagogic, sometimes called *ad hominem*, arguments (not to be confused with abusive *ad hominem* arguments) in which an opponent's point of view is adopted for the purpose of demonstrating the logical absurdity of his view; dilemmas, and arguments *a fortiori*. The rhetorical devices include sarcasm, ridicule, kindness, courtesy, paradox, and questions.

## *The Wilderness Temptation*

Perhaps the best place to begin is with a discussion of Jesus' apologetics in the Gospels. Let us begin with his consistent appeal to Scripture. Here is the account of his temptation found in *Matthew* 4:

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward he was hungry.

Now when the tempter came to him, he said, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."

But he answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took him up into the holy city, set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written, 'He shall give his angels charge concerning you,' and 'In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.'"

Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'"

Again the devil took him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, "All these things I will give you if you will fall down and worship me."

Then Jesus said to him, "Get behind me, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only you shall serve.'"

Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and ministered to him.

There are several important points to be noticed in this account. First, Christ's only defense in this apologetic encounter of the highest importance is Scripture. In response to the devil's challenges, he does not appeal to anything except Scripture.

Second, he appeals exclusively to Scripture despite the fact that immediately before his temptation in the wilderness, he had been baptized, had seen the Holy Spirit miraculously descend like a dove, and had miraculously heard a voice from Heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." He does not mention these miracles, these experiences, in his defense of his status, despite the fact that the devil focuses his challenge on the statement that Christ is the Son of God. Undoubtedly the conventional apologists, the evidentialist-empirical apologists, if they were consistent, would say that Christ made an apologetic blunder of the first order here. He should have appealed to his experience, not just to Scripture. But Christ, of course, is not an evidentialist apologist.

Third, Christ's failure to appeal either to experience or miracle indicates that these are not authoritative in apologetics. They are neither necessary nor sufficient in apologetics. Scripture is both necessary and sufficient. Experiences can be mistaken, and miracles can deceive, but Scripture can neither be mistaken nor deceptive. Later during his ministry he speaks of the apologetic usefulness of miracles:

There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores.

So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

Then he cried out and said, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame."

But Abraham said, "Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things—but now he is comforted and you are tormented. Besides all this, there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us."

Then he said, "I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment."

Abraham said to him, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them."

And he said, "No, father Abraham, but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent."

But he said to him, "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead."

Conventional apologists, unlike Abraham and Christ, put a great stock in miracles, including the miracle of Christ's own resurrection. For example, John Gerstner, R. C. Sproul, and Arthur Lindsley write in their book *Classical Apologetics*:

What would God give His messengers that all could see could come only from God? Since the power of miracle belongs to God alone, miracles are a suitable and fitting vehicle of attestation (144).

If infinite natural power is the ultimate argument for the existence of God, infinite supernatural power (miracle) is the ultimate argument for the revelation of God. If Satan could do miracles, we could prove neither God nor His revelation. If true miracles could be done by God or Satan, we would learn precisely nothing from them (157).

In summary, we stress again the indispensability of genuine miracles. They and they alone ultimately prove that Christ is the Son of God and that the Bible is the Word of God (161).

But of course these gentlemen err by not knowing the Scriptures, for the power of performing miracles does not belong to God alone. Therefore, since Satan can do miracles, these gentlemen can prove neither God nor his revelation.

Five hundred years ago, one Christian apologist, Martin Luther, was not so ignorant of Scripture. He wrote:

The matter of supreme importance to us is to appreciate the value and use of Scripture, that is, to know that it is a witness to all the articles of Christ, and the

highest witness besides—the witness that exceeds by far all miracles. Christ indicates this to the rich man (*Luke* 16:29-31). They have Moses and the Prophets, He said to him; if they do not believe them, they will certainly be less likely to believe if one rose from the dead. The dead may deceive us, but Scripture cannot. This, then, is the point that forces us to hold Scripture in high esteem. And indeed Christ himself here holds it to be the best witness. He says in effect: You read the Prophets and yet you do not believe? . . . So Christ wants to emphasize it even more than his appearance. He does not say: Why do you not want to believe the women who told you that I had risen? Nor does He say: Why do you not want to believe the angels who bore witness to my resurrection? He simply directs them from himself to the Word and Scripture (*What Luther Says*, Plass, ed., 66-67).

The Gospel is mightier to condemn a man than all miracles are to elevate him; for the Gospel neither fails nor lies, but miracles are very deceiving. Thus, St. Paul says (*2 Thessalonians* 2:9) that Antichrist is to deal in false signs to deceive even the elect (*Matthew* 24:24): In *Deuteronomy* 13:5 Moses, too, writes that we simply must not believe any sign if it tends to contradict the Word of God. For signs are to serve and follow the Word and are not to speak the deciding word.

Scripture is not merely the best argument, it is the only foundation of truth. Christ appeals to it *exclusively*, not as one among several sources. Christ is not an evidentialist, but a Scripturalist.

Fourth, Christ appeals to Scripture, even though he himself is God. The written revelation is of greater authority than his own spoken words. He also appeals to Scripture rather than to the voice from Heaven. Peter explains why in his second letter:

We heard this voice which came from Heaven when we were with him on the

holy mountain. We also have the prophetic word made more sure, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

Fifth, Christ does not appeal to something other than Scripture, even when the devil himself quotes Scripture. Evidentialists are wont to say that when Scriptural interpretations differ, the differences must be settled by an appeal to something other than Scripture. Christ does nothing of the sort—undoubtedly another apologetic blunder from the point of view of the evidentialists—which is why they prefer Aristotle to Christ. Christ responds by quoting Scripture back to the devil, correcting his misinterpretation. Scripture, as the Westminster Confession says, is the only infallible interpreter of Scripture. There is no greater authority. Christ does not settle this dispute by appealing to some lesser authority than the written Word of God, and neither should we.

Sixth, the devil performs miracles during this encounter. He takes Christ from the wilderness and places him on the pinnacle of the temple. Many who otherwise believe the Bible, believe that the devil did not literally move Christ to the roof of the temple. But the temptation makes no sense if he did not. The devil was attempting to impress Christ by his own ability to perform miracles.

Seventh, Christ refuses to perform any miracle, or to demand that God perform a miracle, or to worship anyone but God. This, of course, is not the only occasion on which he refused to perform a miracle, for he did not perform for unbelievers, only for believers. Instead of miracles, he appeals exclusively to Scripture.

### *The Garden Temptation*

It is interesting to compare Christ's apologetic encounter to the prior one involving the first Adam and his wife. In that case, of course, the setting was

a garden, not a wilderness; the temptees were not hungry, but well provided for. There was no Scripture, although there was clear and simple propositional revelation. It is that revelation that Satan attacks: Has God said? Eve, blundering, misquotes the revelation, or perhaps accurately quotes Adam's misquotation of the revelation. The devil attacks, asserting that the revelation is not true. Eve, and apparently Adam, for we are told that he was with her, decides to perform an experiment, to see who is correct, God or Satan. Eve believes the evidence of the senses: "The woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate." The experiment proved God wrong. God's theory was that eating the fruit would cause death. But Eve ate it and didn't die. So God was wrong.

The first temptation succeeded because Adam and Eve doubted and then tested propositional revelation, relying on their observations to make the judgment. The second temptation failed because Christ relied exclusively on propositional revelation. He neither doubted nor tested revelation, as the devil tried to get him to do. The first sin was an intellectual sin—an epistemological sin: the shifting of the ground of judgment from revelation to observation.

### *Christ's Esteem of Scripture*

There is abundant evidence in the Gospels testifying to the respect Christ had for Scripture. Perhaps the most famous passage is *Matthew* 5:18: "For assuredly, I say to you, till Heaven and Earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled." In addition to this and other general statements about Scripture—such as, "the Scripture cannot be broken" (*John* 10: 35)—Christ made numerous references supporting the historicity of such Old Testament figures as Abel (*Luke* 11:51), Noah (*Matthew* 24:37-39), Abraham (*John* 8:56), Sodom and Gomorrah (*Matthew* 10:15; 11:23-24), Lot (*Luke* 17:28-32), Isaac and Jacob (*Matthew* 8:11), the brazen serpent (*John* 3:14), and more.

Furthermore, Christ constantly and consistently emphasized the importance of words in general: Christ's words are Spirit and life (*John* 6:63); all humans will be judged by their words, including every idle word (*Matthew* 12:36-37); God's Word is quick and powerful; God's words shall not pass away (*Matthew* 24:35); whoever keeps Christ's words will not see death, ever (*John* 8:51).

In specific instances, where conventional apologetics would require Christ to appeal to something other than Scripture, he failed to do so. He responded to the inquiries from the disciples of John the Baptist by quoting Scripture. He quoted Isaiah to explain why he spoke to the people in parables. After his resurrection, he taught the disciples the Old Testament. He reproached Thomas for not believing the Word and for demanding to see and touch. In his conversation with the rich, young ruler he quoted the Old Testament. He quoted the Old Testament to explain why he was driving the moneychangers and animal vendors out of the Temple. He repeatedly and sarcastically reproached the scribes, Pharisees, and rulers for their ignorance of the Scriptures: "Have you not read?" "You're a teacher a Israel and you don't know these things?" "Go and learn what this means." In short, Christ believed and taught that the Bible was the Word of God, the sufficient Word of God, and he based his apologetics exclusively on that Word. The Bible, in fact, is the expression of his mind. There is no separation between the Word and the Word.

### *Christ's Use of Logic*

There are as many examples of Christ's use of logic as there are of his appeals to Scripture. Let me begin, however, with the conversation that occurs in *Matthew* 22, in which the Sadducees attack the resurrection:

The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him and asked him, saying, "Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after

he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. And last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her."

Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in Heaven. But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his teaching.

And if we are not astonished, we have failed to understand his teaching.

Here is the situation: The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection because they thought that it led to an absurd conclusion and an insoluble problem: a resurrected wife with seven resurrected husbands. But Christ solves the problem for them, by quoting Scripture and using logic. He tells them first that they are mistaken. He does not irenically seek common ground with the unbelieving Sadducees. You're wrong, he asserts. Then he tells them why they are wrong: They don't know the Scriptures. He reproaches them for not realizing something that they should have realized from their study of Scripture: Marriage ends at death. In fact, their own argument included the presumption that marriage ends at death. If marriage did not end at death, then the woman's successive marriages to the brothers, while still married, was itself sinful. But if marriage ends at death, then why would the resurrected woman have any husbands, let alone seven? The Sadducees should have realized that in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage. They did not realize the implications of their own words. Christ judges them by their own

words. Their own words judge them. Nor did the Sadducees recognize the logical implications of the statement Christ quotes from the Old Testament: God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. Because the verb is in the present tense, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are living, and death is not the end of life, though it is the end of marriage. This is an example of Christ's using deductive reasoning. He does not use inductive reasoning, for inductive reasoning, unless the induction can be completed, which is quite rare, is always fallacious, and the *Logos* does not argue fallaciously.

Another example of deduction may be found in *John* 8:47: "He who is of God hears God's words; therefore, you do not hear, because you are not of God." In categorical form the argument appears thus:

Only those of God hear God's words.

You are not of God.

Therefore, you are not hearers of God's words.

In symbolic form: Only if p, then q. Not p; therefore, not q.

Notice the thoroughgoing Calvinism of Christ's teaching. Arminians tend to misread the verse as saying, "You are not of God because you do not hear." But Christ said, "You do not hear, because you are not of God." Election is the cause of regeneration, not the other way around. If Arminians were better logicians, they wouldn't be Arminians.

These deductions are fairly straightforward, and there are many more. Many of Christ's arguments are misunderstood, however. Take this conversation in *Matthew* 16:1-4:

Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing him, asked that he would show them a sign from Heaven.

He answered and said to them, "When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; and in the morning, 'it will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You

know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah." And he left them and departed.

Apparently Christ chose this illustration of the weather because the Jews had asked for a sign from Heaven. Even in his illustration he argued *ad hominem*. Now, some commentators have misunderstood this illustration to mean that Christ approved the unbelieving Jews' empirical epistemology and weather forecasting abilities. Now, I doubt that even the most enthusiastic empiricist or evidentialist would be willing to say that weather forecasting yields knowledge. It is, rather, one of the most common examples of guesswork. And if anyone thinks that Christ said that the Jews gained knowledge by weather forecasting, he has completely misunderstood what Christ did say.

First, Christ's words are an apagogic or *ad hominem* argument. Christ is not endorsing the empirical epistemology of weather forecasting; he is accepting the Sadducees' claim to know, merely for the sake of argument. He calls them hypocrites because they claim to be able to forecast the weather on flimsy evidence, but they cannot understand the signs of the times, specifically Christ's fulfillment of Scripture, even though the evidence is abundant. They claim to know by observing the sky; but they do not know by reading Scripture, listening to Christ, and observing his miracles. They are hypocrites. Christ is not endorsing their pagan epistemology; he is accepting it *ad hominem*, merely for the sake of argument. He finally condemns them for asking for a sign.

Christ uses this frequently misunderstood method of argument repeatedly. For example, in *Matthew* 9:10-13 we read:

And so it was, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to his disciples, "Why

does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

But when Jesus heard that, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

Now, presumably even conventional apologists would agree that Christ was not stating that the Pharisees were righteous and well. He was simply, for the sake of argument, adopting their own view of themselves, and explaining, on that basis, why he did not eat with them: They, being well, had no need of a physician. In this case, his *ad hominem* method of arguing is very clear, but in other cases, such as the one about the weather, some might be initially confused. There are, however, no evidentialist verses in Scripture, any more than there are Arminian verses. There are only verses that, if read superficially, may sound evidentialist or Arminian, but when one understands what has been written, it becomes clear that neither evidentialism nor Arminianism is taught anywhere in Scripture. Both are pagan glosses on Scripture, reading Scripture through Aristotelian or Pelagian glasses.

In *John* 9:40-41 we find another apagogic or *ad hominem* argument:

Then some of the Pharisees who were with him heard these words, and said to him, "Are we blind also?"

Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, 'We see.' Therefore, your sin remains."

Before I turn to Paul's apologetics, let me point out one conversation in which Christ "lost" an argument. In *Matthew* 15 we read:

And behold a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-

possessed." But he answered her not a word.

And his disciples came and urged him, saying, "Send her away, for she cries out after us."

But he answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Then she came and worshiped him, saying, "Lord, help me!"

But he answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs."

And she said, "True, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table."

Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

This Canaanite woman used an *ad hominem* argument to persuade Christ to heal her daughter. Christ praises her use of the argument as an act of great faith. Had she been a feminist, of course, she would have bristled at Christ's calling her a dog, and both she and her daughter would have been lost. The woman's faith, humility, strength, and intelligence are clearly seen in her argument with Christ.

There are dozens of similar examples in the Scriptures; I do not have the time to include them all here, but I hope to include them in my book on apologetics, *Principles of Christian Apologetics*. Let us now turn to Paul.

## *The Apologetics of Paul*

Paul, of course, used the same principles and methods as Christ. He was no innovator in apologetics, just as he was no innovator in theology proper. We are told that Paul's habit, as Christ's was, was to go into the synagogues every week, "reasoning and persuading" the Jews. Of course,



that reasoning was done from the Old Testament. In *Acts* 9:22, "Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ." His proofs were based on Scripture, which is what confounded the Jews.

Paul opens his letter to the Romans by establishing that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." The chapters leading up to this conclusion are not an inductive argument in which Paul examines the life of every man who has ever lived. After all, one cannot establish universals by induction; that requires revelation, and revelation is what Paul uses. Verses 10 through 18 of chapter 3 are quotations from the Old Testament proving that "There is none righteous, no not one." Universal propositions in the Bible are true because they are revealed. Without revelation, there could be no universals, such as, all who are justified are justified by faith alone. Biblical universals are true. Empirical universals are false.

Paul's procedure in *Romans*, later followed by Thomas Aquinas in *Summa Theologiae*, was to raise a series of questions, and then answer them, both incorrectly and correctly. Paul, however, derived all his answers from revelation. His opening chapters have been much misunderstood by Thomas the Aristotelian, and by his many followers, both Romanist and Protestant. But Paul does not add any source of truth to Scripture. A careful reading of *Romans* 1:18-21 indicates that it has nothing to do with the so-called Thomistic proofs for the existence of God. Let us examine it line by line.

"For the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven. . . ." Taking off one's Aristotelian glasses, one might be surprised to note that Paul says the wrath, not the existence, of God is revealed from Heaven. Apparently our evidentialist friends have misread the verse. (Likewise, the Psalmist says the heavens declare the glory, not the existence, of God. Funny how the empiricism of Aristotle can make people hallucinate.) I have yet to come across an evidentialist argument proving the wrath of God on empirical grounds. This is a curious inconsistency. Evidentialists like to argue from experience and observation to the goodness, benevolence, or

intelligence of some sort of god, but they are strangely silent about the rest of experience, which seems to imply, on their assumptions, the irrationality or wickedness of a god. If they are going to appeal to experience as proof of God, they must appeal to all experience, including the experience of Nazism, Communism, and Romanism.

Verse 19 says, "What may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them." This, of course, is obviously a denial of empiricism, and an assertion of direct revelation in their minds. It is manifest in them. Calvin said that men are born with a sense of God. They do not learn about God's existence through observation; when they are conceived they possess knowledge of God and his wrath. It is this immediately revealed knowledge that renders all men inexcusable. If our guilt depended on our knowledge (as it does), and our knowledge in turn depended on our senses, or on our ability to follow an intricate cosmological argument, then virtually all the human race would be innocent. Those whose senses are impaired are obviously excused, and those who cannot follow an argument, especially one that stretches for a thousand steps, are excused as well. Helen Keller and Forest Gump get free passes to Heaven. Given the assumptions of evidentialist apologetics, their lack of senses or intelligence gives them a Get Out of Hell Free card. Paul, of course, was not endorsing the cosmological or teleological arguments. He taught that the rudimentary knowledge which renders men inexcusable is manifest in them because God has shown it to them; it is not something they gain by observation or discursive reasoning.

Verse 20 says, "For since the creation of the world his invisible attributes are clearly seen. . . ." Obviously, invisible attributes cannot be seen with the eyes, so Paul was not teaching some form of empiricism.

Paul continues: "being understood": "see" it seems, was a metaphor for "understand," as it usually is in Scripture. "By the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse." In this portion of the verse, Paul is simply

repeating his statement: The things that are made include men. He is not teaching a novelty—that seeing trees (if one could, in fact, see trees) logically compels one to infer wrath, eternal power, and judgment in the Godhead. Thomas himself denied that creation could be inferred from observation. It was a truth he said, that must be obtained by revelation. Paul is no more an evidentialist than Christ. Instead, he defends revelation, both here and in other letters, such as *1 Corinthians* and *Colossians*, as the only source of knowledge.

### *Paul's Use of Logic*

Perhaps the most famous example of Paul's use of deductive reasoning in an *ad hominem* argument is, of course, *1 Corinthians* 15:

Now if Christ is preached that he has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is vain and your faith is also vain. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ, whom he did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

In this brilliant passage Paul deduces several consequences from his opponents' view that there is no resurrection. He is trying to make them see the logical implications of their view, and thus to persuade them that their view is false. Here are the implications he draws from the proposition that there is no resurrection:

1. Christ is not risen.
2. Our preaching is false.
3. Your faith is futile.

4. We are false witnesses.
5. You are still in your sins.
6. Those who have already died have perished in their sins.
7. We are of all men the most pitiable.

Some of these he derives by immediate inference; some by extended arguments called sorites, which have more than two premises. Paul's logic was impeccable, just as was Christ's. Of course, had there been any neo-orthodox or VanTilian Corinthians, they would have replied to Paul by saying that Paul's logic was not God's logic, that faith must curb logic, and that we cannot be held responsible for the logical implications of our views. Perhaps they would even have called Paul a rationalist who impiously and arrogantly disdains the mysteries of the Kingdom of God and sets himself above his brethren. But Paul had no patience with Mystery or Theological Paradox; he wrote as he was instructed by the Holy Spirit.

### *Conclusion*

By way of bringing this paper to a close, let me quote first John Wycliffe, then Martin Luther:

Wycliffe: All law, all philosophy, all logic, and all ethics are in Holy Scripture. In Holy Scripture is all truth. Every Christian ought to study this book, because it is the whole truth.

Luther: If a person were imprisoned in a house in the dead of night, when it is pitch dark, it would be necessary to kindle a light to enable him to see until the break of day. In this way the Gospel truly shines in the dead of night and in darkness; for all human reason is mere error and blindness, and the world itself is nothing but a realm of darkness. Now in this darkness God has kindled the light, namely, the Gospel, to enable us to see and walk as long as we are on Earth, until the dawn comes and the day breaks forth.

Thus this text (*Psalm* 119:105) is also strongly opposed to all human doctrines; for since the Word of God is the light in a dark and gloomy place, it follows that all else is darkness. For if there were another light, apart from the Word, St. Peter would not have spoken as he did. Therefore, do not consider how intelligent the men are who teach a different doctrine and how impressively they present their case. If you cannot trace it to God's Word, then do not doubt that it is mere darkness, and do not let it disturb you at all that they say they have the Holy Spirit. How can they have God's spirit if they do not have his Word? Therefore they do nothing else but call darkness light and make the light darkness, as Isaiah says.

Scripture . . . alone is the fount of all wisdom. . . . Scripture alone must remain the judge and the master of all books. . . . Whoever does not consult Scripture will know nothing whatever. . . . Nothing except the divine words are to be the first principles for Christians; all human words are conclusions drawn from them and must be brought back to them and approved by them.