

The Orthodoxy of Covenantal Apologetics

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Covenantal Apologetics,¹ in principle and practice, means destroying arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of the only true triune² God; holding every thought captive to obey Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). Thus, apologetics — the defense of the faith — is simply applying biblical truth to unbelief;³ vindicating the Christian philosophy of life over and against any other.⁴

This is because God has been clearly perceived by all his creation to man, including man himself (Rom. 1:19-20).⁵ This natural revelation is equally ultimate with God’s covenant words (Isa. 46:10, 55:11) — the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16), his revelation (1 Cor. 4:7) — because both word and nature are equally necessary, authoritative, inerrant, clear, and sufficient.⁶ This is the case from the outset of creation. Yes, even inanimate creation is in covenant with God (Gen 1, 8:2, Jer. 33:20, 25).⁷

Even so, Man broke covenant (Gen 3) subjecting all creation to futility (Rom.8:20). God handed him over (Ps. 81:12, Rom. 1:24,26,28,) and Man became defiled in all faculties and parts of the body (Jn. 3:19, Rom. 1:21, Eph 2:3).⁸ Therefore introducing the discontinuity that Man is ethically - and thus reasonably - incapable of responding in humble submission to God (Rom. 8:7, 1 Cor. 1:18, 2:14). Though man, as *Imago Dei* (Gen. 1:27, 5:1, 9:6), still has the faculty of reason, he reasons in rebellion (Pr. 12:10), unless he is born from above (Jn. 3:3, 5), thus becoming a covenantally adopted son of God through Jesus (Gal. 3:26, 4:5, Rom. 8:15, Eph. 1:5) and truly set free (Jn. 8:32, 36, Gal. 5:1).

Any attempt of Man, the “in Adam” covenant-breaker,”⁹ to individually or collectively utilize himself as the ultimate reference point¹⁰ using nature alone to come to the rational conclusion of the existence and attributes of a god or what words — if any — a god has spoken is futile.¹¹ As inculcated from what is to be believed - orthodoxy - God does not believe in atheists — just fools who say there is no god (Ps. 14:1, 53:1). Nor does God believe in agnostics, for they along

¹ OLIPHINT, K. *Covenantal Apologetics: Principles and Practice in Defense of Our Faith*, 38–47. Wheaton, IL: CROSSWAY BOOKS, 2013.

² This was added for emphasis, being the presupposition of the passage.

³ OLIPHINT, K. *Covenantal Apologetics*, 29.

⁴ Van Til, Cornelius and William Edgar. *Christian Apologetics*. 2nd ed. 17. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company, 2003.

⁵ CALVIN, JOHN *Institutes of the Christian Religion* Vol. 1. 37-39. Grand Rapids, MI, WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964.

⁶ Van Til, Cornelius, and William Edgar. *Christian Apologetics*. 2nd ed. 78-79.

⁷ Blackburn, Earl M., *Covenant Theology: A Baptist Distinctive*. 30-31. Pelham, AL: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2013.

⁸ The 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith, 6.2

⁹ OLIPHINT, K. *Covenantal Apologetics*, 97.

¹⁰ VAN TIL, Cornelius and William Edger. *Christian Apologetics* 2nd ed. 117-120.

¹¹ *ibid.* 136.

with the atheists — as with all unbelievers — are idolatrous truth suppressors (Rom 1:18-32). Contrary to a claim that God does believe in atheists,¹² “atheos” without God,¹³ is a covenantal distinction (Rom. 3:1-2, 9:3-8, Gal. 4:8, Eph. 2:12,19),¹⁴ not a lack of knowledge. There is no contradiction, as the claim would imply. Thus, physical or philosophical evidences, though they have their place,¹⁵ are not the issue when addressing a subjective claim of unbelief; they are not the objectively true “*consistent with scripture*” issues or the power of salvation — the Gospel is (Rom. 1:16)!

It is the gospel that is the hope within us, because of what it presupposes: that we must be prepared to answer for when asked (1 Pet 3:15), because it is in the fullness of the Gospel we proclaim all to repent and believe (Mk. 1:15), to learn and observe (Matt. 28:18-20) and contend for (Jude 3). This gospel is received as opposed to transcended to (Jn. 17: 6-10, 20, 1 Cor. 4:7) for it is the knowledge of God that we, if in Christ, have been granted repentance and belief (2 Tim. 2:25).¹⁶ The final and ultimate point is well articulated in both the Westminster and 1689 London Baptist confessions, chapter 7.1, combined:

“The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto him as their Creator, yet they could never...

1. have any fruition of him as their blessedness and reward;¹⁷ or,
2. have attained the reward of life.¹⁸

...but by some voluntary condescension on God’s part, which he hath been pleased to express by way of covenant.”

¹² Adam Cochrun and David Van Bebber, interview with Adam Tucker and Dr. Richard Howe, The T.A.G. You’re It! Podcast, podcast audio, April 30, 2020, <https://tagyoureitpod.podbean.com/mf/play/csms7t/tagses2.mp3>

¹³ “Strong’s Greek: 112. ἄθεος (atheos) -- godless, ungodly,” Bible Hub, accessed November 7, 2021, <https://biblehub.com/greek/112.htm>

¹⁴ This is a difference between the Jews as people of the covenant (Rom. 3:1) unlike the Gentiles who once were far off but now are being brought into the same New Covenant through Christ (Eph 2:13) — the gospel!

¹⁵ LISLE, DR. JASON. The Ultimate Proof Of Creation: Resolving the Origins Debate. 97-104. Green Forest, Ar: Master Books, 2009

¹⁶ OLIPHINT, K. Covenantal Apologetics, 51.

¹⁷ Westminster Confession 7.1

¹⁸ 1689 London Baptist Confession