

# A SUMMARY OF APOLOGETIC POSITIONS

## Classical Apologetics

## Evidentialism

## Presuppositionalism

### Starting Point

Reduction: Reason, especially the classical theistic proofs

Induction: Empirical data, especially the Resurrection

Presupposition: Negatively, the inconsistency of alternatives; positively, the Scriptures as necessary for even the unbeliever's rationality

### Main Emphasis

Sound reason will lead to the truth

Sound investigation will lead to the truth

Acceptance of the authority of Scripture will lead to the truth

### The Chief Goal of Apologetics

Goal is to establish the reasonableness of theism

Goal is to establish the reasonableness of Christianity

Goal is to establish the sovereignty of God over human autonomy

### The Chief Philosophical Influences

Rationalism: Plato, Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas

Empiricism: Aristotle, Bacon, Locke, Butler, Scottish "common sense realism" (Thomas Reid), B.B. Warfield and "Old Princeton"

Idealism: Hegel, Bradley, and British "absolute Idealist" thought, Kuyper, Van Til

### Arguments Drawn From

Philosophy

History/Science

Scripture

### Typical Criticisms by Rival Schools

Too deductivistically 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.

### Points of Agreement Among all Three 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