

TRANSCENDENTAL APOLOGETICS

(A Synopsis)

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A. Contours of Transcendental Apologetics

I. Introduction

Transcendental Apologetics aims to be a fully *Biblical* Apologetics.

- a. It is thoroughly and unashamedly **presuppositional** (1 Pet. 3:15), even if makes copious use of historical as well as factual evidences (Acts 2:22-23), engages in informal as well as formal logical argumentation (Acts 24:17-20; 25:8-11), and shares unique as well as common experiences (Acts 2:24-32; 26:9-23).
- b. However, it **keeps its distance** from any and all evidentialist, rationalist and experientialist apologetics that presumes a **neutral**, common ground with the unbeliever on which jointly and pre-evangelistically to canvass evidences, to construct arguments, and to assess experiences both with the (misguided) aim of building (at least) a halfway house to God, and with the (mistaken) notion that this is achievable.
- c. At the same time it is to be distinguished from, and moves beyond, any and all possible apologetics, whether evidentialist, rationalist, experientialist *or* (sic!) presuppositionalist, which, consciously or not, regards the capture of the **mind** as “the great prize” in Apologetics.
- d. In the footsteps of Peter (Acts 2:37), and Stephen (Acts 7:54) Transcendental Apologetics goes after the **heart**, with a vengeance. (This may mean conversions, as in Peter’s case. It also may mean death, as Stephen found out.) Consequently it is not and cannot be satisfied with a nod of agreement by the intellect and does not make its presentations to that end. To the contrary, it aims at the submission of the heart, and therefore has the summons to repentance as the (only acceptable) methodological objective of any and all its presentations. (This is fully in line with Peter in Acts 2:38, and Paul in Acts 17:30.)

II. Backdrop

1. **Transcendental Apologetics is predicated upon the truth of Colossians 2:8 in the larger context of both Colossians and Ephesians.** Here Paul antithetically pits man against God.
2. **On the one hand, there is the empty and deceitful, all too human, philosophy that endeavors to put the basic building blocks or ABC’s of reality (stoicheia) together according to the thought patterns and traditions of apostate man in a sophisticated, rationally compelling, accounting that leaves no loose ends. On the other hand there is the simple profundity of the Person (and Work) of Christ.**
3. **Human philosophy invariably launches an independent and autonomous effort from the bottom up to make total sense of all human experiencing. This is evidence of a staggering pride and is contrasted with humble dependence upon Christ.**
4. **The all too human effort fails, according to Paul.** It is empty. It does not deliver. It is also deceitful. **It claims it does. However, since it does not, it pulls the wool over the eyes of all its originators, its champions as well as its adherents. On the other hand, dependence upon Christ as the God-man cannot miss! After all, his credentials are impressive, to say the least.**
5. **He is the Creator and the Sustainer of the universe (Col. 1:16-17). He is the embodiment of all knowledge and wisdom (Col. 2:3). He is the guarantee of glory (Col. 1:27). In short, he is the Great Originator, Sustainer, Source, Guide and Guarantor, and therefore spells Strength and Success. He is, and can be all this, because he is God incarnate (Col. 1:19)! The go-it-alone philosophy, however sophisticated and profound it may seem to be, does not merely pale in comparison. It is**

suicidal, as will now be demonstrated.

5. In the context of Colossians (at least some of) the basic building blocks or ABC's of everyday reality are shown to consist of one-and-many spheres (Col. 3:12-17) and authority structures (Col. 3:18-4:1). (Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians runs parallel to Colossians in Eph. 4:25-5:20 and Eph. 5:21-6:9.) Both these spheres and these structures constitute the warp and woof, the "deep structure," of all of creation, including the society of man, and are therefore inescapable and unavoidable. At any given time or place all humans always find themselves within one or more of these spheres or structures. This is not an evolutionary fluke.

6. Metaphysically created reality reflects the Uncreated (and Co-ultimate!) One-and-Many, and mirrors the Uncreated (and Co-functional!) Authority-and-Subject relationship in the Being of the Triune God. He has put the imprint of his very Being indelibly upon his creation. In this light it is hardly surprising that many thinkers, philosophers as well as theologians, have come to the conclusion that all of philosophy, in fact all of life, is one long series of attempts to solve the one-and-many problem and to settle the sovereignty-responsibility issue. What else can we expect? It is the most fundamental and all-encompassing "raw" material of creation and its history. Everyone is structurally part and parcel of it, comes by definition face to face with it, and therefore must come to terms with, whether eagerly or reluctantly!

Note: As is argued below, epistemologically created reality only makes sense when it is deciphered according to the interpretation of God, while ethically it only functions properly when it is experienced according to the conduct of God. This comes down to a renunciation of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which pits the ultimacy of the human mind and behavior against the ultimacy of God's Word and Holiness.

7. Any encounter with the all-encompassing creational spheres and structures from an apostate starting point and perspective, whether in thought or action, invariably reveals a fundamental dialectic. In the present context the term "dialectic" stands for an "entity" that consists of two poles, such as the "one" and the "many," or "authority" and "subject." The rub is that in the setting of unbelief these poles mutually and simultaneously both presuppose and exclude each other, and will do so permanently as long as the dialectic prevails.

Note: This dialectic is not a metaphysical factuality that serves as a challenge to be solved by the God of Scripture. It is an evidence of epistemological rebellion against the God of Scripture to be repented of by man. It is not an essential part of God's good creation, but an ethical force that emerges wherever apostasy reigns, and enslaves unbelievers in their totality, and frequently infects Christians as well.

8. This dialectic, which is God's judgment and Satan's tool, governs and directs all of apostate thought and action. The mutual presupposition sets them in motion. The poles must be thought together, by philosophy, economic theory, theoretical physics, etc. and brought together, in the family, the school, the business, etc. Otherwise life stagnates and self-destructs. However, the mutual exclusion only produces, and cannot but produce, failure. The mutual exclusion renders it by definition impossible to think or bring the poles together in a synthetic, peaceful, coexistence. It is no wonder that all of the history of fallen man proves to be a total frustration!

9. It has been astutely observed that it has only two prospects to offer: extinction when the one pole succeeds in eliminating the other, or warfare when they tenuously co-exist. In short, fallen man never succeeds in making either the created one-and-many co-ultimate, or the created authority-subject relationship co-functional. Still, due to the mutual presupposition of the two poles apostate man never gives up hope that "one day" he will succeed in the synthesis, and consequently will launch attempt after attempt to reach it. (He is like a small child who in "infinite" patience again and again endeavors to put a square peg in a round hole.) But due to their mutual exclusion his attempts are shattered again

and again. He always ends up with a relationship of antagonism, violence, warfare, if not destruction and death, at times more and at times less civil.

10. The Airlines industry with its continuing battle between management (the “one” and the “authority” poles) and union (the “many” and the “subject” poles) is only one telling illustration. In fact, the warfare in Eastern Airlines in the early 1990’s brought about its demise. The antagonism was so deep-rooted and so great that both poles were willing to self-destruct, as long as they could strike a mortal blow against the other! At any rate, the middle name of all humans without God is Sisyphus and their “way” is and remains a never-ending dead-end street. This fully dovetails with Paul’s insistence that an all too human philosophy is both deceptive in its semblance of wisdom, and empty in its proposed solutions. It does not, cannot, and will not deliver, ever!

11. But Paul takes one additional step. According to him, this philosophy, victimized by the dialectic, is rooted in blindness of heart, which is accompanied by a darkened understanding, and is evidenced by debauchery of the basest sort (Eph. 4:17-19; Col. 3:5-7). **In Johannine terms, the victims of the dialectic are blind and rebellious (John 3:3, 5), and walk in darkness (John 3:19-20). Only a “new heart” in regeneration can remove the blindness and the rebellion, and so pave the way to the light (John 3:3, 5, 21) and 5).** Clearly until the issue of the heart is settled, there is no hope for one’s intellect or one’s ethics. **It is hardly surprising that Paul brings this into focus as the first order of business in his interaction with both the Ephesians and the Colossians. The new man or heart is the originating point of all of the Christian life in all its facets and dimensions (Eph. 4:20-24; Col. 3:9-10), and not so incidentally the *conditio sine qua non* to counter the tyranny of the dialectic and its devastating effects.**

12. This does not only put in perspective the Apologetics that is exemplified by Peter, Stephen and Paul. It also vindicates the thesis of Transcendental Apologetics, modeled after Scripture, that a biblically acceptable apologetic method does and must target the heart, if it is to go anywhere, and therefore does and must culminate in an inevitable call to repentance. In conclusion, it should be noted that the dialectic is not a metaphysical, creational, factuality that serves as a challenge to be solved by believers and unbelievers alike, and ultimately even by God. It is an evidence of epistemological rebellion against the God to be repented of by man.

13. Once the issue of the heart is settled, however, and the rebellion against God renounced, there is remarkable daylight! The dialectic is in principle dethroned, and its effects (begin to) vanish. “Sanity” returns. Antagonism, warfare, destruction and death are (progressively) replaced by love, peace, harmony and prosperity. All this is predicated upon man’s heart transplant in regeneration. **But it is also its normal outflow. The regenerate no longer loves sin, and no longer hates God and the neighbor. He now hates sin, and loves God and the neighbor.**

14. This is implemented through the renewal of the mind (Rom. 12:2), as every thought is made captive unto the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). In other words, the intellect submits itself to the interpretation of God of all of reality. However, in the process it does not merely recognize that the one-and-many spheres and the authority-subject structures are anchored in God as a reflection of his Being. It also acknowledges that the only way to make them functional is by reflecting the conduct of God. This conduct consists of self-denial in the one-and-many spheres and sacrifice and submission in the authority structures.

18. Paul indicates this when he deals with both the Ephesians and the Colossians regarding their conduct both in these spheres and structures. He insists on self-denial in love and holiness in the former (Eph. 4:25-5:20; Col. 3:12-17) and on sacrifice and submission in the latter (Eph. 5:21-6:9; Col. 3:18-45:1). When all this is practiced in dependence upon Christ as the source of holiness (Col. 3:1-3) and upon the Church as the pipeline of holiness (Eph. 4:11-17) through the agency of the Spirit (Eph. 5:18) and the instrumentality of the Word (Col. 3:16), the one and many poles become (increasingly) co-ultimate and the authority-subject poles (increasingly) co-functional.

Life's prospect is no longer extinction or warfare, but "shalom," full-orbed, profound, and abiding peace, in the full biblical sense of the word! See also *Sovereignty and Responsibility*, Introduction and Chapter 4.

III. Definition

All this puts the definition of Transcendental Apologetics in the proper perspective. It is the discipline that inquires into:

- a. The (sufficient and necessary) conditions that determine the world and life (view) of both the believer and the unbeliever (Col. 2:8), in short, what makes them tick, **with a view to:**
 - (1) **Acquiring a radical understanding of the Christian position**
 - (2) **Plumbing the depth of the Non-Christian position and**
 - (3) **So paving the way for presenting a perceptive and skillful "defense" of the faith that joins the most fundamental issues, and for mounting a probing and effective "offense" for the faith that meets the most basic needs.**
- b. **The principles, methods and strategies of the defense of, and the offense for, Christian truth in word and deed, that both confirm and strengthen Christians in their stance for that truth, and equip and prepare them to give a knowledgeable, reasoned, dignified, appropriate and pointed response in the face of skepticism, opposition or attack with a view to:**
 - (1) **The conversion (repentance and faith) of unbelievers (2 Tim. 2:25)**
 - (2) **The silencing of unbelievers (1 Pet. 3:16)**
 - (3) **A change of heart or mind on the part of believers through the acknowledgment of any and all truth (Gal. 3:1ff)**
 - (4) **A straightening or strengthening of "questioning" or "uncertain" believers (Rom. 9:18-19; John 6:66-68; 2 Tim. 1:7)**

IV. Setting

1. It also puts the **setting** of a Biblical Apologetics in perspective. The various apologetic proposals pay hardly any attention to the framework within which the apologetic enterprise does and must take place. (This may be due to the fact that the capture of the mind is so much regarded as the grand prize in the apologetic enterprise, that the honing of the intellectual weaponry becomes the near exclusive focus.) Apart from Frances Schaeffer, apologists of whatever persuasion by and large either ignore, overlook or fail to emphasize the issue. This is passing strange in the light of 2 Timothy 2:16.
2. The "highway to souls" is paved with the "tarmac of godliness." This has implication for the trajectory of all "Christian education." With a life of holiness as necessary backdrop biblical apologists must from their hearts and through their minds address the hearts of their hearers through their minds with a view to their life. Following the biblical model, therefore, the apologetic setting is an extremely significant issue for the Transcendental Apologist. This model calls for the presence of at least the following elements:
 - (a) **Identification with and consecration of Christ as Lord** (1 Pet. 3:15). He is the reason for the opposition, the source of strength and the guarantee of victory
 - (b) **Presence of the Spirit** (Luke 12:11-12; Acts 1:8). He supplies the power and the insight.
 - (c) **Holiness of life** (1 Th. 2: 10; 1 Tim. 4:15; 1 Pet. 3:16). The life of the speaker must overflow in the hearer.
 - (d) **Identification with the unbeliever** (Rom. 9:1-3; 10:1). Self-denying compassion is often the only "argument" that gets through. "When everything else fails, put yourself in the Gospel gun" (Spurgeon).

- (e) **Love as dynamics and model** (John 13:34-35; 2 Cor. 5:1). The love of Christ in us must set us in motion. The love of Christ on display among us must be the attraction.
- (f) **Dependence upon grace in prayer** (Rom. 15:30-32). It is not in the power of the speaker to convey salvation, neither is it in the hands of the hearer to appropriate it. Prayer is indispensable. Only a sovereign God can “overcome” total depravity!

B. Elements of Transcendental Apologetics

Every apologetics, whether evidentialist, rationalist, experientialist or presuppositional always do and must answer four questions. What is its point of departure, what its point of contact, what its method, and what its authority? The same applies to Transcendental Apologetics.

I. Point of Departure

1. To Transcendental Apologetics the point of departure is the **presentation of, and the confrontation with, truth**, no less and no more with a view to submission. In this it follows the model of Christ, who came to “bear witness of the truth” (John 18:37c).
2. **Apologetics is to be distinguished from preaching and evangelism.** But they cannot be separated. **They are perspectively related**, since they all share the common denominator of “bearing witness to the truth.” In doing so the apologist is not simply confident that anyone who is “of the truth” will hear the voice of Christ (John 18:37d). There is more. He consciously and deliberately resorts to the truth, and the truth only, in his apologetic endeavors, because he recognizes that this is the sole instrument “**to create the ears**” necessary to hear the voice of Christ (Jam. 1:18). The Gospel of Truth may seem to be foolishness to the unbeliever, but it is the wisdom and the power of God unto salvation (1 Cor. 1:18, 21). The apologist must (be willing to) become a “fool for the sake of Christ and the unbeliever.”
3. To insist on a neutral territory in which “to do apologetics” is to fall short of that. In fact, to insist on a neutral ground is both to be wiser than God *and* to deprive unbelievers from a challenge with the only power tool that can effect their salvation. The Scriptural model is self-evident, as we now shall see.
 - a. Historically, Christ presents the truth of the divine self-disclosure in his Person to his contemporaries (John 4:26; 5:17-18; 8:58, etc.), Peter presents the truth of the divine self-disclosure in Scripture to the Jews (Acts 2:14-36), and Paul presents the truth of divine self-disclosure in nature to the Gentiles (Acts 17:22-34). All three confront the unbeliever with the Self-disclosure of God. They also all anchor the truth of that Self-disclosure in creation, history as well as experience. Truth is, indeed, self-attesting, but in a context and not in a vacuum.
 - b. After the Ascension of Christ the Transcendental Apologist seeks to follow this model and present Biblical truth, as well as historico-creational truth, and experiential truth, with the understanding that Biblical truth always functions as the foundation, the dynamics, the framework, and the guide for all other truths. No truths of facts, events or experience have regenerating power. But as supporting cast of the truth of Divine Revelation they make a vital contribution to the process that produces regeneration.
 - c. Biblical truth is threefold. Doctrinally it is the truth of biblical theology, factually the truth of biblical history, and practically the truth of biblical ethics. As Biblical truth it has absolute authority, inner coherence, correspondence with reality, and value for human experience.

- d. Historico-creational truth is threefold. Factually it is the truth of nature Progressively it is the truth of history. Rationally it is the truth of logic.
- e. Experiential truth is threefold. Providentially it is the truth of the presence and impact of the Triune God upon one's life. Personally, it is the truth of Christlikeness. Practically it is the truth of harmony, peace and prosperity in creation and history. In short, it is the truth of the Living Epistles Paul is speaking about in 2 Corinthians 3:1-3.

II. Point of Contact

1. To Transcendental Apologetics the Point of Contact is the **Point of Rebellion or Suppression**. This is centered in the heart, but may manifest itself in a great variety of ways, such as

- a. Hatred and hostility of the heart
- b. Blindness and darkness of the mind
- c. Culpable ignorance of the mind
- d. Suppression of God's manifestation
- e. Rejection of God's revelation
- f. Self-deception due to hardening
- g. Programmatic misinterpretation of the truth
- h. Disinterest due to self-sufficiency
- i. Incredulity due to misinformation
- j. Dismissal as irrelevant
- k. Disdain on display in pride
- l. Opposition on display in confrontation
- m. Mocking on display in ridicule
- n. Destructive attack by whatever means, verbal, tangible
- o. Destructive attack in whatever area, thought, life, culture
- p. Destructive attack in whatever state of mind, consciously or not.

2. According to Transcendental Apologetics, whatever the "conclusion" is that unbelievers reach, or whatever the position is that they take, with regard to the God of truth and/or the truth of God, unless they recognize and acknowledge fully the God of Scripture and/or the Scripture of God from God's Self-disclosure, either in manifestation (nature, history, and the human constitution) or in revelation (Scripture), **it invariably constitutes a knowledgeable "rebellion" or "suppression," whether to a lesser or greater degree.** There is, therefore, always culpability involved. Acts 17 and Romans 1 do not allow for any other interpretation. Therefore the call to repentance and faith is not only warranted, but also always necessary. In fact, in the footsteps of Peter (Acts 2: 38) and Paul (Acts 17:30) the objective of every God honoring apologetics always is and should be conversion and therefore such apologetics will methodologically always seek to pave the way to a summons to repentance and faith as the sole means to that end. This is necessitated by the Point of Contact, and therefore must be pursued by the Apologetic Method.

3. Besides, there is **no such thing as a natural theology, a natural metaphysics, a natural epistemology, a natural ethics, or a natural anthropology, that all men have in common,** and therefore can function as a universally agreed upon point of departure. **Apart from the fact that fallen man is in a suppressing mode (Rom. 1:18), the dialectic precludes any such kind of universality.** Among non-Christians there is constant warfare in all these realms of human endeavor. Those who favor the pole of the "one" are invariably pitted against those who favor the pole of the "many," and vice versa. (If there is any agreement between them it is purely formal without any substance.) And both are pitted against the Christian and his views. All this should underscore the contention that any one who falls short of a fully biblical theology, metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, or anthropology, is by definition a suppressor of the truth, and in the light of Romans 1 culpable.

4. To be sure, unbelievers may **nilly-willy** come up with some truth(s). In fact, they invariably will do so, whether in terms of **facts, logic, achievements or otherwise**. **This oils the machine of all of life, and makes it possible, including communication, enjoyment, and progress in the broadest sense of the words. But it never constitutes a “natural edifice” of whatever sort that is unreservedly laudable and functions as a halfway house to God.** It is and remains a guilty distortion of the full truth. To the extent that it is not as serious a distortion as it could be, it is at best indicative of the restraint of “common grace.” But even the latter is specifically **designed to lead to repentance (Rom. 3:3)**. In short, just like the antithesis does not (necessarily) exclude common grace, so common grace never excludes antithesis, and therefore requires a call to repentance.

5. The relationship between common grace and antithesis can be best formulated as follows. By virtue of God’s “Self-disclosure” in the broadest sense of the word **all of created reality reflects Him in the sum-total of his being and His perfections. With regard to rebel man, there is a “deposit”** in terms of being (including traits and talents), knowledge (including insight and skills), and morality (including behavior principles and patterns). **As a result of the cultural mandate, which is both commanded and inbred, this “deposit” leads to “progress” and “accomplishments”** across the length and breadth of human endeavor, such as architecture, art, biology, business and all other areas of life.

6. To the extent that these are “enriching,” they are for **100% expressions of God’s “common grace” and manifestations of his “truth,” and must be honored as such.** This includes acceptance and enjoyment. But to the extent that they are inextricably intertwined with the rebellion of the unbeliever, they do not only serve practically as “stolen goods,” but irony of irony are as such also fully part of the framework of the suppression of God’s truth. In that framework they function as lies on the most fundamental level, and are therefore **equally and simultaneously for 100% unacceptable and under the judgment of God.** “Even the lamp of the wicked is sin” (Pr. 2:4). **This can be paraphrased to say that even the “light” of the wicked is “darkness.”** And, “Whatever is not from above, is earthly, sensual, and devilish” (Jam. 3:15). That is to say, anything that starts from the bottom up is basically **inanimate**. It is **lifeless** and **callous** like a **rock**. At the same time it is very much **alive**. It is **brutal** and **base** like a **beast**. Finally, the gloves come off. Every bit of human “wisdom” originates in the Enemy. As the consummate liar and murderer, he put his imprint upon it. It is **diabolical** and **gruesome** like a **demon**.

7. Common grace has been compared to **embalming fluid in a corpse**. It keeps it from producing a stench, but certainly cannot give it life. An “**exclusive**” or even “unbalanced” **embrace of common grace**, therefore, is naïve and opens one up to a spiritual “infection” of whatever sort and seriousness. This eventually produces “sickness” (“spiritual HIV”) and ultimately death. At any rate, it constitutes an invitation to be “swallowed up.” On the other hand, the **exclusive embrace of antithesis** indicates a ghetto mentality and prevents Christians to be salt and light.

8. However, it is an equally serious error to construe the common grace-antithesis relationship **in terms of a “balanced” 50%-50% relationship, or any some such linear, “one dimensional,” configuration.** **First**, to the extent that one element in the life of an unbeliever is clearly a “gift” of God’s truth, but is seen **only** as a “common grace,” there is not much choice other than applause as exclusive response. Frankly too often do too many believers tend to be uncritically and undiscerningly enthusiastic about achievements by unbelievers, especially in academia, and end up by only applauding them. **This short-circuits any sort of call to repentance.** Incidentally, in scholarly works in general such calls are simply not being contemplated. That indicates that the interaction remains on the level of the intellect, and that the “playing field” is restricted to that aspect of man. Regrettably even in scholarly apologetic works such call is glaringly conspicuous in its absence. (The present writer is only aware of **one** (sic!) instance in the total history of apologetics in which an author unambiguously emphasizes conversion as the only hope. This is Eta Linnemann, *Is there a Synoptic Problem*.) **Second**, to the extent that another element is clearly a suppression of God’s truth, and

viewed in terms of antithesis only, there is often a wholesale denunciation, if not condemnation. In that case communication simply ceases and is bound to be non-existent.

9. The long and the short of it is this: only non-linearity, that acknowledges any “entity” of common grace as simultaneously both a “gift” and a “suppression” of God’s truth (100% + 100% = 100%) will produce results. The recognition of the antithesis will safeguard one from being “swallowed up.” The acknowledgment of common grace will prevent one from marginalizing oneself into a ghetto (mentality). Of course, this formula does not fit into the human brain. But it is biblical and lodges snugly in the believer’s heart. Further, it produces a Christian Apologetics that transcends the purely rational and the purely factual, does not make the intellect of the opponent the great prize, and prepares the way to a summons to repentance on every “playing field.”

III. Methodology

1. Transcendental Apologetics seeks to escape the two Achilles’ heels of Absolute Proof and Probability Arguments.

a. *Absolute Proof*

Absolute proof is **not** in man’s jurisdiction nor at man’s disposal, not ever! Man can aspire, but never arrive, at ultimacy, neither metaphysically, nor epistemologically, nor ethically. As finite creature he is always Number II in every area of life, thought or action. If he refuses to be a servant of God, he will end up as a slave of Satan. That implies that the mind does not and cannot have the final word. Whether consciously or not, any ambition to produce absolute proof, i.e. a discursive argument that is universally compelling, is idolatrous in that it seeks to achieve ultimate certainty apart from God, any protest to the contrary. Such achievement is simply impossible! **Thankfully there is a growing recognition that certainty in knowledge is not co-extensive with proof.** Ironically and regrettably, this recognition may more be due to the common grace achievements of Thomas Kuhn and his paradigm shifts or Godel and his famed theorem, than to the contributions of Christian apologists. **Therefore, to yield to the demand for absolute proof, or to pursue absolute proof is to acquiesce in, if not pander to, the claim of human ultimacy, whether explicitly or implicitly, whether consciously or unconsciously. At the same time it is to squander a precious opportunity to challenge the proud rebellion of man in his insistence that he is like God, fully capable of determining truth.** In short, **any apologetics that that concentrates upon absolute proof is always after the mind as the great prize, operates on that level, and aims at agreement. This is decidedly not the biblical model!**

b. *Probability Arguments*

Probability Arguments are equally unacceptable. They are *ultimately* an affront to God, since they end up by allowing the possibility of an *objective* uncertainty in the unbeliever, of whatever kind and to whatever degree. Such arguments, therefore, do and must fly in the face of Romans 1:18-21. This passage insists that the evidence of God’s presence and nature is fully clear and needs to be suppressed in order to be denied!

2. Transcendental Apologetics has the following aspects.

a. *The Diagnosis*

(1) The first order of business is to determine what makes the “blind rebel” tick in terms of the position, motivation, and direction of his thought, life, culture, activity, etc. What shows up is the truth of Colossians 2:8ff. As has been argued already, what comes into view is an empty and

deceitful philosophy, rooted in the fundamental dialectic, that victimizes and directs the thinking of all of apostate humans by definition. But it victimizes their actions as well. Any morality apostate mankind can offer is at best the things or work of the law written on the heart (Rom. 2:14-15), not the law itself (Jer. 31:31ff.). That kind of morality is only formal in nature. Ultimately it has no biblical substance, since ultimately it has no absolute content. It proves to favor either the “one” or the “many” pole in the one-and-many spheres and either the “authority” or “subject” pole in the authority structures. In other words, it never opposes sin in the name of holiness, but always the “one” in the name of the “many” or vice versa, and “authority” in favor of the “subject” or vice versa.

(2) “Modernity” typically opts for the “one” and for “authority,” since it embraces the universal as “savior.” “Post-modernity,” just as typically, throws in its lot with particularity, and comes down on the side of the “many” and the “subject.” Unbalanced, and naïve, “common grace” proponents frequently laud either one of them for its “splendid insights,” and join the fight against the apostate particular in the name of the apostate universal or vice versa. In the meantime, they overlook that both modernity and post-modernity are apostate, seek to suppress the God of truth and the truth of God, and are at best two defunct clocks that are right each once a day. Second, in doing so they confuse the “embalming fluid” of common grace, that merely keeps down the stench of the “corpse” of mankind, with the “fresh water” of special grace, that produces life, health and growth. Thirdly, in their enthusiasm they forget that any and all achievements of an apostate ideology are no more than “stolen goods” from the truth of God that they ultimately use to suppress the God of truth. Fourthly, in the process they appear to be quite satisfied to enlist in a questionable program with questionable objectives by turning into the tail that is wagged by the dog of an unclean ideology. Finally, all this makes the possibility remote that they ever function as the head that purposefully and systematically sets out to lay the foundations for a summons to repentance.

b. The Truth

Truth is to be presented for what it is, the *only* Liberating Cure for a perishing mankind (John 8:32; 17:17; 18:37). Such presentation, as long as it starts with, and takes place on the bedrock of revealed, biblical truth, should branch out in all relevant rational, factual and experiential truth as its supporting cast.

c. The Spirit

There is no such thing as an area of neutrality, a common ground. Virtually all apologists recognize that all argumentation that holds to such area or ground, only leads at best to probability. Arrived at that point they invariably refer to the necessity of the illuminating and convicting work of the Holy Spirit. In other words, he functions as a last resort, at the end, when human apologetic efforts fall short of the mark. However, the presence of the Spirit is necessary from the outset. He is the origin of all power, clarity, boldness, love and effectiveness (Eph. 6:19; Col. 4:4; 2 Tim. 1:7), and must be both acknowledged and experienced as such from the very outset! There is no substitute for the apologist to be full of the Word **and full of the Spirit**. To use a train analogy, to be full of the Word is to have the tracks in perfect shape. But unless the locomotive has built up a “head of steam” that sets it in motion, the train is not going anywhere.

d. The Approach

The approach must be characterized by the gentleness of “grace,” the precision of a “surgeon,” and the carefulness of a “rescue” operation (2 Tim. 2:24-26).

e. The Attitude

The attitude must be one of compassion for lost sinners (Matth. 9:35-36) as well as courage toward rebel sinners (John 5:115ff; 8:31ff).

f. The Procedure

The procedure has a negative and a positive side with two sub-aspects each.

1. Negatively

(a) With regard to the “product” of unbelief, the superstructure of the thinking, willing, feeling, speaking, acting, etc. of the non-Christian must be shown to be logically incoherent, and/or factually non-correspondent and/or personally unsatisfactory, and therefore false, self-defeating and self-destructive, which includes the *reductio ad absurdum*. This was part of the agenda of most recent apologists, such as Schaeffer, Clark and Van Til. Recently this is competently done by Zacharias, *A Shattered Visage*, and *Can Man live Without God*. **It ought to be noted, however, that not too much stock should be placed on immanent criticism.**

(Over two thousand years of the history of thought and action has shown that unbelievers are masters of immanent criticism. The history of philosophy is a prime and telling example. Every philosopher was eventually relegated to the scrap heap by his successor based on demonstrated inconsistencies in his metaphysics, epistemology and/or ethics. Immanent criticism can destroy a system by calling attention to logical inconsistencies, lack of factual correspondence, or fatal implications, but it can never point in the right direction. Neither, incidentally, can transcendent criticism. The latter can only pontificate, however properly or improperly. What is needed, is the transcendental critique of a Transcendental Apologetics. Only that goes to the roots of life, thought and action. Only that lays bare the most fundamental issues. Only that can knowledgeably and persuasively steer in the right direction.)

(b) With regard to the “root” of unbelief, it has already been argued that the fundamental dialectic of heart, life and/or method, with its rebel origin, its rebel catch-22, and its rebel consequences must be transcendently exposed.

2. Positively

(a) With regard to the “biblical fruit” of faith, the personal and corporate “shalom,” by means of the presentation of the ever broadening circles of such shalom, in contrast with the fall-out of the dialectic, in terms of love, holiness, joy, peace, harmony and prosperity in Christ and through the Spirit should be emphasized. Here the presence of this “godliness” in the evangelist/apologist, that is ultimately the Church, becomes of paramount importance. Scripture requires the Church to “show and tell.” Without this it loses its authenticity, birthright, and its effectiveness.

(b) With regard to the “biblical root” of faith, the foundation as well as the framework and the crowning piece of the shalom vis-à-vis God should be presented and argued. First, the origin, nature, need, and fruit of the new heart in regeneration should be set forth lucidly and cogently. Further, the same should be done pertaining to the new record in justification and the new life in sanctification.

g. The Tools

All truth, biblical, rational, factual as well as personal truth, with all necessary and possible means to convey it, should be used to the utmost. Furthermore, it should be pressed home “carefully,” but nevertheless “relentlessly.”

h. The Method

The truth should be used as the key to the Kingdom. That is, it should be pressed home to the heart (Acts 2:37; 7:51, 54) in a discriminating and applicatory way. Non-Christians should have no doubt about their eternal plight, at the conclusion of the presentation, while Christians should have no doubt about their shortcomings before God.

i. The Aim

The aim is **not** agreement, as if the intellectual level is ultimate. As has been observed, such approach always leads invariably to probability apologetics, with its inherent failure, and upon recognition of this fact, to the belated introduction of the Spirit as a stop-gap measure. Rather, the objective is repentance and submission of the heart that leads to the forgiveness of sins and godly Kingdom conduct in the full sense of the word. In short, in a biblical apologetics the great prize is never the mind. It is the heart of man, as the *conditio sine qua non* for, and the gateway to, a full-orbed Biblical Christianity. “My son give me your heart” (Prov. 23:26), for “Out of it are the issues of life (Prov. 4:23).

j. The Focus

The focus should be Christ as Lord and Savior as the “heart” of the Gospel presentation. There is no other “tool” to reach the desired aim. **That is why no apologetics should ever be pursued apart from the Gospel.** The notion of apologetics as pre-evangelism is a sham that cannot be rejected except in the harshest terms.

k. The Avenue

The avenue to effectiveness is the call to faith and repentance, explicitly (Acts 2:38) or implicitly (Acts 7:51ff) after the foundation for it has been properly laid. The latter cannot be stressed sufficiently. The **need** for repentance must be made crystal clear before the **summons** to repentance makes sense.

l. SUMMARY

Any and all Apologetics that wishes to follow the biblical model should courageously, fearlessly, surgically, as well as lovingly, compassionately and sensitively go for the heart as the root problem of mankind, and in doing so be perceptively, truthfully, knowledgeably, methodically, boldly and uncompromisingly confrontational.

IV. Authority

For Transcendental Apologetics the authority rests with the truth, with only the truth, and with all of the truth. God is truth, so is Christ and so is the Spirit. What they are, say, and do is the absolute standard for, and therefore has the absolute authority over all of life. God discloses himself, and therefore his truth, in his revelation in Scripture, and in his manifestation in Creation, History, and the Human Constitution. All truth is God’s truth, whether it is thankfully acknowledged as such, or ends up as “stolen goods.” Transcendental Apologists should feel free to avail themselves of all of it. In fact, they would do well to “take in and digest” all truth as extensively and thoroughly as possible. This could only enhance their effectiveness.

V. Conclusion

1. In the final analysis Transcendental Apologetics is neither linear nor circular. Presuppositional Apologetics is accused of being ineffective and without serious discussion partners, precisely because

it is linear. After all, no one will listen, when you start your apologetics with your conclusion. (This is what spawned the evidentialist, rationalist and experientialist (also called classical) types of apologetics that opted for a common ground, a neutral territory.) The typical presuppositional response is that no one can escape circularity. Rationalists, so proceeds the argument, assume their rationalism from the very outset, similarly irrationalists their irrationalism. There is hardly any ground, therefore, to condemn the presuppositionalist! Ultimately there is no functional tabula rasa anywhere! The recommended procedure, then, is to be as broadly circular as possible in one's apologetics so as to encompass and account for as many data of reality as feasible. In this way it could be shown that the message of the Gospel is superior, in fact, "outperforms" any other ideology, philosophy, or religion. This could conceivably make such an impression that the truth claims of Christianity would be acknowledged.

2. There is no doubt that presuppositionalists more than hold their own in this exchange. However, it is about time for all apologists to recognize that in the final analysis the opponents and proponents of presuppositionalism are in this "linear-circular" debate regrettably "kissing cousins." The very terms, linear and circular, betray that protagonists as well antagonists are still operating on the level of the intellect only! For both the linear and circular approach have in common that they regard the intellect as the "grand prize," and basically argue unto agreement.

3. A Biblically informed Apologetics transcends the dilemma of circular versus linear. It locks in on the heart, seeks it out, and challenges it with the truth of God. It does not restrict itself to immanent criticism. By itself this stays too much on the surface. Neither does it confine itself to transcendent criticism. By itself this displays too much detachment. No, it is transcendental in its approach. It truly communicates. It lays bare the deepest movements of the heart in both a gentle and surgical fashion. Then it applies the cure in a person variable manner with truth in all its colorful variation at its disposal. This requires painstaking involvement, fervent prayer, careful diagnosis, and skillful treatment. In short, it is hard work! In the final analysis the Transcendental Apologist will not be satisfied until and unless it is evident to unbelievers that he or she loves them more than they love themselves.

APPENDIX I

(Summary of Today's Apologetic Debate on Method)

1. **The Issue in Method: Should it be Linear or Circular**
 - a. Classical/Traditional Apologetics (Warfield and Sproul--Theistic Proofs) insists on **linearity**.
 - b. Presuppositional Apologetics (Van Til and Frame) deems **circularity** inevitable.

The Problems:

- a. In both the Mind still seems to be the Great Prize.
- b. In a truly Presuppositional Apologetics that should be the Heart!

Note

It should not go unnoticed that all avowedly linear apologetics cannot hide its circularity. Somehow its Christianity colors its starting point. This applies to Warfield as well as Sproul, whether they recognize or even deny it or not. At the same time all circular apologetics has its linear moments.

Even Van Til does not escape this. In short, so-called rectilinear apologetics cannot conceal its curvature, while so-called ring-shaped apologetics tends to straighten out.

2. **Two** Achilles' Heels in Christian Apologetics

- a. Absolute Proof (Van Til / Sproul: interesting bedfellows!)
- b. Probabilistic Arguments (Warfield / Schaeffer / Frame: somewhat interesting bedfellows as well)

The Problems:

- a. Absolute proof is neither in our **jurisdiction** (Van Til / Sproul did not see this), nor **attainable** (Warfield and Schaeffer **did** recognize this)
- b. Probabilistic arguments run counter to Romans 1:18ff. (Van Til / Sproul saw this sharply)

3. The **Transcendence** of the Dilemma linear-circular: Non-Linearity

- a. The Authoritative, Non-defensive Presentation of Truth
- b. With Discriminatory & Applicatory Power: Repent and/or Submit
 - (1) Defensive Apologetics (Later Sample: The Problem of Evil)
 - (2) Offensive Apologetics (Later Sample: The Problem of Evolution)

4. The **Negative** Approach.

The Opposition is:

- a. Inconsistent logically : rationalism (Logical Positivism)
- b. Non-correspondent empirically: irrationalism (Cage's mushrooms)
- c. Self-destructive experientially : pragmatism (Existentialism)

Note

Compare in this context R. Zacharias, *A Shattered Visage*. He shows that atheism is destructive in the areas of origin (science), morals (holocaust), meaning (despair), and future (hopelessness).

The Argument: In its unrelenting attempts the **history** of the thought and conduct of rebel man-without-God in the broadest sense of the word appears to be a never-ending dead-end street. It is strewn with the carcasses of failures. Even rebel man, especially in the history of philosophy, in his "present" solution relegates all "past" efforts basically to the trash heap.

However, all the **immanent** criticisms of previous attempts to solve mankind's problems and dilemmas, as well as the newly posited solutions to these problems and dilemmas did not constitute any real progress. This stands to reason. The soil in which history is rooted is the hatred of God, the subsequent primacy of the intellect, and the consequent dialectic.

Behind it is the Enemy, the liar and the murderer from the beginning. He opposes the truth and murders life (Remember the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil!). The resultant dialectic, which condemns rebel man to a Sisyphus labor, a never-ending dead-end street, is at the same time God's judgment and Satan's tool.

The pendulum swings from universality to particularity, from tyranny to chaos, and *vice versa*, whether to a greater or lesser degree depending upon the measure of (non)compromise. Nevertheless, the synthesis can never be found. The mutual presupposition of the two poles inexorably draws the

victims of the dialectic to make the ever-recurring attempts to arrive at such synthesis. The mutual exclusion shatters those attempts again and again. The victims are both rebellious and blind.

Only a “new heart” in regeneration can remove this twofold problem (John 3:3 and 5). Immanent criticism should never think that all by itself the pointing out or even recognition of logical inconsistencies, lack of factual correspondence, or fatal experiential implications will arrive at the desired results. It must go hand in hand with a transcendental analysis and a call to repentance.

5. The Positive Approach.

- a. Absolute Proof is unsuccessful, while nonexistent (Sproul)
- b. Probabilistic Arguments are troublesome, to say the least (Romans 1:18)

Note

Compare in this context J. Frame’s approach in *Apologetics to the Glory of God* in terms morals and rationality.

His **argument** goes as follows.

- a. Moral values require the existence of God. Moral values are not subjective. Deep down there is a universal agreement to that effect. In fact, moral values display a hierarchy of importance. This ultimately requires a highest, and absolute, origin. This origin is not chance, nor impersonal, but must be interpersonal, in fact, must be the Ultimate Person, namely God. No one else fits “the bill.”
- b. Rationality equally requires the existence of God. There is rationality in the relationship man sustains with his environment. There is also rationality in the universe as such. This is not the product of chance, since chance cannot produce rationality and order. The irrational does not give rise to the rational. Only God does, as ultimate, personal, rationality!
- c. While neither this “moral” or “rational” argument produces compelling logical proof, the force of its probability should count for something, which the Holy Spirit may well use to effect “conviction.”

The Problem: All approaches, such as these, believe in a halfway house, whether it consists of a natural theology (Aquinas), a natural metaphysics (Sproul), a natural epistemology (Sproul), a natural ethics (Frame), or a natural anthropology/rationality (Frame) that all men have in common, and therefore can function as a universally agreed upon point of departure.

The dialectic precludes any kind of universal ground in a so-called natural theology, metaphysics, ethics or anthropology. Among Non-Christians there is warfare in all these realms of human endeavor. Those who favor the pole of the “one” are pitted against those who favor the pole of the “many,” and vice versa. (If there is any agreement between them it is either purely formal without any substance to it, or a matter of a tenuous compromise.) And both are pitted against the Christian and his views.

All this should underscore the contention that anyone who falls short of a fully biblical theology, metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, or anthropology, is by definition a suppressor of the truth, and in the light of Romans 1 culpable. To be sure, there are levels of suppression and therefore also levels of common grace. After all, the suppression always can be worse. But even the common graces of God are designed to lead to repentance (Rom. 2:1ff.). Hence deeper than the common grace is the antithesis.

So once again the conclusion is the same. The apologist must bear witness to the truth in a person variable manner. That requires thorough acquaintance with the truth, in fact, with as much truth as

possible, and also the skill to apply the truth in a tender, clear, persuasive, “striking,” and effective manner. The guideline ought to be that the world of unbelievers must be turned “right side up.” That can only be accomplished, if it is experienced by them as “upside down!” Just as preaching apologetics ought to be probing, searching and discriminating. Just as biblical preaching biblical apologetics meets that standard!

In Sum

Transcendental Apologetics is not merely negative, although it has great merit to force rebel man to look himself in the (“Picasso”) face (Zacharias in his book on Atheism). Nor does it ever argue from below (Frame in his Introduction to Apologetics).

No, Transcendental Apologetics, after it has duly recorded the undeniable realities summed up in negative apologetics, such as found in Zacharias, argues roughly in five phases:

1. God’s Fullness in his Existence and Attributes: Therefore Morality, Rationality, etc. as a reflection of his Trinitarian Being.
2. Mankind’s depravity in its rebellion: Therefore, his inevitable and inescapable entrapment by and in by the self-destructive dialectic.
3. The Sinner’s renunciation of rebellion, i.e. repentance: The only way out of the inescapably recognized morass, whether more or less dimly.
4. The Convert’s peace, fellowship and worship of God: The glorious result.
5. The Believer’s harmony with all of created reality, “shalom,” prosperity, in the fullest sense of the word: The blessed byproduct.

Note

The formulation of these five “steps” only touches the surface. They ought to be fleshed out in a person variable manner with the truth that is specifically applicable in each situation. Just as a physician the Transcendental Apologist will make the carefully chosen remedy depend upon the equally carefully formulated diagnosis. It totally depends upon the circumstances whether, and what sort of, surgery or a prescription is in order.

APPENDIX II

(Natural Theology)

1. Natural Theology argues for the existence and attributes of God by starting from the manifest properties of created reality without first considering taking God’s self-disclosure in Scripture. This raises the question whether the existence and attributes of God can be demonstrated by rational proofs from created reality alone, and whether the manifest evidences can legitimately function as the basis of so-called theistic proofs.

2. Traditionally Natural Theology has produced four types of proofs. They are known as the ontological, the cosmological, the moral and the teleological arguments. They reflect the evident realities of being, knowing, ethics and purpose. These four proofs were championed by Medieval Theology that bought into the Greek view that the realm of Nature is intelligible in terms of itself, and does yield unimpeachable empirical and rational scientific knowledge, predicated upon the conviction

that the intellect is capable and the will free to grasp the essence of things, including the essence of Nature's "first principles, such as "god."

3. Grace is necessary, but it completes, supplements, Nature as well as the autonomous results of man's intellect and free will. Therefore it has no qualms to define prime Being (ontological argument), prime Cause (cosmological argument), prime Virtue (moral argument), and prime Designer (teleological argument), all products of the thinking and will of autonomous man, as "god." Christian truth is therefore simply an extension, be it an indispensable extension, of the natural insight and common intellect of man. It provides a superstructure upon a laudable, be it unfinished, foundation. In fact, the latter constitutes a bud that comes to full bloom by grace, an early shower that is topped of by the late rain of Christianity.

4. But here is the rub, the natural bud and shower, as well as the supernatural bloom and rain are all of divine origin. None therefore can or may be ignored, except at one's peril. This explains the medieval preoccupation with theistic proofs. But it also leads to the conclusion that, consciously or not, an apologetics that argues: "Being: Therefore God;" "Cosmos: Therefore God;" "Virtue: Therefore God;" "Design: Therefore God" is a Crypto-Natural Theology. (Usually in such context the Holy Spirit is introduced as the One who must "complete the job." That should set off an alarm bell!)