

NCT & Apologetics

A critique of popular evangelistic and apologetic methods with Scriptural solutions
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INTRODUCTION

The Church of Jesus Christ has been under attack for 2,000 years. This is an attack that is not waged on the physical battlefield, but in the mind (2 Cor. 10:4-5). If you have been a believer for a while, you know that the Bible commands Christians to evangelize and earnestly contend for the faith that was once for all handed down to the saints (Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Peter 3:15; Jude 3). Evangelism and defending the faith are inextricably linked together. When evangelism takes place, objections arise and they need to be answered properly. But how are we to do that? What should our method for evangelism and apologetics¹ be? There have been many answers offered to this question; most of which are confusing and unbiblical. By God's grace, I want to teach you what the Bible says about defending and proclaiming the faith. Before we get started, I want to mention some practical pastoral concerns that I have developed after years of teaching apologetics and evangelism.

Practical Concerns

- Most apologetic & evangelistic methods and practices are unbiblical and/or deceptive.
- Most apologetics & evangelism instruction is unintelligible and impossible for the average believer.
- Many evangelism methods are gimmicky and deceptive.
- Many believers do not regularly evangelize or use apologetics.
- All of the above are grounded in a misunderstanding of what the *real* problems are.

The Big Three: The Famous Evangelism and Apologetics Commands

1. Matthew 28:19-20

Jesus said, "*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.*"¹⁹ "*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,*"²⁰ *teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*" (Matt. 28:18-20 NAU) Many modern believers seem to think that for this command to be fulfilled it must be a *scheduled* event. But the early church knew nothing of scheduled evangelism, it just happened in the normal course of daily life as believers rubbed shoulders with unbelievers. This matches well with the literal translation of "Go" in verse 19, which can be translated, "*as you are going, make disciples . . .*" Scheduled evangelism is a modern 19th century revivalist concept².

2. 1 Peter 3:15

¹ Simply put, "apologetics" means to give a reason for why you believe what you believe. See comments under "1 Peter 3:15".

² This doesn't mean that church-organized evangelistic outreaches shouldn't happen, but it means that personal evangelism doesn't require a church-organized event to be considered legitimate evangelism.

Peter said, “*but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence*” (1Pe 3:15 NAU). Most Christians scholars will use this verse to teach that we need to be ready to engage in apologetics, and they are right. However, some go on to explain that this means that you need to be able to give historical, philosophical, and empirical proofs of the Christian faith. That is where they are wrong. First, note that the context of 1st Peter is suffering (1:6; 2:20; 3:14, 16-17; 4:1, 12, 14, 19; 5:9). Second, note that the defense Peter commands has nothing to do with sophisticated, complex argumentation, but simply explaining why you are willing to suffer for Christ (“. . . being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you,”). John MacArthur sums up the gist of this passage quite well, “The Eng. Word ‘apologetics’ comes from the Gr. Word here translated ‘defense.’ Peter is using the word in an informal sense . . . and is insisting that the believer must understand what he believes and why one is a Christian, and then be able to articulate one’s beliefs humbly, thoughtfully, reasonably, and biblically.”³

3. Jude 3

Jude said, “*Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.*” (Jude 1:3 NAU) This verse is rightly appealed to in support of defending the faith; the problem is that most people then go on to defend philosophical arguments that are supposed to support the faith rather than actually knowing and defending the faith itself. However, notice that the verse commands us to “contend earnestly for *the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints*”, i.e., we are to contend for the whole body of Christian truth contained in the Scriptures as we have received it from the apostles. This verse calls us to uphold and contend for Biblically based sound doctrine over and against false teachings, human wisdom, and mere opinion that distorts the sacred treasure of the gospel (2 Tim. 1:13-14).

Common Unbiblical Methods of Evangelism and Apologetics

Evangelism

1. Decisional Regeneration – Tends to produce false converts through psycho-emotional manipulation. Is historically tied to the early 19th century heretical revivalist⁴ Charles G. Finney and his practice known as “the anxious bench” wherein people would come forward in a revival meeting and brood over their soul’s condition until they supposedly got right with God by making a “decision” to change their lives and live for God. Finney’s approach left New England spiritually “burned over” and it never recovered. The spiritual deadness of New England can almost solely be traced back to Finney’s antics. It seems as if the “Bible belt” is now experiencing the same burned over condition as revivalist and charismatic practices mixed with postmodernism and pluralism have created religious apathy. Other examples of this are the well-known

³ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2006), fn @ 1 Peter 3:15, p. 1914.

⁴ <http://www.spurgeon.org/~phil/articles/finney.htm>

“sinner’s prayer”, a practice that tends to produce false converts because it assures people of salvation based upon an unbiblical qualification: “If you prayed and really meant it, then you are saved.” This contradicts the entirety of 1st John, which was written for the express purpose of teaching people how they can know that they have eternal life (1 John 5:13). We are never commanded in Scripture to pray the “sinner’s prayer” or “come forward” at a church service to be saved; but we are commanded to repent and believe on Christ (Luke 13:3, 5; John 3:16-18; Acts 2:38; 3:20; Rom. 10:9, 13, etc.). It is not well documented where the practice of the “sinner’s prayer” originated, but proponents have tried to base it upon the tax collector’s verbal confession of faith in Luke 18:13. But notice that that verse doesn’t say that the tax collector prayed, but was “*saying*, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’” The problem with telling people that they need to pray, be baptized, join the church, or *do* any other activity is that you are telling them that they need to complete another task in order to be saved from their sin. It’s simply putting before them another system of “hoops” that they need to jump through. People in the United States are good at jumping through hoops and pulling themselves up by their own bootstraps to get things done. After all, that’s what democracy is all about – everybody gets a fair shake! The Bible actually teaches the exact *opposite*: you can’t do anything, but if you *have been* born of God, you *will* savingly believe, repent, confess, be baptized, etc. (cf. 1st John 5:1 ESV). Faith and repentance in Christ are merely the outward evidences of the prior sovereign, monergistic work of regeneration that God has *already* wrought in a person’s heart; a work that is not based upon any foreseen faith or good works done on the person’s part, but solely based upon God’s good pleasure (Romans 9:10-18).

2. Bait and Switch – This is when you attract people with one thing yet you give them something else that they didn’t originally want but they end up taking it anyway. This is a common tactic in false advertising where a product is advertised for a really low price (the proverbial bait for the proverbial hook) and then when you get to the store they tell you that the sale has ended but that you can still get it for X amount of dollars more. So you go ahead and buy it because of the sales pressure involved and because you want the product even though the company lied to you about its real price. A similar thing occurs when Christian churches use “Dinner Theaters,” “Passion Plays”, “Eternity” productions, “Halloween,” pizza bashes, and spaghetti suppers, and anything else to attract unbelievers into church buildings by enticing the flesh so as to later switch to the gospel. This is a sloppy and deceptive marketing tactic at best and a lack of trust in the Biblical gospel at worst. In the words of Dr. James R. White, “Whatever you win them with is what you’ll have to keep them with!”

Apologetics

There are three main types of apologetics practiced today among Bible-believing evangelicals.

1. Evidentialism – This method uses evidences outside the Bible to defend the Bible, the existence of God, the claims of Christ, His resurrection, etc. These would be tangible evidences primarily, such as archaeological evidence, scientific, empirical evidence, etc. One of the most popular books representing this type of apologetic method would be Josh

McDowell's book *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*. Other proponents of this type of apologetic would include John Warwick Montgomery, Gary Habermas, and William Lane-Craig⁵. Many creation scientists are evidentialists, but this is changing since Answers in Genesis now holds to a form of presuppositionalism, which is another form of apologetics that we will discuss later. The evidential method of apologetics depends upon empirical investigation and is often used to appeal to those who adhere to the philosophy of empiricism⁶. Evidentialists teach that Christianity can be proved in a step by step fashion through accumulating evidence (called the "cumulative case method") of the Bible's reliability, the resurrection of Christ, creation out of nothing, etc. Thus, you base your conclusions primarily on what you can perceive through the five senses. Evidentialism can be briefly summed up this way: we believe Christianity because we have sufficient empirical evidence to prove it.

2. Christian Rationalism – This isn't the use of hard evidences as much as it is the use of logical and philosophical proofs. An example would be the old Scottish "Common-Sense Realism" that dominated old Princeton Seminary of the 19th century was a form of this (i.e., B.B. Warfield). Other proponents would be the great historic Calvinistic preacher Jonathan Edwards with more modern well-known proponents being Norman Geisler, R.C. Sproul, John Gerstner, J. P. Moreland, and Ravi Zacharias. Again, this method emphasizes reason and logical/philosophical proofs to confirm Christianity. They would appeal to 1 Peter 3:15's command us to give a "reason" for the hope that is within us, and they would interpret that as a command to defend Christianity using reason and logic. They also appeal to Isaiah 1:18, "come now, let us reason together says the Lord" or Acts 17:17 where it says that Paul "reasoned" with the Jews and Gentile God-fearers in the marketplace. So, they emphasize logic, and especially the law of non-contradiction (A cannot be ~ A). They have various proofs that they use, but these are philosophical, not evidential proofs. Examples would be the famous five proofs for the existence of God promoted by Thomas Aquinas (i.e., unmoved mover, first cause, design, contingency, ontological⁷). There are various other arguments that are used but one of the most popular and well known was developed by Christian philosopher and mathematician Blaise Pascal (d. 1662) and is called "Pascal's Wager". This argument goes something like this: a Christian says to an atheist, "If I'm wrong, I haven't really lost anything, but if you're wrong, you've lost everything." This method of apologetics finds its historical inception with the famous medieval Roman Catholic theologian Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274). The Protestant John Gerstner argued that we should build upon Aquinas' arguments and even said that Aquinas was a Protestant before the Reformation. So, where did Aquinas get his ideas from? Well, he explicitly says that they don't so much come from the Bible but from Greek philosophy, specifically Aristotle. Aquinas had a very high view of Aristotle and almost put him on par with Scripture. Through Aristotle's philosophical influence, Aquinas believed and taught that we can use human reason and philosophy to prove the supernatural with the natural realm. Christian rationalism also says that the existence of God can be known with a high degree of *probability* and Christianity is *almost* certainly true. This method can be summarized this

⁵ Dr. Craig also adheres to Christian Rationalism.

⁶ This philosophy says that the only way we can know things are through the five senses.

⁷ <http://www.regent.edu/acad/schcom/phd/com707/aquinas.html>

way: We believe in Christianity because it is logical and rational to do so as we have sufficient reason to believe it to be true.

3. Presuppositionalism – Overall, this method is the best out of the three, but in some of its forms, it is still wanting⁸. It has its varieties and proponents, the most notable of which was Cornelius Van Til (d. 1987), former professor of apologetics at Westminster Seminary. Van Til’s most famous disciples were Greg Bahnsen (d. 1995), John Frame, and in a lesser way Francis Schaeffer (d. 1984), who held to a modified form of presuppositionalism. Gordon Clark (d. 1985) taught a rational form of presuppositionalism that emphasized using the law of noncontradiction to show the internal incoherency in non-Christian worldviews. Another type of apologetic that can be viewed as a kind of subcategory of presuppositionalism is known as “Reformed Epistemology”. It is propounded by Alvin Plantinga and it is like a bridge between traditional presuppositionalism and Christian Rationalism. We’ll focus primarily on Van Tilian presuppositionalism because it’s the most popular form of presuppositionalism. The basic idea of this apologetic method is that all people have basic beliefs about the world called presuppositions. These basic presuppositions form the building blocks of a person’s worldview and subsequently, their worldview serves as a filter or a lens through which all facts are interpreted and related. Instead of trying to argue evidences and rational proofs, the presuppositionalist will ask questions like “What worldview contains the basic beliefs about the world that makes sense out of reality?” Then they will compare Christian with non-Christian presuppositions and attempt to show that non-Christian worldviews contradict themselves and self-destruct because only the Christian worldview contains the correct presuppositions needed to make sense out of reality. And so, they will say that unless you *first* assume the existence of the Trinitarian God, you can’t logically talk about anything, do anything, or know anything. Thus, *in principle*, an unbeliever wouldn’t be able to argue about evidences, proof, empirical methods of investigation, and logic unless the God of the Bible *already* existed in the first place to allow the unbeliever to even get their argument against God off the ground. In summary, this method argues from “the impossibility of the contrary” i.e., all contrary non-Christian worldviews are false because they contradict Scripture, they refute themselves⁹, and are arbitrary.

⁸ Several of the methods used by Van Tilian presuppositionalists are profitable since they are based on biblical doctrine (i.e., The total depravity of man, the necessity of monergistic regeneration for men to savingly repent and believe on Christ and to apprehend and embrace the truths of Scripture, the do answer/don’t answer strategy of internal critique from Proverbs 26:4-5; the denunciation of autonomous thinking, the importance of presuppositions and worldviews in evangelism/apologetics, the fact that Christ is the necessary starting point for all thinking per Colossians 2:3, etc.).

⁹ It is important to emphasize that our primary reason for rejecting all non-Christian worldviews is *because they contradict the Bible, which both affirms Christianity and denies all her opponents by explicit declaration* (2 John 9). Thus, I offer this brief presentation of our argument:

Premise 1 - Since there is no authority higher than God's word to confirm God's word, the Scriptures are the ultimate authority (Heb. 6:13).

Premise 2 - Scripture states that only Christian theism is true and all other worldviews (real or imagined) are false because they contradict Scripture, refute themselves, and are arbitrary (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5; 2 Tim. 2:25; 2 John 9).

Conclusion - Therefore, it necessarily follows that all contrary worldviews are false (Pro. 26:4-5).

These three approaches all have some truth in them and I am convinced that their main proponents have certainly meant well in their efforts as they have accomplished much good and helped many Christians. At one time or another I too have used a variety of these methods, but after careful study of the word of God, I am persuaded that all of them, to one degree or another, are inadequate for the task of defending the faith because in their most popular forms, they all have inherent flaws.

If you have ever used any of these methods in defending the faith, you would have noted that an intelligent unbeliever can quickly spot the flaws in them. It is my conclusion that the best you can do using these methods is to arrive at a stalemate or tie in an evangelistic encounter with an intelligent unbeliever. My experience is that if you try to use these kinds of arguments against intelligent unbelievers you will be refuted, especially if they are formally educated in rhetoric, semantics, logic, philosophy, and especially analytic philosophy. Worse yet, the conversation will probably turn into an emotional disagreement over logical and philosophical details that have nothing to do with the propagation of the Kingdom. This should remind us of Paul's warning in 2 Timothy 2:23: "*But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels.*"

The Problems

1. A Denial of the Noetic Effects of Sin: The first major problem with all of these methods to one extent or another is that they fail to take into account the effects of sin on the mind (Rom. 8:7-8; 1 Cor. 2:14-16; Eph. 2:1-3; 4:18-21; 2 Tim. 2:23-26). Each method explicitly or implicitly assumes that the natural man is spiritually neutral when evaluating the gospel¹⁰. However, Christians do not reason in the same way as nonbelievers, for we have the mind of Christ. To assume otherwise is unbiblical and naïve.
2. Dependence on Worldly Philosophy – All of the major apologetical systems depend upon unbelieving philosophical methods to answer unbelieving philosophical arguments against Christianity (1 Cor. 1:18-25; Col. 2:8). These brethren reason that we must use the same standards of reasoning and debate that the unbelievers use and by doing so we can then beat them at their own game. Of course, those rules are stacked in favor of those we are arguing against, so you can't defend the gospel effectively if you play by their rules. Worse yet, they cheat; but as believers, we aren't allowed to cheat, use bad logic, or be inconsistent because we are called to a heavenly standard. One example of how this is prevalent in evidential apologetics is when Christians use the "minimal facts approach" for defending the resurrection of Christ. They note that at the *present* time, most unbelieving, liberal, NT scholars affirm a certain core set of historical facts that can still be used to prove the resurrection of Christ. But why should the *current* beliefs of those scholars be the same even 10 years from now? And who's to say that the next

¹⁰ I realize that most Van Tilian presuppositionalists are confessional Calvinists that have written entire articles about man's depravity and the corresponding noetic effects of sin on the mind and have passionately taught that apart from regeneration, man cannot and will not embrace Christ. For those Van Tilians that are consistent in their application of this doctrine, they should be heartily commended and exempted from my commentary above. However, *some* Van Tilians fail to realize that many unbelievers cannot perceive their irrationality (2 Cor. 4:4) and/or they simply don't care that they are irrational and would rather hold to their irrational unbelief than bow the knee to Christ. This demonstrates that apologetics should be more than an intellectual engagement of the unbeliever; it should first and foremost be an evangelistic enterprise that recognizes and takes into account the spiritual deadness of man and that the only remedy for that deadness is the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16).

generation of unbelieving NT scholars must accept those same claims as historical facts? Apologists use this tactic in the name of being strategic by trying to beat them at their own game. The problem is, unbelievers don't play fair because they hate Christ. Defending the faith like that isn't strategic; it's stupid. Any philosophical tools that we use to engage the unbeliever must be *exegetically* grounded to avoid drifting into the messy morass of autonomous human philosophy.

3. Self-Defeating – Another way that evidentialists and rationalists hurt themselves is when they appeal to extra-biblical historical events to substantiate miracles. For instance, unbelievers have long mocked the Biblical account of Jonah being swallowed by a huge fish but some apologists have responded with the supposed account of one James Bartley, a sailor in the late 19th century that was supposedly swallowed by a whale after falling overboard and was later rescued from the whale's belly after the whale was caught and cut open. The problem with this is two-fold: (1) this suggests that there was nothing really miraculous about Jonah's experience, only that it was an extremely rare yet natural event, and (2) the story about Bartley being swallowed by a whale is most surely a hoax!¹¹ Sadly however, this story has been propagated in Christian literature throughout the 20th century and has even appeared in at least one evangelical commentary. How do you defend miracles by pulling the carpet out from under miracles? Worse, when the very thing that you wrongly appealed to turns out to be a hoax, how much credibility does that give to the faith once for all handed down to the saints¹²? But what about Pascal's Wager? Remember that this argument says that the believer has nothing to lose if he's wrong but the unbeliever has everything to lose if he's wrong. But that's exactly opposite of what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:17-19, "*and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.*"¹⁸ *Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.*"¹⁹ *If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.*" Paul says that if Christians are wrong they are without hope and should be pitied and that if the whole thing is a sham then one ought to "*eat and drink, for tomorrow we die*" (1 Cor. 15:32)! But Paul didn't appeal to Pascal's Wager; instead he went on to defend the truth of the resurrection.
4. Probabalism – Christian rationalism says that the existence of God and Christianity can be proven with a high degree of probability through rational, philosophical argumentation. An example would be when apologists argue that the probability of Jesus fulfilling all of the Messianic prophecies of the OT in regards to His first coming would be like the entire state of Texas being covered with two feet of silver dollars and one of those dollars is painted and dropped out of a plane over the state at 30,000 feet and then you are randomly parachuted out over the state with a blindfolded on, only to then pick up that one painted silver dollar out of the billions of others covering the state upon landing. It sounds good, but there are two problems with this approach: (1) Scripture *never* presents the gospel as probably true, but as *certainly* true [Acts 2:36 – "*Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ-*

¹¹ <http://web.archive.org/web/20021015131359/www.asa3.org/ASA/PSCF/1991/PSCF12-91Davis.html>

¹² I'm not saying that we cannot revise and sharpen our thinking in certain areas of theology and apologetics when better, more accurate information comes to light (i.e., textual variants in new manuscript finds); but just that we should always use the best and most well-attested evidence if we *do* answer people's questions in evangelistic encounters; realizing that *all* evidence is subject to varying interpretations due to (1) the spiritual condition of the person evaluating the evidence as well as (2) the worldview by which the unbeliever interprets evidence.

- *this Jesus whom you crucified.*"] and (2) it is subjective because a philosophically astute unbeliever that is well-read in atheistic philosophers Bertrand Russell or Ludwig Wittgenstein could say, "It's highly probable, but not completely certain". So, probability is not good enough, you need *certainty* to defend the faith.

5. Evidence is Sufficient for Belief – This argument is that evidence apart from reference to the authority of Scripture can convince and convert unbelievers. However, this ignores # 1 above (noetic effects of sin on the mind) and the specific examples in the Bible where people were confronted time and time again with clear evidence of God's supernatural work, yet they still didn't believe (1 Cor. 10:1-11). In the NT, Matthew 28:17 describes how "some doubted" even though they had the resurrected Christ standing right in front of them! These were people who had the greatest empirical evidence in the world yet they doubted. Why? Because their problem wasn't intellectual. It never is. Their problem is spiritual. This simply confirms what Jesus said about this earlier in His ministry, "*If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.*" (Luke 16:31) In other words, if they don't believe what God has said in the Bible, they aren't going to believe even if amazing signs and wonders are done right in front of them. If confronted with evidence, the famous skeptic David Hume would have said something like this, "I wouldn't believe a miracle even if I saw it because miracles are inherently impossible. There must be a natural explanation." This isn't to say that the study of evidences is a completely worthless task; quite the contrary! Work done by Christian scholars in this area is beneficial because it shows how reality and history does in fact comport with Scripture. Historical and scientific evidence can strengthen the faith of true believers; especially those who have been assailed by doubts. However, given the skepticism of someone like David Hume, the pre-existing interpretive framework by which a person understands and evaluates any evidence will cause them to interpret said evidence in light of their prior worldview¹³ commitments and this must always be considered when presenting and using *any* evidence in apologetic/evangelistic encounters. This is because true belief does not come about by intellectual renovation; it is the product of spiritual regeneration. As noted earlier, Thomas Aquinas' defense of Christianity in the medieval Church was essentially a Christianized version of an inherently *unchristian* Aristotelian methodology. This forged the foundation for the evidentialism that we see today as this method spread throughout the church worldwide during the Enlightenment period and in the American church through the work of evidentialists at Princeton Seminary. As a result, Aquinas is the poster child for anyone who supports natural theology and evidentialism. Why? Because like all Protestant evidentialists, Aquinas assumed the supremacy of the mind and overlooked the noetic effects of sin on the intellect.

The Sole Solution: The Sufficiency of Scripture

The previous section noted only a few examples of how the three common methods of apologetics are self-defeating, but the real reason why those methods are not correct is this: *they aren't biblical*. You'll never find the apostles and prophets using any of those methods

¹³ A "worldview" can be defined as a network of presuppositions which is not verified by the procedures of natural science but in terms of which every aspect of man's knowledge and experience is interpreted and interrelated.

anywhere in the Bible. They didn't use bare evidences¹⁴, rational proofs, or presuppositional systems; so what was their system? Basically this: "*Thus saith the Lord,*" "*it is written,*" or "*God says . . .*". You may wonder what will be used to replace all the evidences, proofs, and presuppositions, and it is only one thing: *The word of God*. The Scriptures are all that we need to adequately and successfully defend the faith (2 Timothy 3:15-17). I'm proposing that we go back to the oldest system of all; that of simply going back to the Bible to defend the faith. This could be called *Biblical Apologetics*; i.e., using the Bible itself to answer questions and objections about the faith. The other systems promoted by Bible believers speak highly of the Bible, but they don't use the Bible to defend the faith. They are like a man who has as beautiful sharp sword that runs onto the battlefield, unsheathes his sword, and then says to the enemy; "Look at my sword; look at it! It's sharp, shiny, and beautiful." No, the soldier needs to do more than merely show his sword to his enemy; *he must use it on his enemy*. In the same way, most apologetic systems don't use the Bible the way that the Bible says it is to be used. 2 Timothy 3:15-17 proves my point, "[A]nd that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.¹⁶ **All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;**¹⁷ **so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.**"

Those verses prove that Scripture is sufficient for all of life, including apologetics and evangelism. The Bible is sufficient and profitable to completely and adequately equip the man of God for every good work. According to the Bible, the Bible and prayer are the only weapons needed to successfully fight spiritual battles (Eph. 6:17-18). Nowhere does the Bible say that human wisdom and philosophy is needed to defend the faith; quite the contrary, human wisdom and philosophy is condemned in no uncertain terms by the apostle Paul (1 Cor. 1:18-25; 2:5; Col. 2:8). All we really need is the Bible and prayer.

Experience vs. the Word of God - In 2 Peter 1:16-21, Peter notes that the word of God is more certain than the eyeball experience he and James and John had on the Mount of Transfiguration, "*For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.*¹⁷ *For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased"*--¹⁸ *and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.*¹⁹ ***So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.***²⁰ *But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation,*²¹ *for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*" (2 Pet. 1:16-21 NAU)

Carnal weapons vs. fleshly weapons – 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 says, "*For though we walk in the*

¹⁴ It is true that Jesus appealed to empirical evidence in certain contexts (e.g., John 10:38; 14:11). However, the people Jesus was speaking to had the context of the OT promises which said that the Messiah would do signs and wonders to verify that He was who He claimed to be (cf. Isaiah 35:5-6). Thus, to deny that Jesus was the Messiah in light of his miracles was to deny the very evidence he was giving them that their own culture had taught them to believe about the coming of the Messiah!

flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, ⁴ for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. ⁵ We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ". The battle is not carnal, but spiritual. Using human wisdom and philosophy to defend the faith is to use carnal weapons that were never designed to defend the faith¹⁵. Indeed there is some truth in it, but it is inadequate because it begins with man's mind to get to the truth about God. As Dr. Curt Daniel says, "You can't use a carnal weapon in a spiritual battle anymore than you can beat a ghost with a baseball bat." Also, if you begin with natural revelation (i.e., human wisdom) you'll never get to the Biblical God (Romans 1:19-25). At best you'll only be able to say that the Creator exists, but you'll never be able to tell men what the Creator requires of them. To destroy speculations and bring every thought captive to Christ, you need more than natural revelation, you need *special* revelation found in the preaching of the cross and/or the Bible.

We *never* agree to set aside the Bible and our Biblical presuppositions and beliefs and agree to argue on the basis of unbelieving philosophy and human reason. To assume the natural man's way is to contradict the Bible's own way for answering objections and it is self-defeating. You can't prove the Christian worldview using the natural realm alone or even by giving priority to natural revelation. It is true that the natural and supernatural realms have some things in common (i.e., logic – Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18), but there are definite differences between them. For example, when in a debate over creation versus evolution many Christians will argue for creation using scientific evidences for the obvious design of living things, the statistical improbability of the world coming about by solely natural means, evidences for Noah's flood from the fossil record, and evidence for the young age of the earth. All of these evidences are good and helpful, but usually only for the person that's *already* a Christian, not the unbeliever.¹⁶ People don't come to faith through evidential arguments; they come to faith through the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit working through the preaching of the gospel and the Bible. All hard evidences do is confirm Christians in their belief and in that sense; they can be very helpful in discipleship. Ultimately, every believer believes because he knows that the Bible says so. He may not be able to understand it all, but he knows that because God said it, he believes it. True faith is based upon the word of God alone. If you wield the sword of the Spirit with skill, you will be more effective than any elite apologist who knows evidences and philosophy but doesn't use the Bible as his primary tool for defending the faith. This is because the power doesn't rest in your intellectual ability, but in the Spirit of God working through the word of God (Hebrews 4:12).

Objections

1. What about the proof Jesus personally offered Thomas for His own resurrection? The Bible says that the apostles saw the risen Christ but since Thomas wasn't there initially

¹⁵ Please understand that I am *not* condemning the use of logic and critical thinking. Quite the contrary, for the Lord Jesus and the apostles used logic in their disputations with unbelievers (Matt. 22:42-46; Mark 11:27-33; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18). However, to use logic and philosophical tools in an *autonomous* fashion is to do the very thing that Scripture condemns because it places reason and evidence on a higher level of authority than God Himself (Heb. 6:13). God is ultimate, not logic.

¹⁶ It is true that sometimes people simply want a straightforward answer to their question. However, after witnessing to thousands of people over a period of 15 years, most questions/objections from unbelievers are mere intellectual smokescreens designed to protect an unbeliever's idolatry and further shield them from gospel truth.

and thus he didn't see the risen Christ along with the rest of the apostles, he essentially said he wasn't going to believe unless he saw some hard evidence (John 20:24-25). Therefore, Jesus showed himself physically to Thomas so that he would savingly believe (John 20:26-29). However, pay attention to what Jesus said to him after he saw, "*Because you have seen me you have believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.*" In other words, blessed are those, like us, who do *not* have the physical evidences, yet we still believe. It is as if he was stooping to give tangible evidence to that one man as a Biblical example of how most people will *not* come to believe on Christ. We can't give people tangible evidences of the resurrection; instead, we must give them the historical record of Christ's resurrection as found in the word of God. So, we are not to rely on evidences only, especially since Jesus mildly rebuked Thomas for not believing the report from the rest of the apostles. Remember what Jesus said to the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus, "*O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!*"²⁶ "*Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?*"²⁷ "*Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.*" (Luke 24:25-27 NAU) They had all the evidence they needed in the word of God. Romans 1:18-21 says that all men have sufficient evidence of God's existence. However, that God-given evidence is subject to varying degrees of interpretation depending upon the worldview of the person interpreting it as well as the fact that men often pervert the evidence given to him due to the noetic effects of sin. Also, natural revelation will never get them to the gospel. They need special revelation contained in gospel preaching and the Scriptures for that. We *do* have what we need in the word of God because this is God's own inspired testimony of what He did and how He did it. When we resort to evidences to convince unbelievers of the faith, it is as if we are asking for the rebuke of the Lord Jesus Himself who said that only foolish and dull men fail to believe in all that the prophets have spoken. Faith based upon evidences is no longer faith, it's sight. If faith is based upon reason, logic, tangible evidence, and philosophy; it is no longer based upon God's word. So, it's a very subtle compromise of the sufficiency of Scripture.

2. "*You're Advocating Fideism!*" – Fideism is the view that says that *any* type of apologetics is a waste of time and that you don't need any evidence for the faith, you just need to take a blind, existential leap of faith (i.e., Soren Kierkegaard was a proponent of this). But this is not at all what we are advocating. We are *not* advocating a leap of faith into the dark but a step of faith into the light based upon believing in God's own word; the same word that the apostle Peter said is more sure and certain than his own eyeball experience of the transfiguration of Christ! (2 Peter 1:16-21) We're not advocating faith in faith but *faith in the word of God*. True faith is grounded in the word of God and the only legitimate apologetic is one that is rooted firmly in the Bible and uses the Bible¹⁷.
3. *You can't reject all human philosophy in defending the faith!* – Actually, we can, and we do! The Bible condemns *all* human philosophy in no uncertain terms because it is nothing more than autonomous human reason (1 Cor. 1:18-2:5; Col. 2:8). There *is* some truth in human philosophy (as there is in all unbelieving human systems) such as logic, the need to think critically and clearly, but that is because philosophy is borrowing from God's truth since philosophers are living in and subject to God's world, not vice versa.

¹⁷ We would also advocate the use of evidences, logic, and reason in evangelism and discipleship as long as those things are not used in a neutral, autonomous way.

Indeed, we are called to love God *with our minds* (Matthew 22:37-40) and to *think* about God's truth (Phil. 4:8) and we see the example of Paul *reasoning* with unbelievers (Acts 17:17; 18:4; 19:8-9). But our reasoning is to be grounded and informed by the Bible and our defense is to always make use of the Bible and not autonomous human reason. The three systems mentioned earlier advocated by Bible-believers all depend on autonomous human reason from one degree to another and because of this, any form of Christian apologetics that use a baptized form human philosophy to argue for the faith also comes under the same condemnation of Scripture. Biblical apologetics is the only approach that consistently uses the principle of Sola Scriptura in defending the faith. Our apologetic is not Scripture + evidence or Scripture + philosophy, but simply Scripture *alone*. Scripture alone is our necessary and sufficient tool for evangelism and apologetics because Scripture alone provides the necessary framework to properly understand and integrate evidence, logic, and philosophical categories into our own thinking to the glory of God.

4. *But what if they don't believe the Bible?* Use it anyway! The fact that they don't believe the Bible is irrelevant because it's true whether they believe it or not (Rom. 3:4). The late D. James Kennedy made this great observation, "The apostle Paul, as he preached in the Greek cities appealed to the Scriptures even though the people listening to him did not believe in the Scriptures. He did not try to convince his audience of the veracity and authority of the Scriptures. Rather, he proclaimed them and the Holy Spirit worked and used this proclamation to save some who then came to believe the Bible to be true. In witnessing, our primary function is proclamation, not defense."¹⁸ When God commissioned Ezekiel to prophesy to the nation of Israel that judgment was coming, God told him to preach His word even though God told him that the people would not listen. He said, "*As for them, whether they listen or not-- for they are a rebellious house-- they will know that a prophet has been among them.*" (Ezek. 2:5 NAU) God told Ezekiel that they would not listen to His word, but go and tell them anyway!
5. *What if they ask you to prove the Bible?* We are not called upon to prove the Bible. God *Himself* proves the Bible to men through regeneration (2 Cor. 4:4-6). It is said that Charles Spurgeon said, "*Defend the Bible? I would just as soon defend a lion. Just turn the Bible loose. It will defend itself. They may not follow your rationale, but when they hear the snarling of the word of God, they get the point.*" Spurgeon was no crank. The inspiration for his statement about the self-attesting and self-authenticating nature of Scripture came not only from Scripture itself, but also from his familiarity with the Particular Baptist confessions of faith that said things like this, "*FAITH is the gift of God, wrought in the hearts of the elect by the Spirit of God; by which faith they come to know and believe the truth of the Scriptures, and the excellency of them above all other writings, and all things in the world, as they hold forth the glory of God in His attributes, the excellency of Christ in His nature and offices, and of the power and fulness of the Spirit in its [His] workings and operations; and so are enabled to cast their souls upon His truth thus believed.*"¹⁹ The 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith eloquently affirms the self-attesting nature of Scripture under section I, articles 4-5, *The Holy Scriptures*,

¹⁸ D. James Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*, 4th Ed., (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996), 149.

¹⁹ 1646 London Baptist Confession of Faith, Article XXII. <http://www.sfofgso.org/about.asp?href=sof> Underlined text mine for emphasis – DSS.

The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, depends not on the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God its Author (Who is Truth itself). Therefore it is to be received because it is the Word of God. We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the people of God to gain a high and reverent estimation of the Holy Scriptures. We may be similarly affected by the nature of the Scriptures—the heavenliness of the contents, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole, which is to give all glory to God, the full disclosure it makes of the only way of man's salvation, together with many other incomparable excellencies and entire perfections. By all the evidence the Scripture more than proves itself to be the Word of God. Yet, notwithstanding this, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth of Scripture and its divine authority, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.²⁰ Thus, we don't need to prove the Bible because the Bible authenticates itself.²¹

6. When Paul went to the philosophers in Acts 17, he didn't quote Scripture to those unbelievers. Actually, he contradicted those philosophers at every major point of their system with Scriptural truth (Acts 17:24 cf. 1 Kings 8:27)²². Besides that, Paul had apostolic authority and as such, he was delivering special revelation to them in his preaching. We don't have that kind of authority in and of ourselves, but when we quote the apostles and prophets today, we are appealing to *their* God-breathed authority to support our defense. In his preaching to the philosophers, Paul *did* quote one of their own poets²³ for the purpose of demonstrating that all people already intuitively know that the Creator exists (cf. Psalm 19:1-4; Romans 1:19-25). However, it is clear that he did *not* appeal to evidences or rational proofs, but instead “proclaimed” (vv. 19, 23, 31-32) to them Jesus and the resurrection.
7. This method may be fine to use with some unbelievers, but not all. Why can't we use a variety of methods? Because in 1st Corinthians 1:18-31, it is clear that the message of the cross is sufficient for the philosopher and the dullard. This is because the basic spiritual needs of all men are the same, regardless of their I.Q. We are not to customize our message to fit the ivory tower intellectual but we speak to them using plain language without worldly wisdom (1 Cor. 2:1-5). Simply apply the Scriptures to their situation and you will have all that's necessary to defend the faith and evangelize the lost.
8. You're assuming the very thing you're trying to prove! When it comes to issues of ultimacy, *everyone* assumes things about the world that they can't empirically prove. Everybody takes some things for granted because everyone begins their thinking with

²⁰ <http://www.spurgeon.org/~phil/creeds/bcof.htm#part1>

²¹ It's perfectly fine to show the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in the New Testament (i.e., Isaiah 53), but be aware that knowledgeable unbelievers will usually reject such things out of hand for various reasons, the most common of which goes something like this, “The apostles ripped that OT verse out of context to make it fit their agenda. For instance, just look at the original context of Hosea 11:1 and see how Matthew's gospel (2:15) twisted that verse to make it fit the life of the baby Jesus.” Of course, all of this conveniently ignores the different kinds of prophetic fulfillment (direct fulfillment, type-antitype, etc.). Nevertheless, it is wise to study how to answer these objections when engaging people with Scripture since doing so increases your skill in wielding the word of God.

²² For a detailed exposition of Paul's encounter with the philosophers in Acts 17, see Greg's Bahnsen, *Always Ready*, (Nacogdoches, TX: Covenant Media Foundation, 2004), 235-276. See also Scott Oliphint, *The Battle Belongs to the Lord*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003), 143-173.

²³ This is a quotation from Aratus (ca. 310–245 B.C.), *Phaenomena* 5. Paul asserted a general relationship and accountability to God for all humanity by using their own pagan poets to show them what was already evident within them (cf. Romans 1:19-21).

foundational beliefs about reality that can't be seen, smelt, tasted, heard, or touched. For example, when arguing with Christians (or anybody else), atheists will assume atheistic reason in order to prove atheistic reason. After all, atheists aren't going to assume the truthfulness of Christianity in order to argue *against* Christianity, for such would be self-defeating. If Satan casts out Satan, how will his kingdom stand? (Matt. 12:26) How much more ridiculous is it for Christians to give up their Bibles when trying to defend the message in their Bibles? (!) Just as a soldier might stand on the very hill he's commanded to defend, so you too stand on the word of God, which contains the very message you are commanded to defend (Jude 3).

Sophie the Washwoman

Can you imagine Sophie the Washwoman, a woman who cleans toilets for a living and never finished the 7th grade trying to defend Christianity by using evidential or philosophical arguments? Sophie's attempts to defend the faith with unbiblical methods would be like the young King David trying to put on Saul's armor before going out to fight Goliath; it was a hindrance because it was just too big, bulky, and unnecessary. Besides, what God provided David by way of sling and stone was sufficient for what David needed to do (1 Sam. 17:38-40). It is the same way with the word of God. The truth is, our hypothetical Sophie doesn't really need any of those things; ultimately, she only needs to pray and know her Bible like the back of her hand in order to give an answer for the hope that lies within her (Pro. 26:4-5; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). Her apologetic is going to be like the Lord Jesus, when after being asked a hard question by the unbelieving theological liberals of His day He said, "*You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God.*" (Mat 22:29 NAU) and when tempted by Satan himself, Jesus responded with, "*It is written . . .*" (Luke 4:4). Would to God that we would model the apologetic method of the Lord Jesus!

Like the Lord Jesus, Sophie's method would be simple but not simplistic. For starters, she would need sufficient knowledge to answer questions and objections from the Bible as she evangelizes the lost. That means that she needs to be able to answer questions about theology proper²⁴, soteriology²⁵, hamartiology²⁶, Christology²⁷, theodicy²⁸, bibliology²⁹, and so on. Second, when she gets a question/objection from the unbeliever, she can ask follow-up questions if necessary to make sure she understands exactly what the objections are. It would look something like this, "So, your question or objection is _____, right?" or "Please tell me what your specific objection is." Third, she answers the objection with verses that deal with that particular question. For example, consider the following common objections and their Scriptural responses:

"I don't believe in God" or "Prove to me there's a God"

Answer: "God says He's already proven it to you because Romans 1 says that you already know

²⁴ The doctrine of God.

²⁵ The doctrine of salvation.

²⁶ The doctrine of sin.

²⁷ The doctrine of Christ's person and message.

²⁸ The vindication of God in light of the existence of evil.

²⁹ The origin, nature, and composition of the Bible.

that God exists. It's foolish to deny what you intuitively know is true (Psa. 14:1): *"because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them."*²⁰ *For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.*²¹ *For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened."* (Rom 1:19-21 NAU)

*"The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands."*² *Day to day pours forth speech, And night to night reveals knowledge.*³ *There is no speech, nor are there words; Their voice is not heard."* (Psa 19:1-3 NAU)

"It doesn't matter which religion you follow, as long as you are sincere."

Answer: *"There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."* (Pro. 14:12 NAU)

"Men wrote the Bible."

Answers: *"All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness."* (2 Tim. 3:16 NAU)

"For no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." (2 Peter 1:21 NAU)

"The Bible has lots of contradictions."

Answer: *"A scoffer seeks wisdom, and finds none, but knowledge is easy to him who has understanding."* (Pro 14:6 NAU)

"If God were all powerful and all good, there would be no evil; but since evil exists God cannot exist"

Answer: "No, that's not what God says, *"The One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating evil; I am the LORD who does all these"* (Isa. 45:7 NAU) and *"For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting And His faithfulness to all generations"* (Psa. 100:5 NAU). Our all-powerful and all good God says that He has decreed the existence of evil for the purpose of being glorified in the punishing or forgiving of it in sinful people and also in the redemption of our physical bodies and the physical cosmos, thus taking care of both moral and natural evil (Romans 8:20-23). All of this will serve to *establish* and further *confirm* His goodness and power. Besides, if God didn't exist there would be no standard of goodness by which to measure what is evil; but because God does exist, we can detect evil and prescribe the only remedy for it found in the gospel. Thus, evil shows the existence of God!"

"I'm a pretty good person."

Answer: "No you're not. God says, *"as it is written, 'THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; ¹¹ THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ¹² ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.'*" (Romans 3:10-12)

You get the idea³⁰. If you don't have an answer to their question you can simply say, "That's a good question, I'll get back to you on that." Then, be diligent to find an answer in your own study or get some help from your pastors. If people ask a question about evidence (i.e., "Doesn't radiometric dating prove that the earth is old?"), then briefly summarize what you know, provide them printed material on that subject from Christian experts working in that particular field, or refer them to a trusted website whose URL you have readily memorized that can answer their specific question or objection (i.e., creation.com). Finally, follow up with them later to see if they have read the material and then ask them what they thought about it. If they seem interested, continue to speak the truth to them in love; if they mock, don't give what is holy to the dogs nor cast your pearls before swine lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces (Eph. 4:15; Matt. 7:6).

The How and Why of Interacting with Skeptics

A man named James asked the following on our church blog³¹,

"You write: 'They want me to prove the Christian God's existence but I never let them get away with such since the Bible says that God's existence is a self-evident truth that is hardwired into all people.' It's certainly reasonable to conclude that what we see was created. However, is it necessarily 'logical' to conclude that the Creator is the God of the Bible?"

Thanks for your comments. Your question is a fair one and I'm glad to attempt an answer. In short, the answer is yes; unbelievers know that the Creator God exists but their knowledge of Him is incomplete and thus insufficient to save them from their sins. Romans 1:19-21 says,

"because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. 21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened." (Rom 1:18-21 NAU - bolded portions for emphasis - Dusman)

Paul is teaching that that which is known about the Biblical, creator God *"is evident within them"* since He has *"made it evident to them."* How? Verse 20 tells us, *"For since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse."* In other words, the true God has made Himself evident to all people through the created order and that this is manifested not only as an external reality but also an internal awareness. Moreover, because His eternal power and divine nature has been "clearly seen" through what has been created they are left without excuse. Again, people intuitively know that the God exists as they

³⁰ For an excellent list of questions/objections and Scriptural responses, see these free online .pdf articles from [Lake Road Chapel: God's Answers to Man's Questions](http://www.lakeroadchapel.org/Tracts/answer-questions.pdf) (<http://www.lakeroadchapel.org/Tracts/answer-questions.pdf>) and [God's Answers to Man's Excuses](http://www.lakeroadchapel.org/Tracts/answer-excuses.pdf) (<http://www.lakeroadchapel.org/Tracts/answer-excuses.pdf>).

³¹ This section is taken from an article written on our church blog: http://graceinthetriad.blogspot.com/2010/05/why-and-how-of-how-i-interact-with_08.html

see the created order and this external reality creates an internal awareness that the Creator exists. Also, verses 19 and 21 have a definite article before the word translated “God” in the Greek text, indicating that Paul is not referring to some nebulous deity, but instead this knowledge is of the one true God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, the Biblical God. As a matter of fact, after teaching that the message of the gospel is absolutely essential for the salvation of men, Paul reiterates what he said in Romans 1 when in Romans 10:18 he quotes King David's observation about all men's knowledge of the Creator God:

“But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; ‘THEIR VOICE HAS GONE OUT INTO ALL THE EARTH, AND THEIR WORDS TO THE ENDS OF THE WORLD.’” (Rom 10:18 NAU)

In Paul's use of Psalm 19:4, David testified by the Holy Spirit that God's general revelation of Himself has reached the entire world. So, given what Paul says about the knowledge that God Himself has hardwired into the unbeliever, yes, it is logical to conclude that unbelievers who have never heard the gospel or read a Bible intuitively know that the Biblical Creator God exists.

However, let me be as clear as possible: According to Romans chapter one, people's knowledge of the Biblical Creator through natural revelation is *not* enough to save them but it *is* enough to damn them. Natural revelation does not and *cannot* tell you that God is a Trinity, that the second Person of that Triune being was incarnated in Bethlehem to eventually be offered up as a wrath-bearing atoning sacrifice for sinners, and that justification is by faith apart from works. All of that must come through special revelation; whether it comes in the form of gospel preaching, prophecy, dreams, or being exposed to the teaching of the Bible. This is clear from Romans 10:14-17 and 1 Peter 1:23-25,

“for ‘WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.’ 14 How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? 15 How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, ‘HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!’ 16 However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, ‘LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?’ 17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.” (Rom. 10:13-17 NAU)

“for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. 24 For, ‘ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF, 25 BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER.’ And this is the word which was preached to you.” (1 Pet. 1:23-25 NAU)

You go on to state,

“The God of the Bible spoke to people with an apparently audible voice. He raised the dead, parted the seas, made fire fall from Heaven. He spoke through a burning bush. His believers were told they could drink deadly poison and handle snakes without being harmed. Nothing like these things occurs today. So, why

can't we conclude that the Creator is the God of the Koran, or the 'philosopher's God' who just created everything and then either fell asleep or lost interest and just went somewhere else?"

The reason why people reject the Biblical Creator God and trade Him in for an idol is because they are "suppressing the truth in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:18). Apart from being exposed to God's special revelation and Holy Spirit regeneration, people will always degenerate into idolatry. The Muslim god, the unbelieving philosopher's god, or the Deist's views are all different versions of the same problem: idolatry. Idolatry is the default spiritual status of all people if they are left to natural revelation alone: "*For they exchanged the truth of God for the lie and worshiped and served the created thing rather than the Creator*" (Romans 1:25 - my translation). So, given the inherent depravity within the natural men, if they are left to natural revelation alone and are not regenerated by the Spirit, they may indeed "conclude that the Creator is the God of the Koran, or the 'philosopher's God' who just created everything and then either fell asleep or lost interest and just went somewhere else?"

Apart from God's grace, this is the lot for the unsaved person (1 Cor. 2:14). This is why they need the gospel.

IN CONCLUSION, you don't need to use gimmicky and deceptive techniques to evangelize nor do you need worldly philosophy or evidences to defend the faith. Because God's existence is self-evident to all men, a Christian doesn't need to try to prove the existence of the One whom all people already know exists. To attempt to do such is to subtly call God a liar (Romans 1:19-21). Stand on the word, believe 2 Timothy 3:15-17, and trust God to open men's hearts in His time, not yours (John 6:37-44).

*And that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate [Gk. *artios* – "fitted, complete"], equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:15-17 NAU)*

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Heb 4:12 NAU)