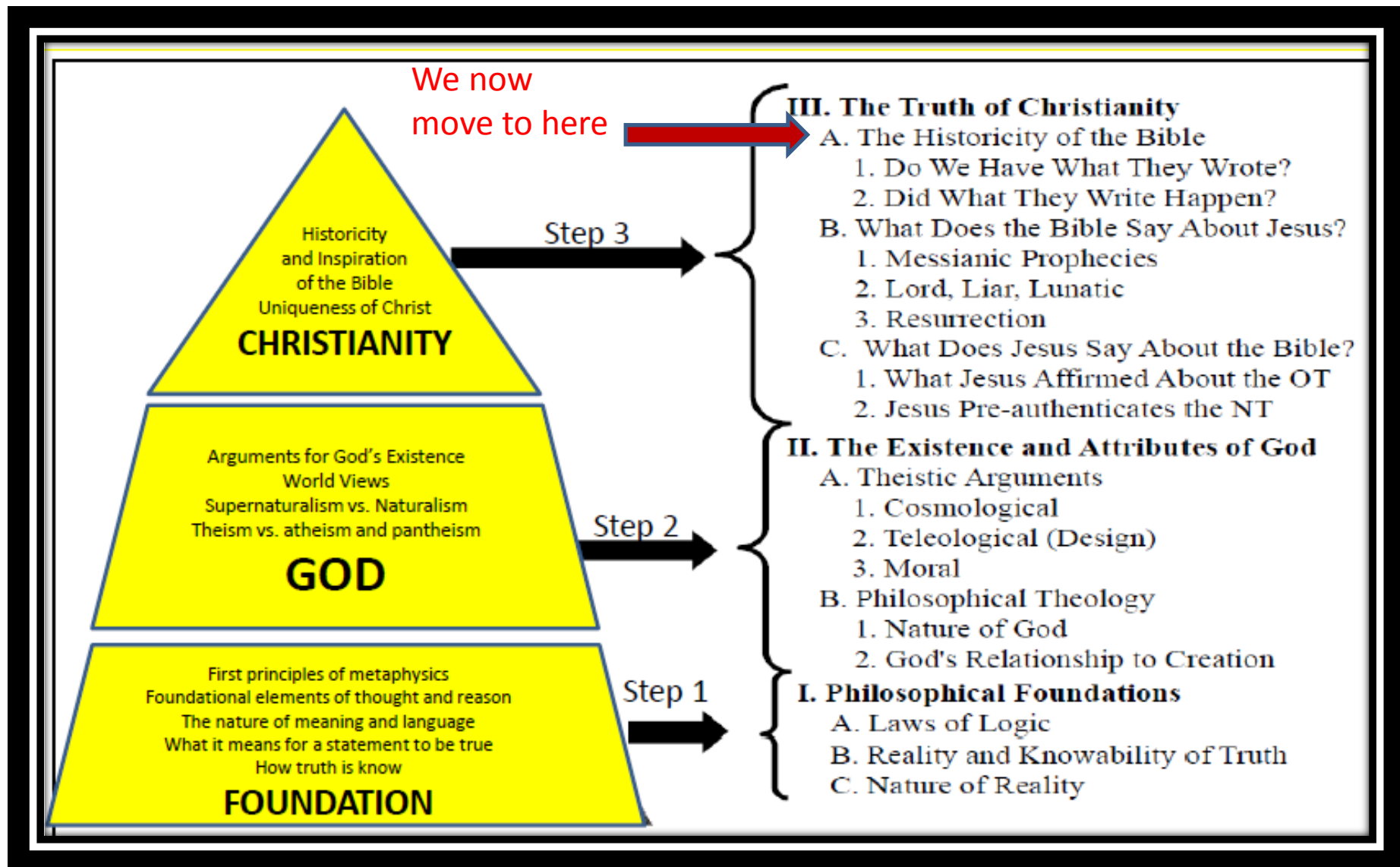


APOLOGETICS 58

The Three Premises to Establish Inerrancy and the Importance of Doing History with Accepted Historical Methods (DDR #607)



THE THREE-STEP APPROACH TO APOLOGETICS

The advantage of doing apologetics in this three-step manner (as represented by the pyramid) is that when you move into the top section, you would have already dealt with issues related to the possibility of miracles as recorded in the New Testament. If someone says he cannot accept the miracles of Jesus walking on water or His resurrection from the dead (which will be covered in step 3), then he needs to be reminded that his objection is philosophical (step 1) and not historical; furthermore, there is no rational reason to reject miracles a priori since there is a God (step 2). Objections to the miracles in the New Testament are philosophical in nature. It is amazing how blind people can be to this fact. If one persists in denying miracles, then you may need to revisit those philosophical or theistic sections in step one and two. This three-step approach is much better than the method used by famous apologists who in effect just throw all of the information out there, e.g. Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, which is a fantastic apologetic book, but does not lay the evidence out as precisely and orderly as the three-step method does.

The first thing we want to do in the third section is to establish the authority of the Bible. After we do this, then we can validate truths of Christianity.

The significance of the fact that Christianity is grounded in history cannot be overemphasized. Note the comment by the world famous F.F. Bruce:


Christianity and History

"That Christianity has its roots in history is emphasized in the Church's earliest creeds, which fix the supreme revelation of God at a particular point in time, when 'Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord ... suffered under Pontius Pilate.' This historical 'once-for-all-ness' of Christianity, which distinguishes it from those religious and philosophical systems which are not specially related to any particular time, makes the reliability of the writings which purport to record this revelation a question of first-rate importance."

F. F. Bruce

F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 8.

The Overall Argument



Premise A - The Bible is a basically reliable and trustworthy document.

Premise B - On the basis of this we have sufficient evidence to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Premise C - Jesus Christ teaches that the Bible is the Word of God.

Conclusion - Therefore, the Bible is the Word of God and Christianity is true.

Notice what premise A is not saying: that the Bible is inspired of God. We begin with a weaker claim of basic reliability. This premise will allow us to get our foot in the door. It will also allow us to use the common accepted methods of the historians. To be sure, we will conclude that the Bible is *absolutely reliable*. However, we cannot start with our conclusion. We start with the premise that the Bible is only basically reliable and then build from there. By beginning with the premise that the Bible is merely *basically reliable*, we begin where the unbeliever is and do not lose him in the first premise.

The Overall Argument

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From premise A, we will show that Jesus is the Son of God. Once we establish that Jesus is the Son of God, we will note how He teaches that the Bible is the inspired and inerrant Word of God. When we establish that the Bible is the inspired and inerrant Word of God, then we will use it to establish that Christianity is indeed true. We will use Jesus' authority to establish that the Bible is more than simply a basically reliable and trustworthy document.

The Overall Argument

Premise A - The Bible is a basically reliable and trustworthy document.

1. Is the NT that we have today an accurate copy of the original NT?

- *time gap between original and oldest extant manuscripts*
- *number of manuscripts*
- *early versions of the Bible*
- *quotes from early Christians*

2. Did the events attested to in the NT really happen?

- *extra Biblical references*
- *earmarks of historicity*
- *testimony of archeology*

This is an overview of the unpacking of Premise A. This will make more sense as we move into some of the details.

The Overall Argument

Premise B - On the basis of this we have sufficient evidence to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

- ***Messianic Prophecies***
- ***Lord, Liar, Lunatic***
- ***Sages argument***
- ***Resurrection***

The unpacking of premise B will be along these lines.

The Overall Argument

Premise C - Jesus Christ teaches that the Bible is the Word of God.

- ***Jesus pre-authenticates the New Testament***
- ***What Jesus affirmed about the Bible***
- ***Jesus and the critics***

Conclusion - Therefore, the Bible is the Word of God and Christianity is true.

The unpacking of Premise C.

The Issue of Historicity: Premise A

Premise A - The Bible is a basically reliable and trustworthy document.

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Conclusion - Therefore, the Bible is the Word of God and Christianity is true.

In going back to our first premise, I want to *emphasize* that we are talking about *historicity* of the New Testament. We are talking about history and using the established methods of historians.

The second premise answers the question who Jesus is which is also a historical question.

Who is Jesus?: Premise B

Premise A - The Bible is a basically reliable and trustworthy document.

Premise B - On the basis of this we have sufficient evidence to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Premise C - Jesus Christ teaches that the Bible is the Word of God.

Conclusion - Therefore, the Bible is the Word of God and Christianity is true.

Inspiration of the Bible: Premise C

Premise A - The Bible is a basically reliable and trustworthy document.

Premise B - On the basis of this we have sufficient evidence to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Premise C - Jesus Christ teaches that the Bible is the Word of God.

Conclusion - Therefore, the Bible is the Word of God and Christianity is true.

Christianity is True: Conclusion

Premise A - The Bible is a basically reliable and trustworthy document.

Premise B - On the basis of this we have sufficient evidence to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Premise C - Jesus Christ teaches that the Bible is the Word of God.

Conclusion - Therefore, the Bible is the Word of God and Christianity is true.

Historicity Involves Two Issues:

- 1. Is the New Testament that we have today an accurate copy of the original New Testament?
= Do we have what they wrote?*
- 2. Did the events attested to in the New Testament really happen?
= Is what they wrote true?*

Both Questions Are Historical

Question one is an historical question involving the task of examining the reliability of the New Testament documents with regard to their transmission down to us through history.

Question two is an historical question involving the task of examining corroborating evidence and judging the plausibility of eyewitness testimony.

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At the risk of being redundant, I want to review the importance of using the appropriate discipline to settle questions of history. I do this because so many people object to miracles, because of anti-theological and philosophical reasons/biases, rather than objectively looking at the historical evidence.

The Significance of a Question Being Historical

Different aspects of reality require different methods of inquiry and tools of analysis.

- **Questions of mathematics require methods of inquiry and tools of analysis appropriate to mathematical objects.**
- **Questions of science require methods of inquiry and tools of analysis appropriate to physical objects.**
- **Questions of history require methods of inquiry and tools of analysis appropriate to historical events.**
- **Questions of _____ require methods of inquiry and tools of analysis appropriate to _____.**

The Significance of a Question Being Historical

To be sure, there are elements that are common to all of them such as the laws of logic.

But that which makes each aspect distinctive requires methods of inquiry and tools of analysis appropriate to that distinction.

The Significance of a Question Being Historical

Confusion and error can arise when the methods of inquiry and tools of analysis of one aspect of reality are used inappropriately within another aspect of reality.

For example, you cannot settle questions of ethics with only the methods and tools of science.

You cannot capture the beauty of a sunset merely in terms of the frequency of the light rays.

The Significance of a Question Being Historical

Confusion and error can also arise when certain assumptions from one aspect masquerade as a question in another aspect.

The Significance of a Question Being Historical

For example, suppose one was trying to decide whether the New Testament account of Jesus walking on the water was historically accurate.

What kind of question is this?

The Significance of a Question Being Historical

For example, suppose one was trying to decide whether the New Testament account of Jesus walking on the water was **historically** accurate.

What kind of question is this?

(It is a historical question.)

The Significance of a Question Being Historical

What if that one concluded that the account could not be historically accurate because it is impossible for a human to walk on water.

What assumption is being made?

(The assumption is that miracles cannot occur.)

The Significance of a Question Being Historical

What if that one concluded that the account could not be historically accurate because it is impossible for a human to walk on water.

What kind of question is that assumption?

(This is a philosophical question.)

The Significance of a Question Being Historical

What if that one concluded that the account could not be historically accurate because it is impossible for a human to walk on water.

What kind of question is that assumption?

(This is a philosophical question.) Why?

(The question of whether miracles are possible is a question about the existence and nature of God.)

The Significance of a Question Being Historical

The problem, then, is that critics can bring philosophical assumptions to historical questions without recognizing that they are doing so.

Many objections to the historical accuracy of the Bible are really philosophical objections.

Being philosophical, they have to be dealt with according to the methods of inquiry and tools of analysis appropriate to philosophy, not history. Only then can we return to the historical issues.