

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY



LAST TIME

- Ontological Argument
- God as the Maximally Great Being

NATURAL THEOLOGY

- The evidence of God through observable, natural processes and understanding.

PROPERLY BASIC BELIEF IN GOD

“What about a person who doesn’t have any arguments for God’s existence? How does he know that God exists?”

PROPERLY BASIC BELIEF IN GOD

- Beliefs which are appropriately grounded may be rationally accepted as basic beliefs not grounded on argument.

PROPERLY BASIC

- You can know that God exists without make an inference to God's existence from something more basic.
- Belief in God can be a part of your foundation of your belief and it is grounded in your experience.
- NOT AN ARGUMENT FOR GOD

BIBLICAL AUTHORS

➤ This is the way that people in the Bible knew God.

“God was known to them as a dynamic will interacting with their own wills, a sheer given reality, as inescapably to be reckoned with as destructive storm and life-giving sunshine . . . They did not think of God as an inferred entity but as an experienced reality. To them God was not . . . an idea adopted by the mind, but an experiential reality which gave significance to their lives.” - John Hick

PROPERLY BASIC

- Not based on some other belief.
- Examples, Belief In:
 - External world around you.
 - Physical objects in it.
 - Reality of the past.
 - Presence of other minds that you own.

NOT ARBITRARY

- Basic does not mean the belief is arbitrary.
- They are formed in the context of certain experience.
- It is perfectly rational to believe it unless you have some overriding reason not to.

2ND PREMISE

- Belief that the biblical God exists is appropriately grounded.
- The inner witness of the Holy Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit is one of the ways it is grounded.

INNER WITNESS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

- Christians know that God exists, not through argument, but through the self-authenticating witness of the Holy Spirit.
- Arguments are sufficient to know that God exists, but they are not necessary to know God exists.

SELF-AUTHENTICATING WITNESS

- The experience of the Holy Spirit is of a genuine reality.
- It is something that is unmistakable for the person that has it.
- Someone who experiences the Holy Spirit, knows that is what it is.

CONT.

- A person who experiences the Holy Spirit does not need to have any additional arguments or evidences to know that they are experiencing the Spirit of God.
- You can have additional supplemental arguments, but you do not need them.

CONT.

- Remember this is not an argument for the existence of God.
- It is not an argument from religious experience. It is the immediate experience of God himself, and the belief is formed in a properly basic way.

CONT.

- This is not confidence in knowing that Christianity is true, but rather one that knows that it is true.
- Someone that fully attends to the inner witness of the Holy Spirit will also have incompatible arguments and evidence overwhelmed.

IS THIS CIRCULAR REASONING?

- To say that the Holy Spirit is real because the Bible says so?
- No, because as believers we have established that the Bible is a reliable source.

BIBLICAL DATA

- The witness of the Holy Spirit
- A central theme in the New Testament
- Something that we must take into account and seriously.

for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through
faith.

to redeem those who were under the law, so that
we might receive adoption as sons. And because
you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into
our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”

GALATIANS 3:26, 4:6

ESV

For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

ROMANS 8:15-16

ESV

that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ,

COLOSSIANS 2:2

ESV

because our gospel came to you not only in word,
but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with
full conviction. You know what kind of men we
proved to be among you for your sake.

1 THESSALONIANS 1:5

ESV

But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and
you all have knowledge.

But the anointing that you received from him
abides in you, and you have no need that anyone
should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you
about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as
it has taught you, abide in him.

1 JOHN 2:20, 27

ESV

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father
will send in my name, he will teach you all things
and bring to your remembrance all that I have said
to you.

JOHN 14:26

ESV

Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God,
and God in him. And by this we know that he
abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

By this we know that we abide in him and he in us,
because he has given us of his Spirit.

1 JOHN 3:24, 4:13

ESV

PLACE OF EVIDENCE?

- Evidence and arguments can be used to support a believer's faith, they should NEVER be the basis of that faith.
- The proper base for a believer is the Holy Spirit himself.

ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT- UNBELIEVER

- The Holy Spirit has a special ministry towards unbelievers.

Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

JOHN 16:7-11

ESV

THE HOLY SPIRIT

- Convicts the world of:
 - Sin
 - Righteousness
 - Judgement
- Without the Holy Spirit, no one would come to know God.

What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God.

ROMANS 3:9B-11

ESV

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.

JOHN 6:44

ESV

SO...

“It seems to me that the implication of this is that when a person refuses to come to Christ, it is never just because of a lack of evidence or for want of good arguments or because of intellectual difficulties. At root, a person refuses to come to Christ because he ignores and deliberately rejects the drawing of God’s Holy Spirit upon his heart. So, in the final analysis, I do not think anyone fails to become a Christian because of a lack of evidence. Ultimately, the reason why a person fails to become a Christian is because he loves darkness rather than light and he wants nothing to do with God. “

ULTIMATE BASIS

- The believer and the unbeliever have the witness of the Holy Spirit as the ultimate basis for the knowledge of the truth of Christianity.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF EVIDENCE?

- Reason, arguments, and evidence must all play a secondary role to the witness of the Holy Spirit.
- Magisterial vs ministerial views.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF EVIDENCE?

- Magisterial
 - When evidence or reason judges the truth of the Gospel
- Ministerial
 - Reason and evidence submit to the Gospel.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF EVIDENCE?

- It simply affirms and bolsters our faith when it is good.
- When there is conflict between the two, we must always defer to the witness of the Holy Spirit.

DEFEATERS AND CHRISTIAN BELIEF

- What about arguments that raise objections or obstacles to your belief?
- Example of Christians in Soviet Union with only evidence being Atheistic Encyclopedia.

CAN BASIC BELIEF BE DEFEATED?

- Of course!
- But you can also defeat the defeater!
- Christian apologetics would be the answer.
 - Problem of Evil?
 - Free Will Argument
 - Evil is not a good argument for atheism.

CAN ORIGINAL BELIEF DEFEAT DEFEATERS?

- Alvin Plantinga argues that intrinsic belief can be a defeater-defeater.
- If you were accused of a crime that you know you did not commit, but the evidence was overwhelming and you know everyone else would think you did it, does that mean you should believe you did it? NO!

OTHER FAITHS RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES

- Can other faiths use the same argument to defend their own religious experiences?
- Mormons- Burning in their bosom
- Muslims- Inner witness

Their claims have no real bearing on what we are saying. Remember we are looking from an Xian view, not skeptics.

OTHER FAITHS RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES

- The Christian's experience with the Holy Spirit is self-authenticating. We know it is the Holy Spirit.
- We are assuming that all religious experiences are equal. That would be false.
 - Buddhist or Hindu = loss or emptying
 - Christians= loving, filling, personal

OTHER FAITHS RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES

- The vast majority of those that convert from another faith to Christianity say that the Christian Holy Spirit experience is entirely different from anything else they experienced.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

- The primary way that Christians know that what they believe is true is through the self-authenticating witness of the Holy Spirit. Evidences and reason can be used to confirm that conclusion but they cannot be correctly or effectively used to negate it.

NEXT TIME

- Read:
 - Excursus- Natural Theology- Problem of Suffering and Evil. pp. 222-256

QUESTIONS?