

Principles for apologetics from Paul at Athens

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Apologetics is *witnessing* by:

defending Christian belief against objections (1 Peter 3:15),

commending (proving) Christian belief (Philp. 1:7, 16) and

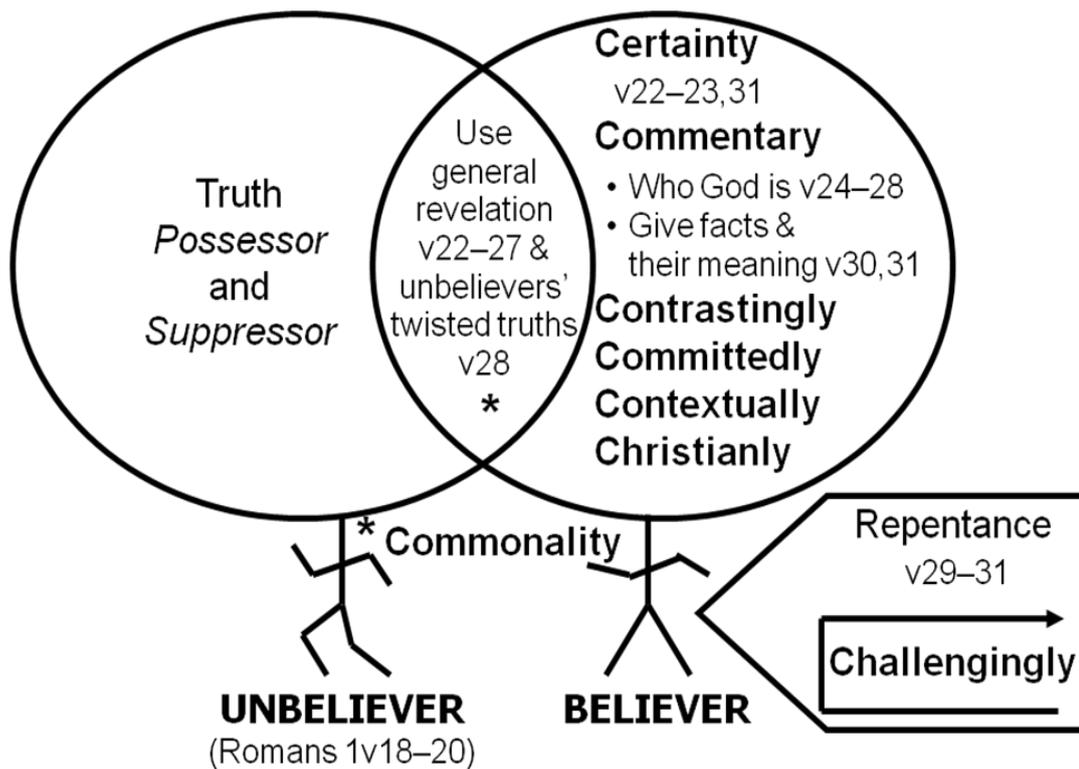
demolishing unbelief (showing its futility) (2 Cor. 10:4, 5),

with the aim of *persuading* unbelievers to become Christians (Acts 26:1, 2, 24–29), by God's grace (2 Tim. 2:24, 25 and John 3:3).

It is vitally important to derive our principles for apologetics from the God's word, the Bible. This essay will draw eight key principles for apologetics from Paul's message to the Athenians at the Areopagus council, as found on Acts 17:16–34.¹ The following diagram summarizes the eight principles.²

¹ For expositions and applications of Acts 17 by other presuppositional apologists see: Cornelius Van Til, *Paul at Athens* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1954), now published by Westminster Discount Books Service; K. Scott Oliphint, *The battle belongs to the Lord: The power of Scripture for defending the faith* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003), 143–173; and especially Greg L. Bahnsen, (edited by Randy Booth), *Always Ready: Directions for Defending the Faith* (Atlanta: American Vision and Texarkana: Covenant Media Foundation, 1996), 235–276, including his concluding summary of the principles from Acts 17 on pages 272–274 (Bahnsen's exposition was originally published in the *Ashland Theological Bulletin* 13:1 (1980)).

² In this exposition I have dug my own course but I have also at times, consciously echoed Cornelius Van Til's and John Frame's teachings. I have sought to indicate this in the footnotes, together with pointing to places where Van Til and Frame (and Greg Bahnsen) have written about the principles I have given. The abbreviations used below for the titles can be found in the Bibliography at Appendix 2.



Key principles for apologetics from Paul's apologetic at Athens in Acts 17

Figure 1

1) Certainty: of God's truth, such as about God and the resurrection

It is compelling to see how Paul declares throughout his message the certainty of truth. He spoke with the authority of the Lord God. There are no ifs, buts, maybes, probably or possibly about Paul's message. Particular notice this in his introduction in verses 22, 23. There he says *"what you worship not knowing and in ignorance I am going to proclaim and declare to you"* (verse 23).³ What they do not know Paul does! So he goes on to declare to them the true God who is to be known. Then also notice how Paul refers to the resurrection as a certain fact, and proof of the judgment to come, in verse 31: *"he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead."* Our apologetics is to follow Paul's method.⁴

³ Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from *The Holy Bible: New International Version*®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by the International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved.

⁴ Van Til, DF3, 197 (b) and 199 (d) / DF4, 255 (b) and 256-257 (d); Frame, DKG, 145, AGG 78 "Presuppositional Apologetics: An Introduction: Part 2" (1999), at <http://www.thirdmill.org/files/english/html/pt/PT.h.Frame.Presupp.Apol.2.html>, 17, 18n7; "Certainty," in Campbell Campbell-Jack et al., eds., *New Dictionary of Apologetics* (Leicester, UK: IVP, 2006),

2) Commentary: (a) the “that and what” of God’s existence (tell who God is) and (b) give facts with their Biblical meaning

(a) The “that and what” of God’s existence (tell who God is)

In verse 24 Paul begins to declare the true God is the *creator* and *Lord* by saying “*The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples build by hands.*” God is the maker of everything including you. He is the supreme one over all—he is the Lord of heaven and earth.

Then, in verse 25, Paul declares God is *independent* and the *sustainer* as he says God “*is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything*” (independence) “*because he gives all life and breath and everything else*” (sustainer). So God is independent. He is self-existent, self-sufficient and self-dependent. There is nothing he needs. There is no worship or good deeds that he needs because he is complete and self-contained. He is complete without us. He is a debtor to no one and does not need anyone to tell him what to do or say. However, we are dependent on the independent God for our life, breath and everything else. He sustains this universe. He is our keeper. The very breath you breathe right now is given by God.

Paul continues in verse 26 by again affirming God is our creator and then Paul proclaims God is the *ruler* over all things: “*From one man [or blood] he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places [or boundaries] where they should live.*” History is his story. Where nations are and people live, including you and me, is determined by God. He is the ruler of all, and everything is happening in accordance with his sovereign plan.

All this is for a purpose: “*so that men would seek God and perhaps reach out for him, though he is not far from each one of us. ‘For in him we live and move and have our being’. As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring’*” (verses 27–28). We are to seek and find the true God who is *near* us all. He is near and personal for we, who are personal beings, are his offspring.

So in verses 24–28 Paul has been giving a running *commentary* on who God is - not only *that* he exists but *what*⁵ the true biblical God is like: that he is the *creator, Lord, independent, sustainer, ruler and near*. Also in verse 30, 31 God is declared as the *judge* (through Jesus) and I think that, if Paul had not been cut short (in verse 32), he would have added that God is the *savior* through faith in Jesus Christ.⁶

141–45, also available at http://www.frame-poythress.org/frame_articles/2005Certainty.htm, 4–6 (and for the psychological aspects of certainty, see that article); also see Bahnsen VTARA, 71–82.

⁵ Van Til, DF3, 9 / DF4, 30 and JA, 427 cf. DF3, 105–106 / DF4, 128 / CA1, 66 / CA2 136–137; Frame FV, 220 (3) and AGG, 73 (1) cf., 34–55.

⁶ Some, like Ned B. Stonehouse in his *Paul before the Areopagus and other New Testament studies* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957) 36–40, think that Paul’s message is complete but I do not think so because: (1) Paul would not have merely referred to Jesus as “the man” without going on to mention his name, and (2) Paul has not yet spoken about the salvation, through the savior Jesus because of

(b) Give facts with their Biblical meaning⁷

Next notice that when Paul refers to the *fact* of the resurrection of Jesus in verse 31 he gives a *commentary* about its *meaning* and significance in verses 30 and 31: God “commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.” Jesus’ resurrection proves he is God who will judge the world (cf. Dan. 7:9, 10, 13). As Jesus says in John 5:27–29, resurrection leads to judgment. The fact of the resurrection is given as a *fact* and not separated from its *Biblical meaning*⁸—Jesus is God and judge of the world.⁹ Imagine you are walking in some hills with the guidance of your map and you come across someone who is lost without a map. You then proceed to help them by describing that the map you have has been proven to be accurately made and very reliable, but you do not show the poor lost person the way to go from the map. Likewise we must not leave out our Bible’s life giving directions in our apologetics. Just speaking about facts without their meaning is like the idling of a car that is not in gear—it goes nowhere!¹⁰

3) Contrastingly: show their rock is not our like rock

Paul was speaking especially to the Epicureans and Stoics (verses 18–21) by *contrasting* the true biblical God (see 2a) the “that and what” of God’s existence above) against their beliefs, as follows.¹¹

GOD IS	COUNTERS EPICUREAN PRACTICAL ATHEISM	COUNTERS STOIC PANTHEISM
The creator	World made by chance—evolution	God is part of the existing order
Lord	No lord	God is on the same level as people
Independent	No God (in practice)	God is part of the world—all is God, God is all
The Sustainer	God not involved (practical atheism)	God is the force
The Ruler	Chance reigns	Fate reigns
Near	God (gods) are detached	God is impersonal

his death on the cross, which was part of Paul’s gospel message (see Acts 13:37, 38, 20:21, 16:31; Rom. 3:23–26; 2 Cor. 5:20–6:2; 1 Thess. 1:9, 10 and compare Luke 24:46, 47).

⁷ In reality talking about the “that and what” of God’s existence is an *application* of giving a “facts with their meaning.”

⁸ Van Til, DF3, 239 / DF4, 325; PA, 10–14; and Frame, DKG, 145–7, 352–353, 376 (maxim 22) and 379 (maxim 60); CVT, 180–181 and 183–184. Van Til’s slogans here were “Uninterpreted things are uninterpretable. Brute facts are mute facts” (GH, 308), or as Bahnsen put it “the facts don’t speak for themselves” (e.g. mp3 GB1731 from <http://www.cmfnow.com>).

⁹ Also compare Paul’s defense of the resurrection before Agrippa in Acts 26—see Bahnsen, AR, 67–68 and VTARA, 53.

¹⁰ Van Til, DF3, 208 / DF4, 264.

¹¹ See DKG, 367–368.

So Paul in his apologetic was *contrasting* the Christian worldview with theirs. He teaches us to show that their rock is not our like rock (cf. Deut. 32:31a).¹²

4) Commonality: through the spectacles of special revelation, (a) use general revelation and (b) unbelievers' twisted truths

(a) Use general revelation through the spectacles of special revelation

The unbeliever knows God and suppresses truth (Rom. 1:18–20)—he or she is a truth *possessor* and *suppressor*.¹³ The believer is living in dependence on God and his special revelation. However, they both share the *common* but not *neutral* ground of general revelation, including the human race's inescapable sense of God, and unbelievers' truths. (In Figure 1, page 2 above, the commonality is shown by the overlapping heads,¹⁴ but the lack of neutrality is indicated by the unbeliever is walking away from the unbeliever.) For the believer general revelation and unbelievers' twisted truths are viewed with the spectacles¹⁵ of special, biblical, revelation.

In verses 22 to 28 and 31 the Apostle declares the bread and butter of general revelation. God is our maker and keeper and our judge. He assumes the Athenians know these truths. For instance verse 24, "*The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands,*" is stated as a fact. Actually Paul does not prove God's existence; instead, he declares who he is and the importance of repentance before God. So we too may *use and appeal to the common ground of general revelation*.¹⁶ We know that any *atheist* is a *theist* and all people have a *knowledge* of God even if they do not *acknowledge* this. So we proclaim that the true God can be known on the basis of what people, deep down, really do know—they are created by God and will face him as their judge.¹⁷

¹² This is similar to Van Til's two-fold strategy: Van Til, DF3, 65 / DF4, 88; DF3, 244 / DF4, 328 (also see DF3, 99–101 / DF4, 121–123, cf. Bahnsen, AR, 273–274 (7) and VTARA, 523–524n126; Frame AGG, 53–55. Also see Matt. 7:24–27. For an exposition of Deut. 32:31a see my "*Show their rock is not like our rock: The apologetics of Deuteronomy 32*" at www.vantil.info.

¹³ Van Til, RP, 16–17.

¹⁴ There is an irony to my diagram (Figure 1 on page 2) here, in that I got the original idea of two overlapping circles from Alistair McGrath's book *Bridge Building: Creative Christian Apologetics* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1992—published in the USA as *Intellectuals Don't Need God and Other Modern Myths* by Zondervan in 1993), 86–89 (USA 56–59), where he is using two non-overlapping circles to (wrongly) illustrate that for Van Til there is no point of contact between believer's and unbeliever's. For Van Til's view that there is common ground *psychologically* or metaphysically but not *epistemologically* see VTARA, 408–410 and 436–43, and compare Bahnsen's explanation of *common* ground which is not *neutral* ground AR, 41–48.

¹⁵ Van Til, PDS, 120 cf. Calvin's *Institutes* 1.5.14 and 1.6.1; Frame, AGG, 22–26 and FV, 216.

¹⁶ Van Til, DF3, 85 / DF4, 108–109 / CA1, 51 / CA2, 109; and Frame, CVT, 116–19, DKG, 145 and 367.

¹⁷ Van Til, ICG, 4–5.

(b) Use unbelievers' twisted truths through the spectacles of special revelation

Because of general revelation and common grace, people speak truths, including about God, amongst their falsehoods. They use *borrowed capital*.¹⁸ Therefore Paul can quote one of these truths from the Athenians own Greek poets in verse 28, “*as some of your own poets have said, ‘we are his offspring.’*” However unbelievers are truth possessors and suppressors so these words “*we are his offspring*” are a *twisted truth* for the Greek poets actually said, “In every way we have all to do with Zeus, for we are truly his offspring.” The words are addressed to the Greek god Zeus. But in fact Zeus does not fit the poems description of the sovereign, life-giving creator. Whereas the God whom Paul declares does. So Paul *used the twisted truth they shared in common* by replanting it in its true context, the God of the Bible. So, we too can quote the truths from today’s unbeliever’s texts and authorities when they are understood correctly in the light of the special revelation of the Bible.¹⁹ Today poets are not usually people’s common authorities, but we can use six other “P’s”: *Programmes* (TV and film); *Papers* (newspapers and books); *Pop-songs*; *Personalities* (people recognized in the public eye); *Proverbs*; and *Professors* (university professors and scientists). However, let us remember this was only a small part of Paul’s message and Paul’s exhortation to us: “*Preach the word*” (2 Tim. 4:2)—we are to be students and proclaimers of God’s word. Nevertheless, where we find unbelievers authorities agree with that word they can usefully be used as a part of our message, to speak to and refute unbelievers by the words of their own mouths. Paul did, and so may we.

5) Challengingly: plead that they repent of autonomy

Returning to Acts 17:29, we find Paul begins to bring the force of the truth about the true biblical God to bear on the Athenians consciences as he says “*Therefore, since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being [or nature] is like gold or silver or stone – an image [or shaped thing] made by man’s design [Literally devising] and skill.*”

Paul here exposes their sins of idolatry, ignorance and intellectual pride. He said because they knew “*we are God’s offspring we should not think of God as an object of man’s devising.*” No, because we are God’s offspring, God is living and personal. They were proud of their idols but in verse 30 he calls this “*ignorance.*” Ignorance is not innocence because ignorance means you should have known what to do but ignored what was to be done. It is like avoiding and ignoring someone you should know as you walk down the street. The Athenians were ignoring the true God and his general revelation! Also, the sin of their idolatrous ignorance is implicit throughout verses 22 to 27 because: their idol to the unknown God shows their ignorance; they have wrong beliefs about God and themselves (see how Paul implicitly countered and exposed their wrong beliefs under 3)

¹⁸ Van Til, CTEV 64, 69; GH, 240, 243; IW, 68; JA, 17–18, 91 and 98.

¹⁹ See Van Til’s IST1, 122 / IST2, 208 and PA, 11–12 cf. previous footnote on “borrowed capital”; Frame’s DKG, 367–368, 379 (maxim 61); and Bahnsen’s AR, 259–263.

“Contrastingly” above); and in verse 27 it is implied that they cannot find God—why?—because they are lost in the darkness of sin, for in verse 27 Paul literally says “*that men would seek God and perhaps grope in the dark for him and find him, though he is not far from each of us.*”

So the unbeliever is going away from God’s truth in his or her autonomy and suppression (Rom. 1:18 and 8:7). The unbeliever must be *challenged* to do an about turn (see Figure 1, page 2 above). Any unbeliever must, by the grace of God, change the direction of their life, mind and heart. They must turn from sinful *independence* to living *in dependence* on God and his salvation in Christ. They must turn from autonomy. In other words they must repent and this is the message Paul brings in verses 29 to 31, the heart of which is “*God commands all people everywhere to repent.*” The gospel is about turning to God from idols to serve the living and true God (1 Thess. 1:9b).²⁰ The sinful autonomy and independence of the unbeliever must not be left unchallenged. Their bias must not be left free to run riot on the so called neutral ground of open enquiry. No, apologetics is evangelism so we, like Paul at Athens, must proclaim the message of the Bible: the true God with whom the unbeliever is to be dependent on; the God with whom the unbeliever ‘has to do’ and must repent before. The unbeliever’s colored spectacles²¹ must be taken away by the Spirit’s power through proclaiming the gospel. The weeds of error must not only be cut off at the surface by our apologetic reasoning, but the roots of autonomy must be dug up.²² This is painful and not easy to proclaim.

However, if someone has toothache from an abscess but the tooth is just cleaned up this is no good. The root problem must be drilled out.²³ The unbeliever is someone who does not like to think they are ill but we know they have the cancer of sin, rebellion and autonomy. A doctor who knew his patient had cancer would give this true diagnosis.²⁴ We are to be physicians of souls who, like Paul did at Athens, command unbelievers to turn from serving created things, to serve the creator (Rom. 1:25). Ultimately the issue is not just intellectual proofs or evidences but repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21).

An important consequence of apologetics without repentance is the unbeliever remains as judge and jury over the truth given. It is added to their knowledge without abandoning their distorted world view and suppression of truths. This is very dangerous because the essence of being saved is confessing ‘Jesus is Lord’ (Rom. 10:9) over my life including my thinking. Christ not human judgment is to be our ultimate authority. In addition, a danger in just giving apologetic proofs is Christianity becomes an intellectual game. These dangers were present in the Areopagus but Paul did not pander to just

²⁰ Van Til, JA, 7 and CTK, 39, and Frame, AGG, 16, 26–27, 54, 76; DKG, 142, 145 and 367; especially FV, 219 (1) and “Presuppositional Apologetics: An Introduction” Part 2: (1999), 18–20, <http://www.thirdmill.org/files/english/html/pt/PT.h.Frame.Presupp.Apol.2.html>.

²¹ Van Til, DF3, 77 and 147 / DF4, 101 and 166–167 / CA1, 45 and 96–97 / CA2, 98 and 192–193.

²² Van Til, DF3, 94 / DF4 116–117 / CA1, 58 / CA2, 120.

²³ Van Til DF3, 225–226 / DF4, 312–313.

²⁴ Van Til DF3, 94 / DF4 116 / CA1, 57–58 / CA2, 120.

intellectual discussion without *challenging* them. No! He corrected their atheism and pantheism. He exposed that they were wrong in their thinking and ignorance, so they must repent (Acts 17:28–30). The gospel is reasonable (Acts 26:25) and to reject it is the most unreasonable and irrational thing to do in the world.²⁵

6) *Committedly*: following the Lord and his word (no neutrality or autonomy)

Neutrality is thinking one is free from presuppositions, bias, or an interpretative window on reality. Autonomy is living and thinking independently of God. However, neutrality is a myth for we are all either for or against Christ (Matt. 12:30), we either serve the creator or created things (Rom. 1:25). And autonomy is disobedient for we were made to think God's thoughts after him (Prov. 1:7 and Ps. 36:9). So Paul was *committed* to following the Lord and his word (1 Peter 3:15, Col. 2:8 and 2 Cor. 10:4, 5 cf. Eph. 6:17b). He gave a decisive “no” to neutrality and autonomy.²⁶ We are to follow his example (1 Cor. 11:1). We see this in the following ways in his message to the Athenians.²⁷

- (i) It is not a God who Paul declares but *the* true biblical God (e.g. see verse 24). Fascinatingly he does this by blending together truths about God from the Old Testament:

v23: [introduction]; **v24a**: Ex. 20:11a, Ps. 146:6a, Isa. 42:5a; **v24b**: Deut. 10:14; **v24c**: 1 Kings. 8:27, Isa. 66:1, 2a; **v25a**: Ps. 50:9–13; **v25b**: Isa. 42:5b, Job 12:10, Dan. 5:23b; **v26b**: Deut. 32:8; **v27a**: Isa. 55:6; **v27b**: Isa. 42:7b; **v27c**: Jer. 23:23; **v28**: [Quotes Greek poets]; **v29**: Isa. 42:8; **v30**: [truth from NT times]; **v31**: Ps. 9:8a / 96:13b / 98:9; **v31b**: Dan. 7:10b, 13. See Appendix 1 for a full tabulation of these.²⁸

Notice how nearly every sentence is soaked with the Bible and where not, there were good reasons as identified above. Moreover, it seems that Paul was Paul partly using the logic of Isaiah 42:5, 7, 8 in his message (see Appendix 1²⁹), whilst he was the servant of the Lord who did verse 6b and 7, being “*a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness,*” (cf. Acts 13:47 and 26:16–18);

- (ii) He quotes only the true part of their poets and reads their twisted truths with the spectacles of biblical revelation (verses 27–29)—see 2b) above;

²⁵ Van Til JA, 21 (4).

²⁶ Van Til, JA, 7 and 21 (3); PA, 1–2; IST1, 3 / IST2, 19; DF3 108 / DF4, 130 / CA1, 68–69 / CA2, 139–140. Frame, AGG, 3–9, 43–44, 74–75, 86; FV, 197, 209, 221–22 (6); and Bahnsen, PASD, 36–38 (the whole of chapter 2 of this work is a biblical study on this theme).

²⁷ Cf. Frame, DKG, 145 and 367–368.

²⁸ Cf. AR, 263–265.

²⁹ Cf. AR, 263–264.

- (iii) And he brings the special saving revelation of Jesus and the resurrection (in verses 30, 31). Greek thought at Athens, including Epicurean and Stoic philosophy, had no place for a bodily resurrection and judgment, yet Paul did not flinch from proclaiming these.

7) Contextually: applying God's truth to unbelievers context

Paul imitated Christ in speaking to people's life *context*. For instance: in his approach to Nicodemus and the women of Samaria in John 3 and 4; and his use of telling parables using scenes from their everyday lives, often to answer *their* questions by leaving them with a question, the sting in the tail of the stories (e.g. Luke 10:25–37 12:13–21, 15:1–31). We see how Paul was all things to the Athenians, without compromising the truth (1 Cor. 9:22, 10:33 cf. Gal. 1:9–10) in these ways:

- (i) He begins by referring to their religiosity illustrated by one of their altars (verse 22–23) and leads them to this is disobedient ignorance which is the repented of (verses 29–31);
- (ii) He counters their Epicurean atheism and Stoic pantheism with true theism. The God who is the: creator, Lord, independent, sustainer, ruler, near and judge (see 3) “Contrastingly” above);
- (ii) Paul was not speaking to Jews or God-Fearers who knew and respected the scriptures. So saying the “scriptures say” would cut little ice with them (contrast Paul speaking to Jews in Acts 13:32–41). So he uses the Bible whilst not saying this (see 6) “Committedly” above). It is not saying “the Bible says” that brings authority but the truths of God's words themselves. This means we can bring together what the Bible says (if possible from memory) in a focused message;
- (iv) He quotes their poets in verse 28 (compare 2) “Commonality: use revelation and unbelievers twisted truths” above);
- (v) And, although the Athenians wanted the latest ideas (verse 21), Paul spoke about the ever present real spiritual needs of people and the ever relevant gospel of “Jesus and the resurrection” (verse 18), that alone addresses the real needs of fallen men, women and children.

We are to imitate Paul, as he imitated Christ (1 Cor. 11:1) by applying God's truth to unbelievers' context.³⁰ We are to do our apologetics *contextually*.

8) Christianly: graciousness and godliness

Paul was gracious and godly in his manner. He was following Peter's command to us to be Christ-like, in Christ—to act *Christianly*. “*In your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. [And] Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear*

³⁰ Frame, DKG, 365–367; AGG, 69 and FV, 222 (7).

conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander" (1 Peter 3:15–16 cf. 2 Tim. 2:24–25).³¹ For instance Paul begins, in Acts 16: 22, 23 by connecting with his listeners' world. He states they are religious by referring to their altar to an unknown God. Then he must have arrested their attention by saying "what you worship without knowing [or in ignorance] I am going to proclaim to you." He uses their religiosity, with its search for final knowledge, as a bridge to the gospel. However, notice he is polite and respectful whilst his language does not approve of their religion. Also in verse 27 Paul literally says "that men would seek God and perhaps grope in the dark for him and find him, though he is not far from each of us." The words "perhaps" and "though" are a gentle³² and gracious way of saying no-one by themselves found God.

Summary

May we follow Paul in using these God given principles, summarized below, in our apologetics and, by the Lord's grace, may unbelievers become believers to the glory of God.

- 1) *Certainty*: of God's truth, such as about God and the resurrection.
- 2) *Commentary*: (a) the "that and what" of God's existence (tell who God is) and (b) give facts with their Biblical meaning.
- 3) *Contrastingly*: show their rock is not our like rock.
- 4) *Commonality*: through the spectacles of special revelation, (a) use general revelation and (b) unbelievers' twisted truths.
- 5) *Challengingly*: plead that they repent of autonomy.
- 6) *Committedly*: following the Lord and his word (no neutrality or autonomy)
- 7) *Contextually*: applying God's truth to unbelievers' context.
- 8) *Christianly*: graciousness and godliness.

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³¹ Frame FV, 220 (2), DKG, 357–58 and AGG, 27–30.

³² Here I am reminded of the saying Van Til liked to use, "suaviter in modo, fortiter in re" (be gentle in manner, powerful in substance), see DF3, 207–208 / DF4, 264, and Frame, CVT 331.

Appendix 1: Paul’s Areopagus message in Athens and its direct Old Testament basis

ACTS 17:24–31 (Own translation)	DIRECT OLD TESTAMENT BASIS (NIV) with Isaiah 42 references underlined— Paul partly used their logic and did verses 6b & 7
24a The God who made world and everything in it	Ex. 20:11a <i>The LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them</i> Ps. 146:6a <i>the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them</i> <u>Isa. 42:5a</u> <i>This is what God the Lord says—he who created the heavens and stretched them out</i>
24b is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not dwell in temples built by hands.	Deut. 10:14 <i>To the LORD your God belongs the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it</i> 1 Kings. 8:27 [Solomon prays:] <i>“But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!”</i> <i>This is what the LORD says: “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?”</i>
25a And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything,	Isa. 66:1, 2a Ps. 50:9–13 [God says:] <i>“I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens [for sacrifices], for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills ... If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it. Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats?”</i>
25b because he gives all life and breath and everything [else].	<u>Isa. 42:5b</u> <i>God ... spread out the earth and all that comes out of it, who gives breath to its people and life to those who walk on it.</i> Job 12:10 <i>In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind.</i> Dan. 5:23b <i>God who holds your breath in His hand NKJV</i>
26 And from one [man’s] blood {RT, NU man} he made every nation of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth; and he determined the preappointed times set for them and the	Deut. 32:8 <i>When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the peoples.</i>

ACTS 17:24–31
(Own translation)

DIRECT OLD TESTAMENT BASIS (NIV)
with Isaiah 42 references underlined—
Paul partly used their logic and did verses 6b & 7

	boundaries of their dwellings.		
27	God did this so that they would seek the Lord {RT, NU God} if perhaps they might grope [in the dark] for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.	Isa. 55:6	<i>Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near.</i>
	‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are also his offspring.’	<u>Isa. 42:7b</u>	<i>to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness</i>
28	“Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine [being] is like gold or silver or stone—shaped by man’s art and thought.	Jer. 23:23	<i>“Am I only a God nearby”, declares the LORD, “and not a God far away?”</i>
	Truly, therefore, God overlooked these times of ignorance, but now commands all people everywhere to repent.	[Quoting Greek poets]	
29	For he has set a day when he will judge the world in righteousness by the man he has appointed. He has given assurance of this to all by raising him from the dead.	<u>Isa. 42:8</u>	<i>I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols.</i>
30		[truth from NT times]	
31		Ps. 9:8a/ 96:13/ 98:9	<i>He will judge the world in righteousness.</i>
		Dan. 7:10b, 13	<i>The court was seated, and the books were opened. ... In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.</i>

Appendix 2: Bibliography and abbreviations used

On Acts 17:16-34 I have put a ** in front of titles I have found particularly helpful.

Apologetics

- AR **Bahnsen, Dr. Greg L.** (edited by Randy Booth). *Always Ready: Directions for Defending the Faith* (Atlanta: American Vision and Texarkana: Covenant Media Foundation, 1996).
- PASD —. (edited by Joel McDurmon) *Presuppositional Apologetics: Stated and Defended*, (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision and Texas Covenant Media Press, 2008).
- VTARA —. *Van Til's Apologetics: Readings & Analysis* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1998).
- Calvin, John. *Christian Institutes* (various editions)
- FV Cowan, Steven B. and Gundry, Stanley N. eds. *Five Views on Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000).
- AGG **Frame, John M.** *Apologetics to the Glory of God: an Introduction* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1994).
- . "Certainty," in Campbell Campbell-Jack et al., eds., *New Dictionary of Apologetics* (Leicester, UK: IVP, 2006), 141–45, also available at http://www.frame-poythress.org/frame_articles/2005Certainty.htm.
- CVT —. *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1995).
- DKG —. *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1987).
- . "Presuppositional Apologetics: An Introduction: Part 2" (1999), at <http://www.thirdmill.org/files/english/html/pt/PT.h.Frame.Presupp.Apol.2.html>.
- JA Geehan, E.R., ed. *Jerusalem and Athens: Critical Discussions on the Theology and Apologetics of Cornelius Van Til* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1971).

McGrath, Alistair *Bridge Building: Creative Christian Apologetics* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1992). Published in the USA as *Intellectuals Don't Need God*

and Other Modern Myths by Zondervan in 1993.

- CA1 **Van Til, Cornelius**, *Christian Apologetics*, first edition (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1976).
- CA2 —. *Christian Apologetics*, second edition (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003)—lightly edited with an introduction and explanatory notes by William Edgar.
- CTEV —. *Christian Theistic Evidences* (Nutley, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1976).
- CTK —. *Christian Theory of Knowledge* (Nutley, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1969).
- DF3 —. *Defense of the Faith*, third edition (Nutley, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1967).
- DF4 —. *Defense of the Faith*, fourth edition (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008). The complete text of the original 1955 edition, with an introduction and explanatory notes by K. Scott Oliphint.
- GH —. *The God of Hope: Sermons and Addresses* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1978).
- ICG —. *Intellectual Challenge of the Gospel* (New York: Westminster Discount Books Service, 1980). Originally published by The Tyndale Press, 1950.
- IST1 —. *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, first edition, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing 1974).
- IST2 —. *An Introduction to Systematic Theology: Prolegomena and the Doctrines of Revelation, Scripture and God*, second edition (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2007). Lightly edited with an introduction and explanatory notes by William Edgar.
- IW —. “Introduction” to *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, by B. B. Warfield, edited by Samuel G. Craig (Philadelphia: P&R, 1948), 3–68.
- PDS —. *The Protestant Doctrine of Scripture* (Nutley, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1967).

(Also PA below is by Van Til.)

Commentaries on Acts

- Barnes, Albert. *Barnes' Notes on the New Testament* available at <http://www.studylight.org/com/bnn/view.cgi?book=ac&chapter=017>.
- ** Bock, Darrell. *Acts: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2007)
- Bruce, F. F. *The Book of Acts: The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, 2nd Revised edition (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989).
- ** Calvin, John. *Calvin's Commentaries on The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. II translated by J.W. Fraser* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965)
- Fernando, Ajith. *The NIV Application Commentary: Acts* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), including see the "evangelistic preaching in Acts" analysis, 32–38.
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- Henry, Matthew Zondervan NIV Matthew Henry Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999).
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- ** Stott, John. *The Message of Acts* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1991)
- ** Witherington III, Ben. *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002).

Select studies in Acts 17:16-31

- ** **AR** Bahnsen, Greg, (edited by Randy Booth). *Always Ready: Directions for Defending the Faith* (Atlanta: American Vision and Texarkana: Covenant Media Foundation, 1996), 235–276. (Originally published in the *Ashland Theological Bulletin* 13:1 (1980).)
- PASD** —. (edited by Joel McDurmon) *Presuppositional Apologetics: Stated and Defended* (Georgia: American Vision and Texas: Covenant Media Press, 2008), 43–46.
- Carson, Don. *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Leicester: Apollos, 1996), 496–501 and 503n28.
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- ** Lucas, Dick. "Preaching to pagans," available at <http://www.simeonarchive.org/documents/pt-lucas-preaching.pdf>.
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- ** Prior, Kenneth. *The Gospel in a Pagan Society* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1975, reprinted by Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 1995).
- Stonehouse, Ned B. in *Paul before the Areopagus and other New Testament studies* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957)
- PA** Van Til, Cornelius. *Paul at Athens* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1954). Now published by Westminster Discount Books Service.
- Wagner, Roger. *Tongues Aflame: Learning to preach from the Apostles* (Ross-shire: Mentor, Christian Focus Publications, 2004), 247–276.
- ** Wellum, Kirk. "A Pastor's Look at Paul in Athens," available at http://www.pilgrimbaptistfellowship.org/docs/paul_in_athens.pdf.
- ** Winter, Bruce. "Introducing the Athenians to God: Paul's failed apologetic in Acts 17?" available at <http://www.euroleadershipresources.org/resource.php?ID=120>.