JETS 39/1 (March 1996) 123–140

PHILOSOPHICAL APOLOGETICS, THE CHURCH, AND CONTEMPORARY CULTURE

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In 1756 John Wesley delivered an address to a gathering of clergy on how to carry out pastoral ministry with joy and skill. He catalogued a number of things familiar to most contemporary believers: the cultivation of a disposition to glorify God and save souls, a knowledge of Scripture, and similar notions. At the beginning of his list, however, Wesley focused on something seldom expressly valued by most pastoral search committees: "Ought not a Minister to have, First, a good understanding, a clear apprehension, a sound judgment, and a capacity of reasoning with some closeness?"[1] Time and again throughout the address Wesley unpacked this remark by admonishing ministers to know what would sound truly odd and almost pagan to the average congregant of today: logic, metaphysics (including the first principles of being), natural theology, geometry, and the ideas of important figures in the history of philosophy.

Wesley's remarks were not unusual in his time. A century earlier the great Reformed pastor Richard Baxter was faced with lukewarmness in the Church and unbelief outside the Church. In 1667 he wrote a book to meet this need, and in it he used philosophy to argue for the existence of the soul and the life to come. The fact that Baxter turned to philosophy instead of small groups or praise hymns is worth pondering. Over a millennium earlier, Augustine summarized the view of many early Church fathers when he said, "We must show our Scriptures not to be in conflict with whatever [our critics] can demonstrate about the nature of things from reliable sources."[2] Philosophy was the main tool Augustine used in this task.

Today things are different. Most evangelical seminaries with which I am familiar do not have professional philosophers on their faculties, nor do they train ministerial candidates to do philosophy or motivate them to see philosophical acumen as part of their calling. And in my experience of speaking in literally hundreds of churches, the first thing that comes to many Christian minds when they hear the word "philosophy" is that Col 2:8 (on their view) warns them to stay away from it. It is no accident that

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[1] J. Welsey, "An Address to the Clergy," *The Works of John Wesley* (3d ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979) 481.

[2] Augustine *De genesi ad litteram* 1.21.

these facts run concurrently with an increasingly marginalized evangelical community, which as a result is struggling with a crisis of self-image as the culture turns neopagan.

I do not pretend to have a thorough answer to these latter two difficulties, but I do believe there is a causal connection between them and the diminished role of philosophy in our collective evangelical worship and witness. Social historian John Gager has pointed out that even though the early Church was a minority movement that faced intellectual and cultural ridicule and marginization it maintained internal cohesion and a courageous witness, thanks in no small measure to the powerful role in the broader Christian community of the philosophically trained apologists in the first centuries of the Christian faith.[3] The same point applies with real force to our current condition. In my view, if the evangelical community would give greater attention to philosophy—especially philosophical apologetics in both formal educational settings, publishing, and local church life—this could help a great deal in our efforts to penetrate effectively our culture and proclaim Christ and a Christian worldview to outsiders and to our own brothers and sisters. But if we continue to eschew philosophy we will continue to speak largely to ourselves, and our dialect will, I fear, be fideistic.

Space does not permit me to attempt to prove this claim directly. Instead I shall do three things: (1) clarify the nature and tasks of philosophical apologetics, (2) describe the current scene in order to surface areas where we need to focus our attention as a community, and (3) offer some brief remarks about a strategy for the future. I hope that my discussion of these three desiderata will show, even if only implicitly, just why we need to be more intentional and intense about promoting philosophical apologetics within our ranks.

I. DIFFERENT TYPES OF PHILOSOPHICAL APOLOGETICS

If philosophy is hard to define, philosophical apologetics is harder still. Nevertheless as a working definition let us characterize philosophical apologetics as a philosophical activity that has as its goal (or perhaps as its result) the increasing or maintaining of the epistemic justification of a Christian worldview in whole or in part.[4] Let us accept this gloss as adequate. Note two things about the definition. (1) Philosophical apologetics involves the direct use of philosophy. Thus historical evidences *per se* are

[3] J. G. Gager, *Kingdom and Community: The Social World of Early Christianity* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1975) 86–87.

[4] Does an atheist who offers good arguments for the soul (assuming as I do that Christianity teaches that souls exist) practice philosophical apologetics? Not if the latter is defined by good epistemic intentions toward Christianity. Still, such arguments have the result of increasing our justification for believing in the soul and may be counted as philosophical apologetics, at least in a secondary sense. Yet in this case would these arguments have to be used by Christian theism to support a Christian doctrine before they would count as philosophical apologetics? I leave the matter open.

not part of philosophical apologetics. (2) Philosophy, as well as its employment by Christians, goes beyond philosophical apologetics. All cases of philosophical apologetics are cases of philosophy, but the converse does not hold.

As I see it, there are at least four different types of philosophical apologetics. My aim in delineating these is not simply informational. My hope is that when these are clarified they can help all of us be more intentional in trying to relate our academic work to philosophical apologetics, whatever other purposes we may have.

1. *Direct defense*. In direct defense, one uses philosophy with the primary intention of enhancing or maintaining directly the epistemic justification of Christian theism or some proposition taken to be explicit to or entailed by it (hereafter I will simply refer to Christian theism). There are two basic forms of direct defense, one negative and one positive.[5] The less controversial of the two is a negative direct defense where one attempts to remove defeaters to Christian theism. If you have a justified belief regarding some proposition P, a defeater is something that weakens or removes that justification. Defeaters come in two types.[6] A rebutting defeater gives justification for believing non-P—in this case, that Christian theism is false. For example, attempts to show that the Biblical concept of the family is dysfunctional and false or that homosexuality is causally necessitated by genes or brain states and that therefore it is not a proper object for moral appraisal are cases of rebutting defeaters. An undercutting defeater does not give justification for believing non-P but rather seeks to remove justification for believing P in the first place. Critiques of the arguments for God's existence are examples of undercutting defeaters. When defeaters are raised against Christian theism, a negative defense seeks either to rebut or refute those defeaters.

By contrast, a positive direct defense is an attempt to build a positive case for Christian theism. Arguments for the existence of God, objective morality, the existence of the soul, the value and nature of virtue ethics, and the possibility and knowability of miracles are examples. This type of philosophical apologetics is not accepted by all Christian intellectuals. For example, various species of what may be loosely called Reformed epistemology run the gamut from seeing a modest role for a positive direct defense to an outright rejection of this type of activity.

2. *Philosophical polemics*. In philosophical polemics, one seeks to criticize views that rival Christian theism in one way or another. Critiques of scientific naturalism, physicalism, pantheism and normative ethical relativism are all cases of philosophical polemics.

[5] See R. Nash, *Faith and Reason* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988) 14–18.

[6] For a useful discussion of various types of defeaters see J. Pollock, *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge* (Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1986) 36–39; R. Baergen, *Contemporary Epistemology* (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace, 1995) 119–124.

3. *Theistic explanation*. Suppose we have a set of items x_i through x_n that stand in need of explanation and we offer an explanans E as an adequate or even best explanation of the explananda. In such a case, E explains x_i through x_n, and this fact provides some degree of confirmation for E. If a certain intrinsic genre statement explains the various data of a Biblical text, then this fact offers some confirmation for that statement. Now Christian theists ought to be about the business of exploring the world in light of their worldview and, more specifically, of using their theistic beliefs as explanations of various desiderata in intellectual life. Put differently, we should seek to solve intellectual problems and shed light on areas of puzzlement by utilizing the explanatory power of our worldview. For example, for those who accept the existence of natural moral law, the irreducibly mental nature of consciousness, natural human rights, or the fact that human flourishing follows from certain Biblically mandated ethical and religious practices, the truth of Christian theism provides a good explanation of these phenomena. And this fact can provide some degree of confirmation for Christian theism. I will mention shortly how the discipline of philosophy enters into this type of intellectual practice because it overlaps with the way philosophy is relevant to the next type of philosophical apologetics.[7]

4. *Integration*. The word "integration" means "forming or blending into a whole; uniting." The human intellect naturally seeks to find the unity that is behind diversity, and in fact coherence is an important mark of rationality. In conceptual integration one's theological beliefs are blended and unified with propositions judged to be rational to belief as true from other sources into a coherent, intellectually satisfying worldview. One of the goals or results of integration is to maintain or increase both the conceptual relevance of and epistemological justification for Christian theism. To be engaged in the task of integration is to embark on a journey that is at once exciting and difficult. Integration is no easy task. It is a lifelong project that should occur within an individual believer's life and among the various members of the Christian community working together. Part of the difficulty of this journey is due not only to the massive amount of information and vast array of studies that need to be consulted but also to the fact that there are many different aspects of and attitudes toward integration itself. It is beyond my present scope to attempt to give anything even approximating a typology of these aspects and attitudes.[8] It may be helpful, however, to list some examples where the need for integration arises as well as some of the different ways that Christian theology interacts with other disciplines in the process of developing an integrated Christian worldview. Here are some cases that illustrate the need for integration.

[7] Explanation can be seen as one purpose for certain types of integrative practices. But because of its importance I make it a category of its own.

[8] For a brief typology of different aspects of integration see W. Hasker, "Faith-Learning Integration: An Overview," *Christian Scholar's Review* 21 (March 1992) 234–248.

(1) A Biblical exegete becomes aware of how much her own cultural background shapes what she can see in the Biblical text, and she begins to wonder whether meanings might not reside in the interpretation of a text and not in the text itself. She also wonders if certain hermeneutical methodologies may be inappropriate, given the nature of the Bible as revelation.

(2) A psychologist reads literature regarding identical twins who are reared in separate environments. He notes that they usually exhibit similar adult behavior. He then wonders what free will amounts to, if there is really any such thing. And if not, he ponders what to make of moral responsibility and punishment.

(3) A political science professor reads John Rawls' *Theory of Justice* and grapples with the idea that society's primary goods could be distributed in such a way that those on the bottom get the maximum benefit even if people on the top have to be constrained. He wonders how this compares with a meritocracy, in which individual merit is rewarded regardless of social distribution. Several questions run through his mind: What is the state? How should a Christian view the state and the Church? What is justice, and what principles of social ordering ought we to adopt? Should one seek a Christian state or merely a just state?

(4) A neurophysiologist establishes specific correlations between certain brain functions and certain feelings of pain, and she puzzles over the question of whether there is a soul or mind distinct from the brain.

(5) An anthropologist notes that cultures frequently differ over basic moral principles and wonders whether this proves that there are no objectively true moral values that transcend culture.

(6) A businessman notices that the government is not adequately caring for the poor. He discusses with a friend the issue of whether businesses have corporate moral responsibilities or only individuals have moral responsibility.

(7) A mathematician teaches Euclidean geometry and some of its alternatives and goes on to ask the class if mathematics is a field that really conveys true knowledge about a subject matter or if it merely offers internally consistent formal languages expressible in symbols. If the former, then what is it that mathematics describes? If mathematical entities exist and are timeless, in what sense did God create them?

(8) An education major is asked to state his philosophy of education. In order to do this he must state his views of human nature, truth, how people learn, the role of values in education, and so on. He wonders how his Christian convictions inform these issues.

In each of the cases listed above, there is a need for the person in question—if he or she is a Christian—to think hard about the issue in light of the need for developing a Christian worldview. When one addresses problems like these, there will emerge a number of different ways that theology can interact with an issue in a discipline outside theology. Here are some of the different ways that such interaction can take place.

(1) In the two-realms view, propositions, theories, or methodologies in theology and another discipline may involve two distinct, nonoverlapping

areas of investigation. For example, debates about angels or the extent of the atonement have little to do with organic chemistry. Similarly it is of little interest to theology whether a methane molecule has three or four hydrogen atoms in it.

(2) In the complementarity view, propositions, theories, or methodologies in theology and another discipline may involve two different, complementary, noninteracting approaches to the same reality.[9] Sociological aspects of church growth and certain psychological aspects of conversion may be sociological or psychological descriptions of certain phenomena that are complementary to a theological description of church growth or conversion.

(3) In the direct interaction view, propositions, theories, or methodologies in theology and another discipline may directly interact in such a way that either one area of study offers rational support for the other or one area of study raises rational difficulties for the other. For example, certain theological teachings about the existence of the soul raise rational problems for philosophical or scientific claims that deny the existence of the soul. The general theory of evolution raises various difficulties for certain ways of understanding the book of Genesis. Some have argued that the big-bang theory tends to support the theological proposition that the universe had a beginning.

(4) In the presuppositions view, theology tends to support the presuppositions of another discipline and vice versa. Some have argued that many of the presuppositions of science (e.g., the existence of truth, the rational, orderly nature of reality, the adequacy of our sensory and cognitive faculties as tools suited for knowing the external world) make sense and are easy to justify given Christian theism but are odd and without ultimate justification in a naturalistic worldview. Similarly some have argued that philosophical critiques of epistemological skepticism and defenses of the existence of a real, theory independent world and a correspondence theory of truth offer justification for some of the presuppositions of theology.

[9] R. Bube has complained that my characterization of complementarity is confused and is actually a description of what he calls compartmentalization (*Putting It All Together* [Lanham: University Press of America, 1995] 168; cf. chaps. 6, 10). For Bube, compartmentalization treats science and theology as different descriptions about different kinds of things with no common ground or possibility of conflict. Complementarity views science and theology as different descriptions of the same reality. Unfortunately, Bube is simply wrong in this complaint toward my position. What he calls compartmentalization is close to what I call the two-realms view of integration, and my description of complementarity is an accurate one. The source of Bube's confusion is revealing. I claim that the complementarity view eschews interaction between science and theology, and Bube says that it embraces such interaction. But Bube equivocates on what "interaction" means in this context. For me it is epistemic interaction, roughly the same description of the same reality that can be in conflict or concord to varying degrees of strength. For Bube interaction amounts to taking two different (noninteracting in my sense) perspectives and forming them into a whole. For example, a completely scientific description of the origin of life in natural terms could be described in theological terms as God's activity in bringing life into being. It is clear that his notion of interaction is not the one I deny in explicating complementarity. Moreover my use of interaction is crucial in understanding the significance for scientific methodology of gaps in the natural causal fabric due to libertarian agency and primary causal activity on God's part.

(5) In the practical application view, theology fills out and adds detail to general principles in another discipline and vice versa, and theology helps one practically apply principles in another discipline and vice versa. For example, theology teaches that fathers should not provoke their children to anger, and psychology can add important details about what this means by offering information about family systems, the nature and causes of anger, and so forth. Psychology can devise various tests for assessing whether one is a mature person, and theology can offer a normative definition to psychology as to what a mature person is.

These are some of the ways that integration takes place. From the examples and models listed above, it should be clear that philosophy is central to the task of integration. Nevertheless that task of forming an integrated worldview is a very difficult one, and there is no set of easy steps that exhaustively describes how that task is to be conducted or what role philosophy should play in the quest for integration. With this in mind, the following is a list of principles that can aid someone unfamiliar with philosophy to think more clearly about its role in integration.

(1) Philosophy can point out that an issue thought to be a part of another discipline is really a philosophical issue. It often happens that scholars untrained in philosophy will discuss some issue in their field and, without knowing it, cross over into philosophy. When this happens the discussion may still be about the original discipline, but it is a discussion within philosophy.

For example, attempts to put limits on a given discipline and attempts to draw a line of demarcation between one field of study and another, say between science and theology, are largely philosophical matters. This is because such attempts assume a vantage point outside and above the discipline in question where one asks second-order questions about that discipline. Philosophy focuses on these kinds of second-order questions.

Consider the following six propositions that seek for science to place a limit on theology and vice versa: (S1) Theological beliefs are reasonable only if science renders them so. (S2) Theological beliefs are unreasonable if science renders them so. (S3) Theological beliefs are reasonable only if arrived at by something closely akin to scientific methodology. (T1) Scientific beliefs are reasonable only if theology renders them so. (T2) Scientific beliefs are unreasonable if theology renders them so. (T3) Scientific beliefs are reasonable only if arrived at by theologically appropriate methods.

Contrary to initial appearances, these propositions are not examples of science or theology directly placing limits on the other, for none is a statement of science or theology. Rather, all are philosophical statements about science and theology. Principles about science and theology are not the same as principles of science and theology. These six principles are philosophical attempts to limit science and theology and show their relationship.

Here is a second example of where a discussion crosses over into philosophy almost unnoticed.

Evolutionist: The origin of life from inanimate matter is a well-established scientific fact.

Creationist: But if life arose in the oceans (abiogenesis) as you claim, then dilution factors would have kept the concentration of large macromolecules to levels so small as to have been negligible.

Evolutionist: Well, so what? I do not think abiogenesis took place in the ocean anyway. Rather, it took place in some isolated pool that had some concentrating mechanism in place.

Creationist: But there is no geological evidence for such pools. Further, the probabilities for such a process are incredibly small. And in any case, evidence appears to be coming in that the early earth's atmosphere was a reducing atmosphere, in which case the relevant reactions could not occur.

Evolutionist: Give us more time and we will solve these problems. The only alternative, creationism, is too fantastic to believe. It involves religious concepts and is not science at all.

Creationist: Well, neither is evolution science. Science requires first-hand observation, and since no one was there to observe the origin of first life, any theory about that origin is not science, strictly speaking.

The discussion starts out as a scientific interaction about chemical reactions, probabilities, geological evidence, and so on. But it slides over into a second-order philosophical discussion (one that represents a misunderstanding of the nature both of creationism and science) about what science is and how one should define it. These issues are surely relevant to the debate, but there is no guarantee that two disputants trained in some first-order scientific discipline have any expertise at all about the second-order questions of what science is and how it should be practiced. If scientists are going to interact on these issues, then philosophy will be an essential part of that interaction.

(2) Philosophy undergirds other disciplines at a foundational level by clarifying, defending, or criticizing the essential presuppositions of that discipline. Since philosophy operates as a second-order discipline that investigates other disciplines, and since philosophy examines broad, foundational, axiological, epistemological, logical and metaphysical issues in those other disciplines, then philosophy is properly suited to investigate the presuppositions of other fields. Thus philosophy plays a regulative role for Christian intellectual activity—including apologetics—and is critical to our community if we are to articulate and defend our theology to thinking people, especially to those outside the Church. Philosophy can provide structure and sharpness to our discourse in the public square.

For example, in linguistic studies issues are discussed regarding the existence, nature and knowability of meaning. These issues, as well as questions about whether and how language accomplishes reference to things in the world, are the main focus of the philosophy of language and epistemology. Again, science assumes there is an external world that is orderly and knowable, that inductive inferences are legitimate, that the senses and mind are reliable, that truth exists and can be known, and so on. Orthodox theology assumes that religious language is cognitive, that knowledge is possible, that an intelligible sense can be given to the claim that something exists that is not located in space and time, that the cor-

respondence theory of truth is the essential part of an overall theory of truth, and that linguistic meaning is objective and knowable. These presuppositions, and a host of others besides, have all been challenged. The task of clarifying, defending, or criticizing them is essentially a philosophical task.

If evangelicals wish to speak out on issues and move beyond a surface analysis of them, we need philosophy. I grow weary of laypeople who have no clue about what Christian ideas have to do with the issues that constitute their vocations. Training in logic, metaphysics, epistemology and ethics is a crucial part of local church discipleship in this regard.

(3) Philosophy can aid a discipline by helping to clarify concepts, argument forms, and other cognitive issues internal to a field. Sometimes the concepts in a discipline appear to be contradictory, vague, unclear, or circularity-defined. Philosophers who study a particular discipline can aid that discipline by bringing conceptual clarity to it. An example would be the wave/particle nature of electromagnetic radiation and the wave nature of matter. These concepts appear to be self-contradictory or vague, and attempts have been made to clarify them or to show different ways of understanding them.

Another example concerns some conceptions of the mechanisms involved in evolutionary theory. Some scientists have held that evolution promotes the survival of the "fittest." But when asked what the "fittest" were, the answer was that the "fittest" were those that survived. This was a problem of circularity within evolutionary theory, and attempts have been made to redefine the notion of fitness and the goal of evolution (e.g., the selection of those organisms that are reproductively favorable) to avoid circularity. Whether these responses have been successful is not the point. The point is, rather, that philosophers have raised problems for a scientific theory regarding issues of conceptual clarity. In these and other examples like them, philosophy can help to clarify issues within a discipline. When philosophy is brought to bear on questions of this sort, the result may be that the theory in question is problematic because it involves an internal contradiction or is somehow self-refuting.

For example, the sociological claim that there is no difference between intellectual history (roughly, the attempt to trace the development of ideas through history by focusing on the rational factors involved in the ideas themselves, including their own inner logic and relationships to ideas coming after them—for example, the development of empiricism from John Locke to George Berkeley to David Hume) and the sociology of knowledge (the attempt to trace the development of ideas as a result of nonrational factors in a given culture—for example, social status, economic conditions, and so on) is sometimes justified by an appeal to conceptual relativism. The claim is made that different cultures have different language games, different views of the world, and so forth, and that all of one's views are determined by nonrational factors and thus are not to be trusted. Such a claim is self-refuting, for presumably this theory itself would be untrustworthy on its own terms.

By way of application, Christians need to be involved in political, social and ethical issues. But the evangelical voice in this regard often sounds tinny and sloganistic because our proclamations do not express a well-developed political, social or ethical theory. And we do not have the latter because we do not know the philosophical issues necessary to developing these theories.

(4) Philosophy provides a common language or conceptual grid wherein two disciplines can be directly related to one another and integrated. Sometimes two different disciplines will use a term in a slightly different but not completely unrelated way. When this occurs, philosophy can help to clarify the relationship between the different disciplinary uses of the term in question.

For example, sometimes an operational definition of a notion can be related to an ordinary language definition of that notion or a definition from another field. An operational definition is, roughly, a definition of a concept totally in terms of certain laboratory or experimental operations or test scores. Thus one could operationally define a number of sociological concepts (minority group, traditional family roles, group leadership) or psychological terms (depression, intelligence) completely in terms of an operation or test score. A person could be said to be depressed if and only if that person would score between such and such a range on a standard psychological test.

Now these operational definitions may be related to our ordinary language notions of the relevant concepts in question, but they may not be clearly related—and, in any case, they are certainly not identical to them. So philosophical clarity needs to be given before we can specify the relationship between depression as it is understood in ordinary language and depression as it is operationally defined in some test.

This type of philosophical elucidation is especially important when the term in question appears to be normative in nature. Thus if one tries to give an operational, psychological definition of a "mature" or "healthy" adult, then all one can give is a descriptive definition, not a prescriptive one, for psychology as it is currently practiced is a descriptive field. Philosophy focuses on moral prescriptions and oughts. Psychology focuses on factual descriptions. So philosophy becomes relevant in clarifying the relationship between a "mature" adult, psychologically defined, and a "mature" adult taken as a normative notion (i.e. as something we ought to try to be like).

Philosophy also helps to clarify and relate the different disciplinary descriptions of the same phenomenon. For example, biologists describe a human being as a member of the classification *Homo sapiens*. Philosophy, theology, law and political science (to name a few) treat a human being as a living entity called a human person. It is a philosophical question as to whether the two notions are identical and, if they are not, how they relate to one another.

(5) Philosophy provides external conceptual problems for other disciplines to consider as part of the rational appraisal of theories in those disciplines (and vice versa). A philosophical external conceptual problem

arises for theory T, in a discipline outside of philosophy, when T conflicts with a doctrine of philosophical theory P, when P and its doctrines are rationally well-founded. For example, suppose there were a good philosophical argument against the view that history has crossed an actual number of events throughout the past to reach the present moment. If this argument is a reasonable one, then it tends to count against a scientific theory (e.g. an oscillating universe) that postulates that the past was beginningless and actually infinite. If there were a good philosophical argument for the claim that space and time are absolute, then this argument would tend to count against scientific theories to the contrary.

Again, if there are good philosophical arguments for the existence of libertarian freedom and agency or arguments for the existence of real moral responsibility and the necessity of libertarian freedom as a presupposition of moral responsibility, then these would tend to count against sociological, economic, or psychological theories that are deterministic in nature. In cases like these a rationally defensible position is present within philosophy, and it runs contrary to a theory surfaced in another field. The philosophical external conceptual problem may not be sufficient to require abandonment or suspension of judgment of the theory in the other discipline. It may merely tend to count against it. Even so, these kinds of conceptual problems show that philosophical considerations are relevant to the rationality of theory assessment in other disciplines.

II. AREAS OF FOCUS FOR PHILOSOPHICAL APOLOGETICS

Happily, the state of Christian philosophy in general and philosophical apologetics in particular is stronger today than at any other time in the last half century.[10] As Mark Noll correctly points out: "Christian philosophers have made their presence felt in the world of scholarship more substantially than intellectuals in any other discipline."[11] The incredible growth, vitality and influence of the Society of Christian Philosophers alone is nothing short of a miracle, given the intellectual climate since its inception in April of 1978. It is now one of the most influential groups among professional philosophers in the west, and its journal *Faith and Philosophy* is widely recognized as one of the top journals in the discipline.

In spite of these gains, however, it would be misleading to speak as if all were well on the battle front. There is much work to be done, and it would be wise for us to think carefully about where our efforts are most needed. But how is one to think about this, since there are dozens of branches and subbranches in philosophy that could be fruitful realms of philosophical apologetic activity? Any taxonomy here would likely express the interests and biases of the taxonomist, and I am no exception to this rule. Still, I think the following refections are not too wide of the mark. I have used three criteria in formulating them. First, philosophical

[10] See *Philosophers Who Believe* (ed. K. J. Clark; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993).

[11] M. A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 236.

apologetics should be focused on those areas of study that seem to be intrinsically more central or foundational to the Christian theistic enterprise. For example, work in religious and moral epistemology would get high marks on this criterion. Second, philosophical apologetics should be focused on areas that are currently under heavy attack. Philosophy of mind comes readily to mind in this regard. A third and perhaps less important criterion is this: Philosophical apologetics should be focused on those areas of study in which such activity is underrepresented (relatively speaking). Political and social philosophy would get my vote here.

With this in mind, here are some areas where I think more concentrated efforts would bear fruit for the kingdom of God.

(1) There are two broad approaches to the intellectual life that are, in my view, dangerous rivals to Christian theism even if we grant that some modest positive value is to be found in each. First, there is philosophical naturalism, which is the view that the spatiotemporal physical universe studied by natural science—especially physics—is all there is.[12] Many or even most philosophical naturalists would take this view to entail the following: (a) scientism as an approach to epistemology along with a denial of first philosophy and an attempt to naturalize philosophy as a discipline; (b) the denial of universals and other abstract entities as well as the type of metaphysical necessity traditionally thought to be expressed in the so-called synthetic a priori first truths of reason; (c) a view of living organisms as ordered aggregates with or without nonphysical emergent properties instead of seeing them as substances with natures that place them in natural kinds; (d) acceptance of some version of either strict or supervenient physicalism (either way, substance dualism is anathema); (e) an assimilation of personal identity to the identity of physical artifacts with the result that persons do not possess absolute, primitive unity at or through time but, rather, are four-dimensional space-time worms; (f) an eschewal of libertarian free will and agency.

It is hard to overestimate the damage that philosophical naturalism has done to our culture. Christian philosophers need to go to work on criticizing this view and articulating alternative positions. More specifically, we need to place more efforts in defending substance dualism (either the Thomist or Cartesian version), and we need more Christian theologians and Biblical scholars to follow John Cooper's lead by showing that this is in fact the correct Biblical position instead of labeling it a Greek intrusion into Biblical thought and opting for a facile Christianized physicalism.[13] The overstated false dilemma between Hebraic holism and Greek dualism

[12] For a clear statement of naturalism see R. Grossmann, *The Existence of the World* (London: Routledge, 1992). Defenses of naturalism include W. Callebaut, *Taking the Naturalistic Turn* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993); D. Papineau, *Philosophical Naturalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993). A good critique of naturalism is S. J. Wagner and R. Warner, *Naturalism: A Critical Appraisal* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1993).

[13] See J. W. Cooper, *Body, Soul and Life Everlasting* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989). For the distinction between Cartesian and substance dualism see J. P. Moreland and S. Wallace, "Aquinas vs. Descartes and Locke on the Human Person and End-of-Life Ethics," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 35 (September 1995) 319–330.

is one of the worst ideas in western thought since Descartes claimed that animals were mere machines. In fact I think we need more work in essentialism and philosophy of biology to show that there is indeed a theological and philosophical contribution to our description of what is real about living things. We abandon a philosophy of nature to our own peril and then wonder why the general culture has either a diminished or superstitious set of beliefs about the afterlife. Reductionism, mechanism and physicalism are dangers for horses as much as for humans. It is interesting to note that scientists are increasingly coming to see that DNA is not the genetic blueprint for the organism but, rather, is an important physical part or tool that presupposes the organism as a whole for the existence and functioning of DNA in the first place.[14] This should come as no surprise to Christian philosophers and theologians who take the soul seriously, as the fathers in the Church did before us.

A second intellectual movement is postmodernism. For those who love truth, reason, the good life, and the Christian God, postmodernism must be criticized and judged inadequate.[15] The postmodernist rejection of direct access to the mind (language, theory) independent world, the correspondence theory of truth, the paradigm independence and objectivity of rationality and justification, the objectivity and availability of authorial intent, and the appropriateness of an all-encompassing metanarrative fall short of what I believe to be the commitments entailed by evangelical faith. In a related point, I think epistemological foundationalism has been widely rejected because it came to be associated with (a) the empiricism and logical positivism that flourished in the first half of this century and (b) the need for incorrigible foundations for knowledge coupled with a view of knowledge as entailing Cartesian certainty. But neither of these is essential to foundationalism. And, in my view, sophisticated versions of it are still the best way to describe the structure of epistemic justification and to respond to the extreme claims of certain postmodernists.[16] Whether or not you agree with me here, one thing seems clear: More work needs to be done by Christian philosophers in this area.

(2) Three areas of philosophy of religion need more attention by philosophical apologists. First, we have Alvin Plantinga, Nicholas Wolterstorff and their friends to thank for bringing religious epistemology to the forefront of philosophical discussion.[17] I remain unconvinced, however, that

[14] Cf. J. Wells, "The History and Limits of Genetic Engineering," *International Journal on the Unity of the Sciences* 5 (Summer 1992) 137–150; H. F. Nijhout, "Metaphors and the Role of Genes in Development," *BioEssays* 12 (September 1990) 441–445; J. M. Barry, "Informational DNA: A Useful Concept?", *Trends in Biochemical Sciences* 11 (1986) 317–318.

[15] For an evangelical discussion of postmodernism see T. R. Phillips and D. L. Okholm, *Christian Apologetics in the Postmodern World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995).

[16] See R. Chisholm, *Theory of Knowledge* (3d ed.; Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1989); R. Audi, *Belief, Justification, and Knowledge* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1988).

[17] See A. Plantinga and N. Wolterstorff, *Faith and Rationality* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1983); A. Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate* (New York: Oxford University, 1993); *Warrant and Proper Function* (New York: Oxford University, 1993). For a response to Reformed epistemology see *Rational Faith: Catholic Responses to Reformed Epistemology* (ed. L. Zagzebski; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1993).

either the proper basicality of belief in God or epistemic externalism is the way to go. I may be wrong about this, but I would like to see more efforts directed toward defending epistemic internalism and relating it to philosophy of mind. We also need to give more thought to the importance of natural theology for the justification of theistic belief. I also think that insights gained from work in moral and religious epistemology could provide defeaters for a naturalistic evolutionary view of the origin and functioning of our noetic equipment. These and other desiderata are needed areas of exploration in religious epistemology. A second and related point is that we need to update, develop and strengthen the arguments for God's existence. William Lane Craig has already done this for the cosmological argument.[18] Currently Phillip Johnson, Steve Meyer, Paul Nelson and Bill Dembski are heading up a group doing work on the design argument. And while we are in the neighborhood of theistic arguments, let me say that more attention needs to be given to the argument from consciousness and the moral argument.

Third, philosophers should continue to apply their craft to the clarification and defense of various Christian doctrines. Much is already being done regarding the concept, attributes and works of God, the Trinity, and the hypostatic union. I also think that the issues of Christian particularism and the morality of everlasting punishment are not going to go away in the near future.[19]

(3) In the last few years a battle has been raging about the nature of science itself and how to best integrate it with Christianity. Many Christian intellectuals follow Richard Bube and Howard J. Van Till who say that science must embrace methodological naturalism and that the complementarity view is the best way to integrate science and Christianity in areas of dialogue like creation and evolution.[20] I am on the other side of the divide.[21] Be that as it may, it is clear that we need to have more philosophers work on these issues because, in spite of what some Christian scientists say, the issues are largely within the purview of the history and philosophy of science.

Two other issues need to be explored more fully with an eye on integrating science and theology. First, the realism/antirealism debate in phi-

[18] See W. L. Craig and Q. Smith, *Theism, Atheism, and Big Bang Cosmology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993).

[19] *More Than One Way? Four Approaches to Salvation in a Pluralistic World* (ed. D. L. Okholm and T. R. Phillips; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

[20] See H. J. Van Till, "The Character of Contemporary Natural Science," *Portraits of Creation* (ed. Van Till; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) 126–165; H. J. Van Till, D. A. Young and C. Menninga, *Science Held Hostage* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1988); H. J. Van Till, "Categorical Complementarity and the Creationomic Perspective," *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* 37 (September 1985) 149–157; Bube, *Putting It All Together*.

[21] See *The Creation Hypothesis* (ed. J. P. Moreland; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994), chaps. 1–2; J. P. Moreland, "Creation Science and Methodological Naturalism," *Man and Creation* (ed. M. Bauman; Hillsdale: Hillsdale College, 1993) 105–139; *Christianity and the Nature of Science* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), chaps. 1, 6; "Conceptual Problems and the Scientific Status of Creation Science," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 46 (March 1994) 2–13.

losophy of science needs to be explored to develop applications from it to questions of integration. Second, as I have already said, certain views of living organisms (that they have irreducible, immaterial essences that give them their unity, their kindedness, and ground their teleological development and the functions of their parts and that are what direct the development of the organism's body and phenotypes) sit easily with Biblical concepts of creation, created kinds, and so forth. Christians have been too frightened by the charge of vitalism—a notion that is itself grossly misunderstood—and should not abandon the philosophy of nature as a legitimate part of our search for the knowledge of true descriptions of natural living organisms.

In all of this, one thing is of paramount importance. Many today, including many Christians, think that science is the king of the hill, epistemologically speaking, and have settled on something that bears a family resemblance to fideism in the area of religious knowledge and on the view that theological claims are in some way or another claims about a spiritual realm, a religious way of seeing, and the like. This has contributed to the marginalization of Christianity in the culture and to a view of theology as a language game for the faithful. Whatever we do in the area of science and Christianity we must vouchsafe a reply to this view bifurcated epistemology and defend the objectivity and public accessibility of Christian truth-claims and the rational justification for them.

(4) How can I say something meaningful about ethics in one or two paragraphs? Obviously there is great need for Christians to intensify their efforts to develop articulate positions on the issues of our day. But a word of caution is in order here. If we direct too much attention to ethics at the exclusion of metaphysics and epistemology, then we may inadvertently contribute to the cultural perspective that, somehow, ethics is not a field of real knowledge grounded in the way things are but is instead an attempt to clarify and bring order to the various traditions and paradigms that in the final analysis are relative to individuals and communities and only involve the expression of private, subjective beliefs.

Having said this, I want to mention two other things in this area. First, more work needs to be done in integrating deontological approaches to normative ethics with virtue theory. What we need is a better way of showing how moral rule following is related to the good life of human flourishing, which in turn is metaphysically grounded in the way we are by nature as creatures made in God's image. Second, the whole issue of human personhood is widely discussed in a way that I do not find adequate. Many think that, absent God and the doctrine of creation in his image, the notion of being human is merely a biological one and that anyone who thinks we are valuable because we are human is guilty of speciesism. The locus of moral worth has come to be personhood viewed as the emergence of a set of properties on a properly structured functioning human brain that satisfy the criteria of personhood. On this view, one can be a human nonperson. Some Christians have come close to accepting the spirit if not the letter of this approach. I have argued elsewhere that this

is just a mistake.[22] The image of God is possessed by all human persons who are such by nature, not by functioning. I think we need to take the image of God more seriously as a metaphysical reality and not leave definitions of being human or being a person to scientific naturalists or Christianized appropriations of a scientistic approach to these issues.

As I said, these are my own reflections about the current state of things. Whether or not you agree with the details, I hope I have said enough to show that philosophical apologetics is critical to the vitality of the Church and her mission in the world as we approach the twenty-first century. The question that remains is how we can be more effective and intentional in supporting the practice of philosophical apologetics among us.

III. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STRATEGY

In light of all that has been said to this point, where do we go from here? What do we need to do as an evangelical community engaged in a culture war trying to glorify God and spread the gospel? Noll wryly bemoans the fact that "when faced with a crisis situation, we evangelicals usually do one of two things. We either mount a public crusade, or we retreat into an inner pious sanctum."[23] By contrast I suggest we rethink the role of the intellectual life and, specifically, of philosophy in that life, for the health and mission of the Church. One of the most important things we can do is to reexamine the way we plan, spend our time, and direct our resources in light of the following two facts. First, we are involved in a war of ideas for people's minds and hearts. This war is critical because individual and communal forms of life are governed not by mere belief but by what people take to be known or reasonably believed. Moreover we are living in a *Zeitgeist* that denies that religious knowledge is possible and that religious claims, like most factual claims, are publicly accessible and objectively rational. Second, the evangelical community largely speaks to itself in a religiously isolated language game, most of our ministry efforts focus on in-house issues, and we are just not part of public discourse. In light of this we simply must find ways to reappropriate the importance of philosophy in general and philosophical apologetics in particular. Here are some suggestions for doing this.

1. *Seminaries should add professional philosophers to their faculties*. Even better, they should hire a group of them to start a graduate program in philosophy and ethics. At Talbot School of Theology we started such a program three years ago, and we currently have four philosophers and ethicists on our faculty and close to seventy graduate students. Our presence has increased the spirit of intellectual depth and precision, as

[22] J. P. Moreland, "Humanness, Personhood, and the Right to Die," *Faith and Philosophy* 12 (January 1995) 95–112; J. P. Moreland and J. Mitchell, "Is the Human Person a Substance or Property-Thing?", *Ethics and Medicine* 11 (1995).

[23] Noll, *Scandal* 141.

well as the courage to be informed activists in the culture among the rest of the seminary community. Our goal is to place one hundred students in doctoral programs in philosophy who will become college professors in the next twenty years and to see a steady stream of philosophically trained graduates pour into parachurch ministries or become ministers of evangelism and discipleship.

2. *We need to teach pastors to start institutes for study and activism in their churches*. I have already been a part of starting such an institute, and I cannot go into details here about how such a center operates. But regardless of details, an institute for study and activism seeks to equip believers to think about how Christianity relates to their vocation at the level of ideas and to be able to understand and critique contemporary culture to spread Christ's influence and to win others to Christ. The standard seminary curriculum, absent the chance to be trained in philosophical apologetics, is simply not producing ministers who are equipped for war and have the courage to get involved in the conflict of ideas raging all about us. People in our churches have virtually no idea how their Christian beliefs relate to ideas intrinsic to their vocations. It is well past time for us to put aside this dichotomized vision of Christian piety.

3. *Parachurch ministries like Campus Crusade should designate certain staff members whose job it is to form centers of apologetical research at different sites around the country to equip their own staff and students and to penetrate the secular campuses that constitute their mission fields.* It is unconscionable that the very ministries that target the citadels of learning have been so out of touch with the world of ideas.

4. *Foundations need to be set up to fund evangelicals who wish to pursue doctoral degrees in philosophy or ethics.* I think we need to pay special attention to these disciplines for two reasons. First, due to their very nature these fields are absolutely foundational in mobilizing believers to be effective in getting at the bottom of systems of thought that are harming the progress of the gospel and the nurturing of the saints. And the hot issues of the day are largely ethical and philosophical. Second, philosophy has a public relations problem among us, and there is little effort and virtually no felt need to raise up a new generation of evangelical philosophers compared to, say, Christian psychologists or Biblical scholars.

5. Finally, the evangelical community has far more Biblical and theological scholars than it does philosophers. Happily, however, there is a growing number of well-trained philosophers who are solid evangelicals. *We need theologians and OT and NT scholars to take the lead in identifying crucial issues we need to address and to set up institutes, conferences, or multi-authored volumes to address them*. And I urge us all to be sure that we bring more Christian philosophers into this networking process.

In closing, it is urgent that we rethink the importance of the intellectual life for the health of the Church and the effectiveness of her outreach. And when we do this, it will be obvious that philosophy is now, as it always has been in our history, a crucial component in our collective Christian concerns. We now find ourselves largely marginalized in the culture and ingrown in the issues we address, the activities we perform, the books we read, and the categories in which we think and speak. Our marginalization and ingrown texture are the result of several decades of academic bullying from the outside and intellectual cowardice or indifference on the inside. For some time now, with rare and notable exceptions, Christian intellectuals have largely focused their studies on religious issues within the Church or on technical minutiae regarding Biblical exegesis. As important as exegesis is, we do not need another commentary on Ephesians or a new book on the doctrine of salvation. Instead we need a renaissance of evangelical statements of and defenses for what we believe about the broad issues being debated in the academy and the broader culture. And we will never succeed at this if we do not give philosophical ability and training a central place in church and seminary education. If the giants of the past like Wesley and Baxter saw philosophical apologetics as crucial in this regard, we neglect this activity to our own peril. Failure to rethink church life and seminary education in this context will only contribute to our increased marginalization and the ingrown texture of our presence in an increasingly secular and alien culture.[24]

[24] I wish to thank R. D. Geivett and J. M. Reynolds for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.