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Your presentation follows the pattern used by Roman Catholic missionaries and many others, where general revelation (through nature) and theistic proofs bring someone to belief in God, his eternality, omnipotence, and other natural attributes. Special revelation adds a saving knowledge of God through Christ as holy, good, and loving (through history regarding God's moral attributes). The first format has its precursor in Paul's Areopagus speech; the second step follows Gamaliel's argument in Acts 5, a resurrectiono-centric format in which the existence of the church and the fact of Jesus' resurrection stand or fall together: the church exists; therefore, the resurrection occurred, Christ's claim are true because resurrection is supernatural, and miracle confirms the claims of the miracle worker, *etc.* In the modern day, that two-step process has been enhanced by increased awareness of the complexity of nature with its accompanying tendency away from the likelihood that gradual change could explain chemistry-to-man by "endogenous complexification," upward increase in complexity only by factors inside the natural order. Natural evolution replaces the need—not the fact/disproof—of supernatural deity; so it has become the apparent option for replacing the creationist model. A relevant observation, I might add, is that it is not possible to put in sequence the origin of reciprocating parts (especially for the level of observable complexity culminating in human social relationships).

The second step is also replaced by the evolution model—social evolution—in which the Christian message developed to become what we see in the New Testament, the belief system preserved by getting associated with the Roman government that destroyed the alternative traditions that descended from Jesus of Nazareth. The difficulty here is that it does not square with the Roman persecution of the church (rather than Gnosticism, *etc.*) and the lack of time for this scenario to unfold. But these challenges to the theistic worldview and Christian message are plausible enough to excuse people who do not want to surrender autonomy.

A third format directly challenges the penchant for human autonomy by starting with the subjective need of every person for security, meaning, love, and innocence—needs that any thoughtful person recognizes that dependent beings who die cannot provide for themselves. It connects with the personal-interpersonal center we worked from in the study of salvation. As a matter of fact, it corresponds also with the Calvinistic approach that sets aside the use of apologetics altogether in the evangelistic enterprise—but for other reasons legal (divine sovereignty) and anthropological (human depravity). The person does his own comparison with alternative worldviews so as to recognize intuitively that the gospel is "better," and that God must indeed be in what you are saying (cp. 1 Corinthians 14:24-25, "*God is indeed among you.*"). We are not responsible for the "power" of the gospel in contrast to other messages; we are responsible only for presenting it correctly and appropriately.

This whole tangent about apologetics and Christian evidences relates to the practical aspect of the class assignment. Efficiency is always an issue in the witnessing endeavor. If people will listen long enough to go through more involved presentations, they are "seekers" at some level—and that is perfectly okay. Admittedly, it is doubtful that any tactic will suffice with someone hardened against hearing by the deceitfulness of self-sufficiency—the sin of autonomy (Hebrews 3:17). Such people may have to be knocked flat on their backs before they are in a position to look to a higher, external basis for a fulfilling life. The "friendship factor" in salvation suggests directly presenting people's problem as alienation and God's solution as reconciliation. The listeners on their own contrast it with their own approach to life if they have one. Then,

if they raise counter-considerations, they become elements of discussion such as those you touched on. Perhaps in confirmation of the relatively lower efficiency of the approach is the observation that significantly more than half your layout dealt with pre-salvation matters.

I did not notice any traces of matters we described in class and in collateral readings. That is not in itself a “problem” since nothing in the assignment called for incorporating such ideas. It does suggest that the class approach to the topic did not impact what would have been the presentation without having gone through the study. The phrase, for instance, “*paying for sin*” (p. 8) is foreign to the alternate approach, which says that alienation itself is the problem and that it is not the kind of thing that can be “*paid for*,” certainly not by someone else; one (righteous) person cannot “*pay*” by being alienated on behalf of a (sinful) other one. We are not saved from the consequences of alienation. God gives us up to the natural and social ramifications of sin in that we receive in ourselves the “recompenses” of those sins, recompenses that are not removed (Romans 1:24-2:3ff.). If any recompense gets removed, it is indirectly in consequence of the reconciliation itself (with God) and the conversion from behaviors—behaviors being conditions both for bringing about and removing alienation (with him and people): sin changed to repentance and apology and righteousness can be conditions for human forgiveness as well. So, the only thing God promises to save us from is the alienation—which death and its precursors result from. That reconciliation happens only because God himself freely chooses to reckon us as righteous “friends” and spiritual “sons” on the condition that we identify Christ his righteous Son (and the Father with whom Christ is at one; John 10:30; 17:11). Only the Son embodies among us what we must be willing to aspire to be like in kind and degree—bearing our own crosses and resisting unto blood (Mathew 16:24; Hebrews 12:4). Friendship with God (reconciliation) is the salvation, and it alone is the salvation. “*Paying for alienation*” is not possible; *post facto* restitution is the only thing a sinner might do, but restitution can only be for some kinds of matters in recognition of reconciliation rather than as condition for it and certainly not as a cause of it so as to “*pay for*” it.

These notations lead on to dealing with the theory of divine satisfaction, and that goes on for a while; so I’ll break off here.

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