

Theological Equipping Class

Logical Fallacies and Apologetics

April 26, 2020

Introduction

Why do we need to think?

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind... (Romans 12:2)

Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. (2 Timothy 2:7)

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (Philippians 4:8)

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (Ephesians 4:11–16)

Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature. (1 Corinthians 14:20)

What is a fallacy?

"an error in reasoning that renders an argument untrue, invalid or unsound."

Why should we care about fallacies?

1. Being able to identify fallacies will help you to answer common objections to the faith.
2. Being able to identify fallacies will help you to avoid using them in your conversations with unbelievers.

Equivocation

"the same term is used in two or more different senses in the course of an argument" (Peter Kreeft)

Examples:

- Who's on First?
- Headaches
- Tofu > Bacon

Examples in theology:

- Don't judge me
- Gay wedding?
- What is love?

Examples in apologetics:

- God in Islam and Christianity
- Jesus in the cults
- Surveys and polls

Are we using the same word with slightly different meanings?

Appeal to emotion (*ad misericordiam*)

Examples:

- 2 Pictures of children
- Starving kids?
- Mass shooting survivor
- "you don't know what I've been through," or "think about how hard that will be for that person"
- Divorce and remarriage

Examples in apologetics

- "good people going to hell"

- Noah's flood or the conquest of Canaan
- Human sexuality
- Who's the victim?

Begging the question (*petitio principii*)

"You keep using that phrase. I don't think it means what you think it means."

someone assumes what they are trying to prove.

Examples:

- UFOs and aliens
- How did you feel when you killed your husband?
- "A woman has the right to do what she wants with her own body."
- "Baptists exclude from the covenant those whom Christ has welcomed."

Examples in apologetics:

- The Bible can't be true because it contains miracles.
- Miracles don't happen because I've never seen one.
- Jesus couldn't have risen from the dead because dead people don't rise from the dead.
- "The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction..."
(Dawkins)

Exception? The Bible is the word of God because it says it is.

Ad hominem: to the person

when instead of addressing someone's argument or position, you irrelevantly attack the person or some aspect of the person making the argument.

Not an ad hominem:

- sons of Satan and whitewashed tombs
- Babysitter

- Pilot

Examples:

- Luther's anti-Semitism
- Calvin and Servetus
- Founding Fathers and slavery
- Theological arrogance

Examples in apologetics

- Crusades and atrocities
- Slavery
- Islam and terrorism

"I can learn something from everyone, even the devil, if nothing else then how to be crafty." (RC Sproul)

Strawman

"consists in refuting an unfairly weak, stupid or ridiculous version of your opponent's idea (either his conclusion or his argument) instead of the more reasonable idea he actually holds." (Peter Kreeft)

Examples

- Political ads
- Defund PP
- Back alley abortions
- Gun control

Examples in apologetics

- "Christianity is misogynistic! It teaches that women are second class citizens undeserving of human rights!"
- "Christians deny evolution and therefore reject all science."

"One of the rules of medieval debate was designed to block 'straw man' arguments: you must first state your opponent's idea in your own words (to be sure you understand the idea instead of just parroting the words), to his satisfaction, before you go on to refute it." (Peter Kreeft)

Appeal to experience

Examples:

- “You can’t speak truth to me because you are of a different race than me and don’t know what I’ve been through.”
- “Speaking truth in the wrong way makes it untrue.”
- “I don’t have to listen to what you say because I don’t like the way you are saying it.”
- Boomers and millennials
- Abortion
- Alcohol

Examples in apologetics:

- Abuse
- Sexuality

Moving the goalposts

Examples:

- Flat earth

Example in apologetics

- Contradictions to corruption to translations to....

What evidence could I give you that would cause you to rethink your position or admit that you're wrong?

False dilemma (excluding the middle or false dichotomy)

Examples:

- Donations
- Adoption and abortion
- Would you rather?
- Mastercard

- Directv
- Illiteracy

Examples in the church:

- Age of the earth
- Female elders
- Spanking or abuse
- Abuse or divorce
- Trinity
- Hypostatic union

Examples in apologetics? Not really...

- if you're not going to heaven, you must be going to hell?
- you are either for us or against us

Whenever you are given only a few options, ask, "are there any other possibilities here?"

Red Herring

Examples

- Reagan
- Abortion – capital punishment
- Immigration

Examples in theology

- Female preachers
- Morality and the existence of God

Don't take the bait. Instead, just say maybe that's true, but its irrelevant to this particular topic.

Conclusion: the glory of God and the joy of man

Truth is a treasure. Fallacies are obstacles.