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For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

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Comical Apologetics

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Anyone who is more than superficially acquainted with the bizarre and irrational world of Dutch "Reformed" philosophy can sympathize with the desire of Sproul, Gerstner, and Lindsley (hereinafter SG&L) to present a rational defense of the Christian faith. One American representative of Dutch thought is Cornelius Van Til of Westminster Theological Seminary, and he is the primary target of *Classical Apologetics*. Van Til's books, it is gladly admitted, are positively lucid compared to those of Herman Dooyeweerd, who holds the Guinness record for the greatest number of unintelligible sentences ever printed. But even some of Van Til's works tend to be unreadable, for they are frequently obscure and poorly argued. One can, therefore, sympathize with SG&L's desire to present a rational defense of Christianity, but the execution of their "defense" is so inept that one hardly knows where to begin. *Classical Apologetics* is scarcely an improvement over Van Til. In his review of the book, Dr. Clark annihilates SG&L; permit me to dust off the spots on which they stood. Let me begin with the least significant criticisms and conclude with two demonstrative proofs of the absurdity of classical apologetics.

At one time, Zondervan was a reputable publisher, but the number of errors in *Classical Apologetics* bespeaks slovenliness in form as well as substance. The book is riddled with spelling errors, ranging from the annoying to the amusing. For example, on page 138, "principal" is spelled "principle"; "fibrillations" becomes "fibulations" (97);

vacillate" is printed as "vascillate" (234, 245, 274, 275); and "led" (the verb) becomes "lead" (the metal) (301). Those are some of the annoying misspellings; an amusing error appears on page 187 in the middle of a discussion of the effects of sin on the mind. The sentence reads: "The basic error in traditional thought, being principally Arminian, is that it overlooks the poetic influence of sin." The poetic influence of sin is a subject heretofore largely overlooked by Christian apologists. Now that SG&L have called it to the attention of the Dutch theologians, I am sure we shall be inundated with tomes with titles like *Toward a Cosmonomic Critique of Autonomous Poesy*. But let us move on to some more substantial criticisms of *Classical Apologetics* that cannot be blamed on the publisher.

SG&L uncritically accept an unbiblical separation between the head and the heart and seem ignorant of Clark's treatment of the issue in *Faith and Saving Faith* and *The Biblical Doctrine of Man*. This error vitiates much of the 338-page discussion. In addition to separating the head and the heart, they seem to be able to separate Clark from Clark, for on page 265 he is described as "perhaps the most thoroughgoing presuppositionalist of them all," and on page 334 he becomes "presuppostionalism's most formidable foe." But then perhaps the authors are trying to make an esoteric point about apagogic arguments.

Reading *Classical Apologetics* is, in many ways, akin to walking through a funhouse full of distorting mirrors: One can recognize the men (after all,

SG&L give their names), but the descriptions of their views are sometimes surreal. Not only do some of the descriptions distort the truth, at least one of the quotations does also. On pages 270 and 271 SG&L quote Clark's book, *Religion, Reason and Revelation*, page 43. Here is what SG&L quote him as writing:

Hodge's first sentence bears the form of the main argument, clearly attached to the preceding. He had just said that what is true of three links must be true of a million; but now he adds that nothing multiplied by infinity is nothing still. Aside from its doubtful connection with the preceding, he has not mentioned that zero multiplied by infinity is zero, as one can easily see by realizing the fraction $2/0$ and the fraction $3/0$ are both infinity.

Now compare SG&L's version of Clark with what Clark actually wrote:

Finally, Hodge's third sentence, which seems to bear the form of the main argument, does not clearly attach to the preceding. He had just said that what is true of three links must be true of a million; now he adds that nothing multiplied by infinity is nothing still. Aside from its doubtful connection with the preceding, for he had not mentioned zero or multiplication, the sentence is bad arithmetic. It is not true that zero multiplied by infinity is zero, as one can easily see by realizing that the fraction two over zero and the fraction three over zero are both infinity.

In the space of seven lines on pages 270-271, SG&L commit at least a dozen errors of punctuation, misspelling, unacknowledged omission of words, and unacknowledged insertion of words. They quote Clark as saying exactly the opposite of what he actually wrote. Sloppiness on this scale makes all their quotations suspect, and the reader would be well advised to check the sources SG&L cite rather than accepting their quotations as accurate.

But leaving these matters and many others aside, we must move on to SG&L's argument itself. They call attention to the importance of miracles in their apologetic method. Let me quote their exact words so that it will be clear that I am in no way misrepresenting their views. They write:

What would God give His messengers that all could see could come only from God? Since the power of miracle belongs to God alone, miracles are a suitable and fitting vehicle of attestation (144).

If infinite natural power is the ultimate argument for the existence of God, infinite supernatural power (miracle) is the ultimate argument for the revelation of God. If Satan could do miracles, we could prove neither God nor His revelation. If true miracles could be done by God or Satan, we would learn precisely nothing from them (157).

In summary, we stress again the indispensability of genuine miracles. They and they alone ultimately prove that Christ is the Son of God and that the Bible is the Word of God (161).

The arguments from prophecy and miracles reduce to one, argument from miracles, because prophecy is a species of the generic category of miracle. It is the miraculousness of prophecy which makes it an argument, while what makes miracle an argument is that it requires God to account for it (276).

In traditional apologetics, miracles (as we have seen in chapter 8) play an absolutely crucial role. They are the evidence that certifies messengers sent by God (282).

SG&L's entire book rests on the proposition that "the power of miracle belongs to God alone." SG&L stress the "indispensability of genuine miracles." Miracles "play an absolutely crucial role." "If Satan could do miracles," they write, "we could prove neither God nor his revelation."

But, of course, Satan has done and can do miracles. The Bible says so. For example, *Matthew* 24:24 and *Mark* 13:22 say: "For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible." *2 Thessalonians* 2:9 says: "The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles [miracles of falsehood, not magic tricks], signs and wonders." *Revelation* 13:13 says: "And he [the second beast] performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from Heaven to Earth in full view of men." *Revelation* 16:14: "They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs...." *Revelation* 19:20: "But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf." *Matthew* 7:22-23: "Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" *Deuteronomy* 13:1-5:

If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place, and he says, "Let us follow other gods" (gods you have not known) "and let us worship them," you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer.... That prophet or dreamer must be put to death....

All these passages, and many others, indicate that Satan as well as God can perform miracles. It is clearly not true, as SG&L allege, that "the power of miracle belongs to God alone."

Now, SG&L stress the necessity for demonstrative proof. They wax eloquent (and rightly so) about the indispensability of logic. What follows are two proofs that demonstrate the absurdity of traditional, classical, apologetics.

Taking their statements and the Biblical teaching on this subject as premises, we can deduce by good and necessary consequence that SG&L utterly fail in

their efforts to present a rational defense of Christianity. Here are the syllogisms:

"If Satan could do miracles, we [SG&L] could prove neither God nor his revelation" (157). Satan can do miracles (*Matthew* 24:24 *et al*).

Therefore, SG&L can prove neither God nor his revelation.

"If true miracles could be done by God or Satan, we [SG&L] would learn precisely nothing from them" (157).

True, that is, genuine miracles can be done by God or Satan.

Therefore, SG&L learn precisely nothing from them.

A lot of time, effort, and money has been wasted on this book. Had the three authors been a little better acquainted with Scripture and logic, they could have done us all a favor and urged everyone to study Gordon Clark. He has already developed a rational defense of the Christian religion, but few Christian seminary professors seem to be paying attention.