Three Approaches to Apologetics

Method	Proponents	Argumentative Strategy	Strengths	Weaknesses
Classical	Thomas Aquinas, John Gerstner, R.C. Sproul, Norman Geisler, J.P. Moreland	A two-phased approach. Begins by employing natural theology to establish *theism* as the correct worldview. After God's existence has thus been shown, the classical method moves to a presentation of the historical evidences for the deity of Christ, the trustworthiness of Scripture, etc, to show that Christianity is the best version of theism (vs. Judaism, Islam, etc.).	• Acknowledges natural theology/general revelation • Takes seriously the evidence for God and Christianity • Seeks to combat fideism and anti-intellectualism in Christianity.	• The two-phased approach could convince the unbeliever of theism, but not Christianity. • Arminian/semi-Pelagian versions tend to see reason as an autonomous organ not completely affected by sin. • The Roman Catholic version assumes Roman Catholic theology.
Evidentialism	John Warwick Montgomery, Clark Pinnock, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Josh McDowell, Lee Strobel	A one-phase approach. "Christianity on trial." Not so concerned about using natural theology to get to a "first step." Rather, evidentialism begins with evidences for the Christian faith (the resurrection, etc.).	• Takes seriously the historic validity of Christianity (again, vs. anti-intellectualism).	• As with the classical approach, can put too much emphasis on reason.
Presupposition-alism	Cornelius Van Til, John Frame, Greg Bahnsen, Gordon Clark, Francis Schaeffer	Presupposes the truth of Christianity as the proper starting point for apologetics. Skeptical of the "common ground" between believers and unbelievers. Noetic effects of sin have so damaged reason that over-appealing to reason is futile. "Christianity alone makes sense of the world around you."	• Takes seriously the noetic effects of sin. • Takes seriously the unbelievers inability to understand the faith apart from being granted faith. • Seriously challenges false worldviews.	• Although the system doesn't require dismissing evidence for the faith, some proponents might. • Can be unnecessarily confrontational. • Often criticized for being "circular" in its reasoning (proving Christianity by starting with Christianity).