

How Has John Frame's Apologetic Changed Over Time?

John Frame writes to Steve Hays at Triablogue
about how his apologetic has changed over the years

By [John Frame](#)

March 4, 2020

Well, it's true that our reasons for faith tend to develop over time, and into old age. Of course, much often remains the same. I'll share with you how my own web of belief has developed. Let me use our familiar genre of the numbered list.

I still find my published argumentation pretty cogent, without insisting on every detail.

1. I've always looked for the obvious, since Romans 1 says that God is "clearly" revealed. It may be that there are complicated mathematical proofs or elaborations of the cosmological argument. Perhaps some smart people can benefit from those. But I'm not smart enough to think all that through, and to me they certainly don't have the clarity that Romans 1 speaks of. As I get older, I feel increasingly committed to this point.

2. I'm circling back on some of my earliest convictions. When I was a kid, I observed among my friends some genuine conversions. I have never seen anything other than Christian conversion that could seriously transform somebody's life.

3. The heart of my apologetic has been the Schaefferian distinction between personality and impersonality. That distinction raises the question of which characteristic is more fundamental. I have argued that the things that are most important cannot be accounted for on impersonalist presuppositions: rationality, art, morality. Christianity, I think, is the most consistently personalist faith there is, though that personalism is sometimes compromised, as with the recent militant Thomism.

4. Getting older has increased my interest in history. It seems that through history, there have been two ways people and nations have related to one another: conquest and love. In the conquest dynamic, might makes right; the victor gets the spoils. In the love dynamic, people look out for one another and try to achieve the greater good. Biblical religion, and Jesus to an astonishing

degree, set the love dynamic on its course. Even if I could not argue effectively for the truth of Christianity, I would want to be on the side of those who promote the love dynamic. Today, it seems to me that Christianity, and only Christianity, promotes love as a social dynamic.

5. If Christianity is false, why do its enemies seem so fanatical about stamping it out? That fanaticism has existed through the centuries, but today it is getting worse and worse. The Communist Chinese and the Muslims are prepared to kill people, re-educate them, torture them—more than any other time in history—just for being Christians. The secular leftists in the West are a little gentler, but they too won't stop their nastiness until they get rid of every speck of Christianity in society. Given that dynamic, I want to be on the side of those who favor liberty of conscience. And today I can't find a way to declare that conviction other than confessing Christ.

6. The Bible tells the truth about my own heart, my need of redemption, my path to fellowship with God. That is all more complicated now. In my youth I tended to take every spiritual, physical, economic reversal as a challenge to my faith. That really doesn't happen anymore. The reversals are to be expected, and they are new ways of experiencing God's mercy. So the reversals reinforce my faith. This is an "existential" argument for the truth of Christianity. I don't know how to state it persuasively; it is largely based on my internal feeling. But (contrary to those who consistently denigrate feelings in favor of reason) that feeling is one that integrates all my life and provides a context in which reason can function. I could never abandon that sense of the reality of God. So of necessity, as I grow older, events have reinforced its role as the foundation of the rest of life: reason, aesthetics, politics, etc. This is, I think, presuppositionalism at a deeper level. C.S. Lewis's comment comes to mind, that I believe in God, not because I see him, but because through him I see everything else.

7. Probably what has changed most about me as I've aged is my sense of the mysteriousness of it all. I've always felt a deep sense of mystery, but now that sense has moved to the center. And I have less and less sympathy with people who think they have it all figured out. The Trinity, for example, is a rich mystery. Every theologian says this, but some of them think they can inform us very dogmatically what "eternal generation" and "eternal procession" are and then damn us to Hell if we are not impressed with their explanations. Lighten up, folks. As if God gave us this doctrine as a club with which to beat one another over the head.

Just some thoughts, Steve. Thanks for giving me the opportunity to think them.

Blessings,

John Frame

This article is provided as a ministry of [Third Millennium Ministries](#) (Thirdmill). If you have a question about this article, please [email](#) our *Theological Editor*.

Subscribe to *Biblical Perspectives Magazine*

BPM subscribers receive an email notification each time a new issue is published. Notifications include the title, author, and description of each article in the issue, as well as links directly to the articles. Like BPM itself, *subscriptions are free*. To subscribe to [BPM](#), please select this [link](#).