The Missional Approach: 
Reconsidering Elenetics (Part 1)

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But the Lord God called to the man: Where are you? (Gen. 3:9)

When he [the Counselor] comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment…. (John 16:8–11)

Introduction

If mission really is mission, the key topic must be the conversion of those who do not believe in Christ as the Savior of the world: according to Scripture, unbelievers. How will they convert without someone to preach to them? How can they preach unless they are sent? (cf. Rom. 10:14–15). Conversion, in turn, leads us to the concept of missional approach. That is, how can we approach those of other religions and ideologies—even atheists—and effectively communicate the gospel to them? One’s missional approach is all about how to connect with unbelievers, how to communicate at their level of understanding, how to adjust the gospel message to their vocabulary so as to lead them to the crucified Lord Jesus Christ and confront them with the gospel claim. What does it take to call a person to repent and believe in Christ in a way that is properly meaningful and truly representative of the gospel?

This issue is connected to the science of communication, the general rules and conditions of which are also valid for missional dialogue. We gratefully use words such as sender, message, and receiver; the time, place, and atmosphere; and the start, progress, and closing of the communication

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1 The second part of this article is scheduled to appear in the November 2009 issue of the Calvin Theological Journal.

2 Here, I use the biblical term unbelievers for all those who do not believe in Christ. We admit though, that these persons are believers in terms of their own religion (or nonreligion).
process. *Elenctics*, however, is more. It teaches us how to act and speak in a way that conforms to the biblical views on humanity, sin, redemption, and conversion.

To avoid misunderstanding, I present the following three provisos: First, no human can convert others; only the Spirit by grace can. The evangelist’s task is to lead the believer to the person and the work of Christ; to guide him to the cross and the resurrected Christ. Then, the evangelist must ask the questions: “What about you? Who do you say Jesus is?” (Matt. 16:15). The approach one takes has to do with both speaking and feedback—adjusting the message and clarifying the goals to evaluate the unbeliever’s answer. The elenctic process takes more than one conversation. It can take months of careful adjustment based on feedback; encircled by prayer that the Lord will touch the unbeliever. Then, one must leave the result to God.

Second, any approach must be motivated by love. Before one obeys the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19), one must obey the Great Commandment (Matt. 22:37–40). The evangelist, according to Bavinck, is not a postman who drops a letter in the mailbox but a messenger of the Lord to announce the good news.

Third, the approach is not just a biblical or theological topic. Although we can learn some of our approach from Scripture, the Bible is not a manual for such. Many disciplines, such as communication theory, cultural anthropology, sociology, linguistics, psychology, science of religion, and so forth, use various forms of approach. Our focus will be on the biblical dimensions of approach, but, I do recommend the study of these other disciplines.

**Elenctics: Biblical Principles Regarding One’s Missional Approach**

**Introduction**

When we look at the biblical principles of missional approach, we cannot merely copy the historic ways of communication that are described in Scripture, but why not? First, one finds a variety of communication styles in Scripture—each having a different approach and belonging to a unique time and place. There is no single model for us to follow. Second, the contexts of Old and New Testament history are not the same as the twenty-first century’s context, and the context in which we find ourselves is not like any other in the world. All kinds of changes have taken place in secular history.

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3I will use the generic word *evangelist* to indicate the range of *senders* in the communication process. Evangelist can thus refer to a professional missionary, evangelist, minister, pastor, teacher, preaching elder, ordinary Christian, and so forth.
as well as in the history of the church. Events such as the Enlightenment; World Wars; the fall of the Berlin Wall; 9/11; the global rift; and modern techniques, sciences, and cultures mean that one must not identify our era with biblical times. We must never try to communicate in the way that the prophets, Jesus, Paul, or Peter did.

In Scripture, Paul did not hesitate to ask his readers to “follow his example” (1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 3:17 NIV). He exhorted them to “be imitators of God” (Eph. 5:1 NIV), to imitate those who persevere (Heb. 6:12), and to become “imitators of God’s churches in Judea” (1 Thess. 2:14 NIV). However, imitation never means to copy exactly the way in which Christ, Paul, or Peter did things. Every person has a specific character, vocabulary, behavior, impact, and so forth, and, just as we do not need to wear the same clothes, eat the same food, or travel the same roads that Abraham, John the Baptist, or Paul did, we also do not need to use the same approach that they used.

However, we do need to explore the basic elements, dimensions, flow, weight, and color of the rhetoric in Scripture. We need to dig deeply into the discussions to discover their backgrounds—why this or that word was used, why this or that answer was given (or, not given), how the questions were posed, and so forth. We need to search for a pattern, a constant factor that dominates, and a main reason behind a specific evangelistic approach. Of course, love always lies at the heart of the missional approach. Another constant in elenctics is the call to convert, be it encouragement, warning, reproach, or repentance. In fact, Scripture will always underlie any approach. How else can a person stand before the Creator of the world, how can she face the holy God and relate to him who is both a loving Father and a righteous Judge?

Why did God address Adam with the words: “Where are you” (Gen. 3:9 NIV)? This short question reveals the sinner’s real situation in God’s eyes. For God, the situation reveals both his desire to love and restore mankind’s broken relationship and his divine call to mankind to account for a disastrous choice against the Creator. In the following section, I will explore the depth of this approach. Then, I will move on to the dynamics of the discipline of elenctics.

The Discipline of Elenctics

Why have I chosen to use the word elenctics? It is because this is the basic word Scripture uses for the approach. The meaning of this word is seen throughout the whole Bible, but its actual wording can be found in John 16:8–11: “When he [Holy Spirit, Counselor] comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment”: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.
The word *convict* is the translation of the Greek word *elenchhoo*. *Elenctics* is a derivation of this verb. This and words such as *elenctic* and *elenctical* have been used for centuries to rebuke false teachings. It was only in the nineteenth century that people rejected this word—mostly for liberal and evolutionistic reasons. In the twentieth century, mainline conciliar missional discussion forcefully abandoned it under the pretense that it belonged to the colonial period. The word *dialogue*, which was based on equal rights between Christian and non-Christian religions, took its place in the 1960s and 1970s.

However, due to Johan Herman Bavinck, the discipline of elenctics remained as a core element of Reformed mission. Bavinck even pushed the discipline to a higher level of understanding. Although he overtly explains elenctics rather briefly, his missiology is fully stamped by this basic biblical element of missional approach. Today, we owe the issue of elenctics to him. In the following explanation, I use his views and publications as my guide.

**The Word Elengchoo**

*Elengchoo* occurs in many biblical texts (e.g., Luke 21:15; 2 Tim. 3:16; Titus 1:9). The basic meaning is “unmask,” and its primary atmosphere is juridical—the courthouse where a judge passes a verdict on litigation, but another meaning is to deliberately expose a person to the truth. From there, its derivations have different meanings: show a person’s fault (Matt. 16:15), expose [to the truth] (John 3:20), rebuke (1 Tim. 5:20; 2 Tim. 3:16; Titus 1:13; Heb. 12:5; Rev. 3:19 [close to discipline, punish]), convict (James 2:9; Jude 15 [similar to judge], refute those who oppose Christianity (Titus 1:9), and prove guilty (John 8:46). The whole range, however, shows the juridical flavor of the word—from unmask to blame, insult, test, examine, inquire, refute, accuse, punish, and judge.

Second, this word puts us in courtroom where the prosecutor and judge have to unmask someone’s guilt and pronounce guilt or innocence. In John 16:7, the word *counselor* underlines this scenario (Greek: *parakletos* [lawyer, advocate]). In fact, the gospel of John is stamped with a juridical atmosphere.

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His use of the word *witness* (Greek: *martureo*) also connects to a courtroom.

John and the other apostles brought witness to Jesus’ birth, life, crucifixion, death, resurrection, ascension, and his promise of return. The facts of the historical events at Jerusalem are the undeniable evidences of this one truth: Salvation is only through Christ. The gospel message commands people to repent and convert. Those who do not believe that Jesus was sent by the Father will be unmasked by the gospel, exposed to the truth, and pronounced guilty before God, the supreme Judge.

Third, preaching the gospel in a dialogical format (similar to the process of a lawsuit) and unmasking unbelievers as opposing Christian truth is the core issue of all missional work. In this way, mission is the provisional preparation of humankind to face the Creator. The world of unbelievers is accused before the throne of God. Humanity has to confess its sin, convert, and believe in Christ. Only then are they saved from the final judgment. Missional work is not a game. It is a matter of life and death.

*The Foundation of Elenctics: John 16:8–11*

The text of John 16:8–11 is the foundation of elenctics. It clarifies the work of the Holy Spirit, intertwining it with the apostles’ proclamation of the gospel. The evangelist proclaims the gospel, seeks feedback, clarifies, urges conversion, evaluates the unbeliever’s position, and determines whether the unbeliever remains unrepentant. If the unbeliever has, in fact, converted, then the new believer will be baptized and received into the congregation.

A close look at John 16:8–11 reveals that when the comforter comes, he will accuse the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. (Jesus is speaking before his trial and crucifixion; looking beyond to Pentecost and the Spirit’s work). John uses the word *world* (Greek: *kosmos*) many times. Here, it has a specific audience: the unbelieving Jewish people in his day. They are accused, not just of a general sin but of a very specific sin: unbelief (John 16:9). During all the years that Jesus preached and healed the sick in the midst of the Israelites, the majority of them rejected him as the promised Messiah. In John 1:10–11, it states: “He [the Word Jesus] was in the world [the people of Israel], and though the world [Israel as a separate people] was made through him, the world [Israel in the days of Christ on earth] did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own [God’s specific, elected people Israel], but his own did not receive him.” John’s wording suggests that *his own* and the *world* are parallel in this text.

For us, this means that we must expose the unbeliever to the gospel: Jesus himself. They need to have the opportunity to learn about Jesus, consider the message of salvation through him, and make up their minds. Then, if they still reject Christ as their Savior, they will be accused before God’s throne and be judged guilty in God’s view.
Jesus accused unbelievers “in regard to sin” (John 16:9). In other words, those who reject Jesus as Christ commit sin—a word that cuts painfully and deeply. The Jewish people pretended to know exactly what sin is. They were proud to be the elected ones who knew God’s will—both his commandments and his punishments. More than any other people, they had been taught God’s view of sin. They felt superior to other nations. Thus, Jesus’ words in John 16:9 turn the issue of sin upside down because, as it turns out, the Jewish people had committed the ultimate sin: They rejected him. They rejected their unique opportunity. Their actions proved that they were deeply involved in sin.

With the words, “[I]n regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer” (John 16:10 NIV), Jesus confronts the unbelieving world of his day with the ultimate lawsuit: unrighteousness. Because Jesus is looking ahead to his ascension, he knows that he will be shown to the disciples as the righteous man. God himself will declare Jesus not guilty, which will show them that God rejected the Jewish act of crucifying Jesus. God himself will resurrect Jesus, which will show them that God will bestow on him full glory at the right hand of the Father in heaven. The case about righteousness would not be the separation of the Jewish people from other nations but whether or not Jesus was guilty of unbelief and blasphemy, Jesus would, in fact, be found not guilty because he was the most obedient believer and the most righteous man in the universe. As such, Jesus’ ascension becomes a divine verdict both on the Jewish unbelievers and on all who have not believed since then.

Finally, Jesus proclaims, “in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned” (John 16:11 NIV). These words contradict the world’s view. By putting Jesus on the cross, the Jews and the Sanhedrin were determined to judge Jesus guilty and worthy of crucifixion. The cross, however, as culmination of judgment, would show that Satan, not Jesus, lost the battle. By bringing the sins of the world to the cross, Jesus obtained an acquittal for all who would believe in him. Thus, because of the cross and resurrection, Satan would stand condemned. Throughout history, Satan repeatedly opposed God’s redemptive work, and he wanted to destroy God’s plan for salvation. In the end, when Jesus died on the cross, it seemed that Satan had become victorious, but, it was not Satan who triumphed but Jesus. He is alive forevermore; death has been conquered; Satan has lost. Jesus became the King of Kings; Satan became a public spectacle (Col. 2:15); he stands condemned. God pronounced his final verdict.

These verses form the foundation of elenctics. The gospel of Christ is a wondrous message, full of grace and love. By proclaiming this gospel, the evangelist invites all people to come to the living Christ and receive a pardon for sin, a restored relationship with God, and eternal life. This is a very serious invitation. Those accepting this message will be acquitted, free
to leave the courtroom. Those who reject this offer will be found guilty and will, in the end, receive eternal punishment.

**Summary**

Elenetics means that all people addressed by the gospel are guided into God’s courtroom, to stand before God the Father. When someone embraces Christ as his redeemer, he will be rescued from God’s judgment. He can leave the courtroom as an acquitted person. The one who does not want to find shelter in Christ will stand condemned. Preaching the gospel will definitely change the lives of the receptors, either to life or to death. Mission is not a game. It requires one to make the ultimate choice (2 Cor. 2:14–16).

**Definition and Key Issues of Elenetics**

Elenetics is scientific reflection on the way in which we approach unbelievers in our missional task. Elenetics must unmask non-Christian ideologies as pseudo-religions and offer *elenchos* to the adherent of that pseudo-religion by proclaiming the gospel of Christ, so that the unbeliever will confess his guilt before God and will convert to faith in the Triune God. The goal of this elenctic calling is to rescue the unbeliever from God’s judgment and to reconcile him with God and man.

We now consider the main elements of this definition.

*Scientific Reflection*

Elenetics is a subdiscipline of missiology, and, as such, it bears the features of scientific study and reflection. This means that the statements and results of elenctic study are not just the personal view of the scholar. The missional approach is not one’s personal feelings, nor is it the articulation of so-called evangelical words. Rather, it is the serious study of the background and history of the unbeliever—his religion and worldview and his understanding and reaction to the gospel. The follow-up of this research is to study the entire gospel to understand grace and compare it with the unbeliever’s worldview. Therefore, though elenetics can involve practical steps on how to proceed, it can never be only a set of steps. The evangelist must study God’s Word because he will be held responsible for his witness.

*Unmask*

It goes without saying that every discussion, every explanation of the gospel, and every admonition and warning must be loving, empathetic, and humble on the part of the evangelist. Nevertheless, the task is to *unmask* the arguments that oppose the gospel. Elenetics will enter into the depths of the heart, evoke hidden motivations and prejudices, and penetrate to
the secrets of one’s life. Indeed, elenetics can be sharp like the surgeon’s knife that cuts away the rot to allow healing.

The gospel, properly preached, will unveil sin. It will reveal the nakedness of sinners before God. Then, with arms stretched out toward Jesus, one’s cry for help follows. However, strong opposition and fierce reaction will also surface. The lies regarding non-Christian ways of salvation will be exposed to the truth. Unmasking is delicate work. It separates lies from truth, light from darkness, white from black; it will reveal that which is deeply buried in a person’s soul. Elenetics impeaches the unbeliever’s unwillingness to accept Christ.

**Non-Christian Religion or Ideology**

The focus of elenetics is on people who do not believe in Christ. The issue, however, is the non-Christian religion, ideology, worldview, or conviction regarding salvation. In former days, missiologists used to mark the non-Christian religions as *pseudo-religions*, meaning *false* religions. This qualification did not stamp the non-Christian religion as bad or mean but as illegitimate. Such a view was based on the Christian conviction that only the Christian religion is the true religion because only the religion revealed in Scripture and in Christ can join people to God. The other religions might seem attractive and might seem to have much in common with Christianity, but, upon exploration, it becomes clear that the gap between the two types of religion is wide. Only one religion can guide humans to salvation; the others do not and cannot.

Added to the non-Christian religion we also have to deal with modern ideologies such as Marxism, socialism, capitalism, nationalism, tribalism, atheism and agnosticism, and so on. The main feature of ideologies is their rejection of a belief in God; fundamentally they are nontheistic. However, the impact of an ideology is more or less like a religion. Adherents believe that this ideology leads them to a new world, offers a kind of salvation, and provides hope and endurance in difficult situations. In a way, this ideology is a substitute for religion. As such, the ideology provides a *false* hope, a *pseudo-hope*. Now, elenetics has to unmask the claims of this ideology in order to persuade the adherent to convert and believe in the one and only Savior, Jesus Christ.

**The Elengchos (Rebuttal)**

The evangelist’s task is to rebut the unbeliever’s convictions. However, this rebuttal is definitely not a mere logical argument. Although there will be a comparison between the non-Christian religion and the gospel, this comparison will take the form of a rational look at the differences along with a sensitivity toward the unbeliever. Here is where elenetics differs from apologetics; elenetics will use apologetic arguments, but it will also reach into the unbeliever’s deepest feeling and irrational convictions about life and death.
Elengchos is the core of elenctics. The evangelist, because of the study of the gospel, will first try to understand why this specific unbeliever does not want to surrender to the love of Christ: Why does he or she refuse? What keeps him or her from overcoming his objections? Here, we touch the fundamental issue of mission: Why does a person not stretch out his arms to the Savior of the world and open his heart to the love of Jesus Christ? As long as this question remains unanswered, there is no conversion.

To use a surgical metaphor, the elengchos is the scalpel that will cut into the unbeliever’s convictions. The evangelist knows well this pain, having experienced it while an unbeliever. Because the evangelist has experienced the pain, he or she is uniquely qualified to “operate” on the unbeliever. The evangelist’s own experience of elengchos enables him or her to go beyond rational understanding to be able to see grace at work in the heart of a sinner. In the end, and through the presentation of the gospel, it is impossible for the unbeliever to deny the facts of Jesus’ saving work, but he or she can still refuse the gospel.

The deepest resistance to the gospel lies not in one’s lack of understanding but in the will to remain in unbelief. (We admit here that the theology of election lies behind conversion, but we limit ourselves to the task of the evangelist and the responsibility of the unbeliever.) After the elengchos, the evangelist can go no further. The unbeliever must choose salvation or reject it.

Calling with the Gospel

Closely related to the topic of elenctics is the calling of the gospel. The evangelist does not try to overrule with bare facts; he invites the unbeliever to come face to face with the crucified and resurrected Christ. Sometimes this can be accomplished by reading a Scripture passage, but usually it will done through the changed life of the evangelist—a loving demonstration of the gospel. This is key. The evangelist who reads Scripture, studies Scripture, and prays the Spirit for himself will have an open heart for Jesus and a deep love for the unbeliever. When the Spirit is working, the unbeliever will be convinced of the need for the gospel because of the evangelist’s life.

With regard to this function of elenctics, it becomes clear that it is not a defensive tool but an offensive discipline; offensive—not in the sense of an attack—but in the sense of proclaiming the gospel to an unbelieving world and penetrating the lives of unbelievers. The history of mission started on Pentecost. From that moment, the apostles went out to their neighbors and to the regions beyond Israel. They encountered other people, proclaimed the gospel, and visited men and women in their homes. It was a gentle attack on the world with love and mercy. Elenctics is merely the means and strategy to fulfill the task.
Confession of Guilt

Because elenetics unmasks the sinner’s real situation before God, the issue becomes whether or not the unbeliever will persist in his or her unbelief. The task of elenetics is to get the sinner to admit personal sin, confessing his or her lost condition, and repent before God. Although confession is connected to conversion, it deserves special attention. The evangelist guides the unbeliever to recognize that her or his particular religious ideology is opposition and rebellion against God.

Conversion to the Triune God

In 1 Thessalonians 1:9, Paul states that the believers at Thessalonica “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (NIV). This is the focus of all mission work. Conversion is a double action—deny the pseudo-god, the idol, and rush to the one true God who is not hidden. He has revealed himself in Christ through the Scriptures. Together with the Spirit, he is the triune God. No other religion confesses this triune God—the basis of Christianity.

Goal

All of elenetics is focused on the sinner’s salvation and, ultimately, the glorification of God’s grace and eternal love. However, this is not to deny the reality of God’s judgment. First Thessalonians 1:10 is a summary of Paul’s missional preaching. The announcement of God’s judgment, mentioned in that verse, is an indispensible element of missional activity (cf. Acts 17:31). It manifested God’s love and mercy when he visited Adam and Eve in Paradise and when he revealed their sin and banned them from the garden.

Even more, both God’s love and God’s judgment are revealed at the cross of Jesus. His death demonstrated that God’s anger and judgment on the human race was particularly serious and righteous. The fact that Jesus became the Mediator between God and humans and became the reconciler of sin demonstrated the wondrous divine love and sovereign free grace of God for his people.

This reconciliation restores all broken relationships. First is humanity’s relationship with God. When relationship is restored, God promises that the believer will escape eternal punishment. This communion and unity with God is without fear and is manifested in the worship and adoration of God, in the midst of his people, assembled together at the Lord’s Supper.

Second, this divine reconciliation affects relationships among humans. The new believer will live in community with other believers, which will bring peace and unity to Christ’s church on earth. It is their joyful obligation to care about one another as they journey toward the full manifestation of the kingdom of God at the end of time. Mutual relationships among
Christians have their own features and specific strengths, and conversion provides one with a new attitude toward fellow humans. The believer loves both God and neighbor because his or her life has been transformed. Even though transformation on this earth is temporary, it is the foretaste of a redeemed world where humans will love, adore, and glorify God, and enjoy him forever.

**Result**

It is natural that the evangelist wants to see results. Therefore, it is his hope that the unbeliever will repent and accept Christ. He regularly prays for their salvation, asking for the work of the Spirit in their hearts, but he will stand back and wait on the Spirit to do his work. He cannot predict whether or not the gospel will be accepted, nor can he force acceptance. The most he can do is to bring the unbeliever to the cross of Jesus and ask: “Who do you think Jesus really is?” Can the unbeliever reject Jesus’ love? Will he just continue in unbelief? Or, will he kneel before the cross, confess his guilt, and cry out for forgiveness and grace?

The evangelist’s last word has been spoken. The Spirit picks up the dialogue with the unbeliever. Only the Spirit can open the unbeliever’s heart to believe in Christ whether immediately or in the future. Behind all lies the love that God has for his chosen ones. There is, however, another scenario: Many who have heard the gospel do not repent, do not convert, and do not believe because he or she is unwilling to bow for the Creator and Judge of the universe.

This shows the other side of the gospel coin, which is hard for the missionary-evangelist to bear and even harder for the unbeliever. There is a twofold outcome of the process of elenetics. At the end of world history will be the judgment day. There will be persons at the right hand of the Lord and at the left hand. Those who have been elected and prepared for eternal life will enjoy eternal communion with their Savior on the new earth. The others who did not want to be in communion with Christ will be condemned to everlasting judgment in hell.

In view of this, let us be silent, our hands over our mouths. We stand before the Judge and Savior of the world. We adore his wisdom and accept his judgment. Here, we encounter the deepest reason for elenetics, the deepest reason as to why the evangelist warns people against this final judgment. God is very serious: serious in sending his Son, serious in the offer of Christ’s death for our sins, serious in his resurrection from the grave, and serious in pouring out the Spirit to equip the church to go evangelize the world. The fact that this world lies condemned even though the gospel proclaims salvation from God’s ultimate penalty, gives the evangelist all the more courage to continue to proclaim the only escape God presents to the world: Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, Lord of lords, at the right hand of God the Father (Phil. 2:11).
Summary of Elenctics

The practice of elenctics is evidence of God’s love for unbelievers. Why does the evangelist proclaim this love? Because he or she knows all too well his or her own sinful condition apart from Christ, standing condemned before God’s throne if he himself does not take shelter with Jesus Christ. Knowing this, he reaches out to the unbeliever, aiming to protect him from God’s wrath.

Indeed, elenctics is combat. However, it is not combat to kill but to rescue. Satan attacks to “kill.” The divine struggle is driven by God’s love and is inspired by the wondrous sacrifice of Christ; a sacrifice that was made out of love for all of humanity. The coming judgment at the end of times is real. Let, then, the messengers of the gospel, the soldiers of peace, go into the world to rescue and to heal.

Elenctics is also the anticipation of the day of judgment. The evangelist is called to bring humans before the throne of God where the person will be judged if he did not glorify God nor give thanks to him for the goodness he showed (Rom. 1:21). On that day, the unbeliever cannot wipe away unbelief; therefore, the accusation is justified. Before that day, however, there is the crucified Christ who is willing to protect unbelievers from God’s punishment. What will the unbeliever decide? Embrace Christ as his or her personal Savior, or reject this offer of love.

After the evangelist has proclaimed the gospel, disputed the objections, listened to the deepest convictions of the unbelievers, and repeatedly demonstrated by word and deed the love of Christ, he needs to stand back. The battle is between the unbeliever and God. She or he is brought before God’s throne. Having been shown Christ, he or she must now surrender, repent, and believe, or remain in unbelief and the judgment of death.

Elenctics is a serious discipline. The outcome, of course, rests with God. There is no other road to acquittal, no other path to freedom, no other way to salvation and eternal life except in Christ Jesus.