

Section One

Apologetics

Chapter One

Introduction to Apologetics

APOLOGETICS IS THE area of Christian study that defends and proves the truth of Christianity. Our English word “apologetics” comes from the Greek word apologia which means “to defend” or “to make a defense.” It was used in the Greek language to refer to an argument of defense in court during a judicial interrogation.

The Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament describes it this way, “The word was often used of the argument for the defense in a court of law and though the word may have the idea of a judicial interrogation in which one is called to answer for the manner in which he has exercised his responsibility, the word can also mean an informal explanation or defense of one’s position and the word would aptly describe giving an answer to the skeptical, abusive or derisive inquires of ill-disposed neighbors.”

This word is used by Peter in 1 Peter 3:15:

*“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer (**apologia**) to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.”*

Peter is telling believers that they should be prepared to present evidence for their hope in Christianity. This evidence can include what Jesus has done for them personally, as in a personal testimony, but it should also be able go beyond personal feeling and experience.

The word apologia is used by Paul in Colossians 4:6:

“Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer (apologia) everyone.”

Here the word “conversation” refers to daily life.

Acts 22:1:

“Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense (apologia).”

Philippians 1:7:

“For whether I am in chains or defending (apologia) and confirming the gospel . . .”

In the above verse the word “defending” (apologia) is for the skeptical unbeliever. The word “confirming” is in regard to the believer who believes but is under the continual assault of a doubting world.

In Titus 1:7, 9 and 2 Timothy 2:24-25 the overseer and the “Lord’s servant” must be willing to “refute those who oppose truth” and “instruct those who oppose” his teaching.

2 Corinthians 10:5:

“We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

This verse indicates that part of the role of apologetics is to attack or to go on the offense against false philosophies.

Areas of apologetics that we will look at in this study and throughout this book are:

1. The uniqueness of Christianity
2. The uniqueness of Jesus Christ
3. The authenticity of the New Testament
4. The authenticity of the Old Testament
5. Philosophical proof for the existence of God
6. Scientific proof for the existence of God
7. Scientific support for the Bible
8. Archeological evidence for the accuracy of Scripture

Usefulness of Apologetics

1. Confirm your own faith
2. Withstand attacks of unbelief and skeptics in or out of the church
3. Testify to the truth more knowledgeably
4. Influence and enlighten people in a secular and skeptical society

Warnings to the Apologist

1. Cold Caution: An apologist can become cold and intellectual. Avoid this. Keep it personal and relevant.
2. Holy Spirit Caution: Arguing a person to acceptance does not replace the Holy Spirit’s conviction. You can win the battle of the debate but still lose the war for a person’s soul.
3. Accuracy Caution: An incomplete or inaccurate recital of hearsay will evoke a sarcastic rejection and become stumbling stones in the skeptics’ field.

Some People's Objections to Using Apologetics

All of these are unwarranted objections to apologetics. Many of these are true statements, but when taken out of context and misapplied they lose their veracity.

1. The Bible does not need to be defended.
2. God can't be known by human reason. (Understand that God's existence is revealed by reason. God's plan is revealed by revelation. Apologetics deals with reason.)
3. Natural humanity can't understand God.
4. Without faith no one can please God.
5. Jesus refused to give signs to evil men.
6. Proverbs 26:4, "Do not answer a fool according to his folly."
7. Apologetics is not used in the Bible. (See Acts 17:2 where Paul reasoned with the Jews, and Acts 17:22-33 where he reasoned with the philosophers at the Areopagus in Athens.)

Solid Faith

There is no such thing as blind faith, at least not in the good or useful sense of the phrase. God has always provided enough evidence for you to put your faith in something: his actions, his existence, his word, Jesus' miracles, etc.

An unexamined faith is not worth keeping. When opposition comes, an unexamined belief system or blind faith will quickly collapse and be replaced by something that seems more defensible.

Evidence of the truth will produce faith. Romans 10:17 says:

"Faith comes from hearing the message."

A rational person needs evidence that God exists before he will believe that God exists. Romans 1:19-20 says:

"Since what may be known about God is plain to them because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made so that men are without excuse."

In Matthew 22:37, Jesus says:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind.”

Point: The heart cannot truly believe what the mind rejects.

The Christian faith goes beyond reason but never against it.

2 Timothy 1:12 says:

“I know whom I have believed.”

Some Misconceptions Concerning Faith

Blind Faith

False Statement: Christianity is blind faith or intellectual suicide.

Truth: The Christian faith is based on evidence, and God has always intended it to be that way. Consider: creation, the parting of the Red Sea, Jesus’ miracles, etc.

Objective Faith

False Statement: If you believe something then it is true to you. That is your faith.

Truth: It is not how great you believe something that makes it true, but believing something that is true that makes your faith great. The value of the Christian faith is not in the one believing, but in the one who is believed in. Jesus is the object of our faith.

Ancient Myths

False Statement: There is virtually no difference between Greek mythology and Christian stories.

Truth: All ancient myths have been exposed long ago, but it is common to see the secular world still trying to undermine Christianity even today. After all the ancient religions have fallen to skeptics, Christianity is still alive and under attack. Myths never claim to have eyewitnesses as Christianity does in 2 Peter 1:16, 1 John 1:1-3, Luke 1:1-3, Acts 1:3, and 1 Corinthians 15:5,6. The Apostles did not try to convince the public of Jesus’ life and death but appealed to them by asking them to recall what they themselves had seen (as in Acts 2:22 and Acts 26:24-28).

Philosophical Presuppositions

One of our challenges today is that the modern approach to history is rooted in the philosophical presupposition that there is no God. A presupposition is what a person believes before the evidence is looked at. Often a person’s presupposition does not allow him to accept the clear evidence or the truth he is being presented. This applies not only to non-believers but is an issue for all people including Christians who have presuppositions concerning the interpretation of Scripture.

Modern historians who presume there is no God consider the gospel account of Jesus and his life as inaccurate because of the miracles and supernatural events. The

modern philosophical presupposition is that we live in a closed system in which nothing supernatural exists. So the modern world begins its “fair and open-minded” investigation of biblical history by rejecting any reference to God or the supernatural.

The result is that many times modern skeptics are not debating the Christian faith from a position of knowledge or evidence but from presupposed assumptions they refuse to give up. Much of the time this is a reflection of their hearts and not their minds.

Faith and Reason

Reason moves the will from the outside. Faith is when a heart gives assent to the evidence. Faith then moves the will from the inside. This is why demons can see the evidence but will not be moved by it (James 2:19). They are against the evidence. Reason can prove that God exists but cannot convince the unbeliever to believe in God. Reason allows us to confront the unbeliever with the evidence of truth.

Reason is like describing the sun to a blind man. He feels the warmth, eats the crops, but can't see the sun. Faith (or revelation) is like the blind man receiving sight and seeing the sun for himself.

Chapter Two

Uniqueness of Christianity

CHRISTIANITY IS THE only true religion among many religions.

The Bible Claims Uniqueness

- ONLY GOD: The God of the Bible is the only true God (Jeremiah 10:10-12).
- ONLY WAY: Christ is the only way to God (John 14:6).
- ONLY WORD: The Bible is the only true revelation from God (Isaiah 8:20).
- ONLY HOPE: Faith in Jesus is the only way of salvation (Acts 4:12; Galatians 1:9).

Christianity Has a Unique Historical Basis

- Christianity is not based on Jesus' teachings but on Jesus, who he is, the person of Christ, the Son of God. Salvation is not in the teachings of Jesus but in Jesus himself.
- Islam is based on the teachings of a man, Mohammed, not on Mohammed himself.
- Buddhism is based on the teachings of the Buddha.
- Confucianism is based on the teachings of Confucius.

Christianity Has a Unique Account of Origins

- Christianity describes the origin of the universe as a special creation by an eternal, omnipotent, personal God. In comparison, other religions are weak when discussing the topic of origins. No other religion goes back to the absolute beginning before anything existed. All other religions merely discuss

the reforming of pre-existent material.

- Babylonian religions began with a primeval chaotic mixture of three waters.
- Egyptian religion assumes an initial watery chaos from which everything evolved.
- Greek mythology describes a chaos of water at the beginning.
- Roman writers describe a beginning from a universal, blind interplay of atoms.
- Secular humanism supports a sophisticated process of evolution of pre-existing material.

No other cosmogony (theory of creation) goes beyond what currently exists back to the First Cause. All other cosmogonies begin with space, matter and time already in existence. None can answer the question, "Where did this all come from?" The Bible gives a reasonable explanation: This vast and complex physical universe came from an eternal, omnipotent and personal God.

- An Eternal God explains the concept of time.
- An Infinite God is the adequate cause of space.
- An Omnipotent God accounts for the existence of power and matter.
- An Omniscient God explains intelligence and order of creation.
- A Personal God is why there is life, personality and freewill within creation.

Evolution or a primeval chaos with colliding atoms cannot explain any of these things: time, space, power, matter, intelligence, order, life, personality or freewill.