



A P O L O G E T I C S

201

WHAT IS APOLOGETICS

AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

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Peter 3:15 “Always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect...”

The word for “defense” is where we get our word apology, it means a defense like you would make in a court of law.

This class will cover how to make a defense to various things such as:

- the existence of God,
- the proof of the resurrection of Jesus,
- the reliability of the scriptures,
- competing systems of thought,
- what some call the “problems” of a biblical position.

Apologetics can accomplish great things regarding the truth of Christianity because it seeks to answer honest questions, but also expose dishonest questions, all the while building the faith of believers.

Jude 3 Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

Our hope for this Element U:

- Equip and prepare you “to contend earnestly for the faith.”
- Help you define a biblical base for a Christian apologetic (defense).
- Help you formulate an apologetic adequate for personal assurance.
- Help you have confidence in the claims of your position.
- Help you critically evaluate systems of thought that compete for the minds of men.
- Help you consider solutions to the major problems that confront the biblical position today.

Apologetics is typically broken into two parts:

- The **Argument** - Who is God? Why is the Bible considered to be authoritative? Was Jesus who Christians say He was?
- The **Evidences** - This is who God has revealed Himself to be. This is why we believe the Bible is authoritative. This is the evidence for Jesus.

Apologetics is a discipline that tries to answer the question, “What rational defense can be given for the Christian faith.”

Apologetics is first about evangelism, not trying to win arguments. Douglas Wilson says, “*Win the man, not the argument.*” Our goal is not to win anything other than people to Christ. Arguments can (and should) play a role in the public work of evangelism, which is why apologetics consists of more than just smiling at people and being sweet. Wilson says, “*Argument plays a role, but argumentation is a sharp tool, and a tool is something that a craftsman should—if he wants to keep all his fingers—understand fully in order to wield it properly.*”

Apologetics starts with a look at our own hearts. **2 Timothy 2:24-26** *“And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.”* Paul is not saying “DON’T ARGUE,” but there is more involved. Followers of Jesus are to have a certain demeanor, one calculated to be used by God to change people’s hearts and minds. When someone argues for the Gospel he must know to do it “with gentleness.”

Acts 18:27-28 *“And when [Apollos] wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.”* In this passage we don’t have any indication that the men in this debate were ever convinced, or won over, but we are told that the believers were encouraged by the refutation of the arguments that were being offered against the truth that Jesus was the Christ.

2 types of apologetics

1. Offensive (positive)

- Seek to present a positive case for Christian truth claims
- Can be broken down into natural theology and Christian evidences
- Classical examples of their argument would be based on ontological, cosmological, , teleological, and moral arguments for the existence of God.
- They would use Christian evidences that include fulfilled prophecy, the claims of Jesus and the historical reliability of the Gospels.
- The goal is to show that there are good reasons to think that Christianity is true.

1. Defensive (or negative)

- Seeks to obliterate objections to Christian truth claims.
- Goal is to show that no good reason has been given to not believe Christianity is true.

C.S. Lewis said (Paraphrase) *“If I have two competing and contradictory instincts, an evolutionary approach can account for each of those instincts (say, self-preservation and herd preservation). What it cannot account for is a third instinct that tells me which of the first two instincts I ought to obey in this instance. I do not have an “umpire” instinct that decides between them.”* - A conscience cannot be accounted for apart from God.

Epistemology - the branch of philosophy that asks how we can know that we actually know anything.

- Rationalism - claims to knowledge based on objective reason.
- Empiricism - knowledge derived out of experience.
- Revelation: God made a point of telling us who He is and what He wants.

Belief in God’s revelation does not exclude reason or experience—it creates an appropriate place for them.

An epistemology of revelation

- God has spoken in the created order.
- God has spoken through His apostles, prophets, and martyrs. (We have their accounts in Scripture, the only ultimate and infallible book in the world).
- God has spoken to us through His Son, Jesus.

Different types Apologetics:

- **BIBLICAL APOLOGETICS** - include issues concerned with the authorship and date of biblical books.
- **PHILOSOPHICAL APOLOGETICS** - concerns itself primarily with arguments for the existence of God.

These arguments can be grouped into several categories:

1. Cosmological argument – Argues that the existence of the universe demonstrates that God exists.
2. Teleological argument – Argues that there is a purposeful design in the world around us, and a design requires a designer.
3. Ontological argument – Argues that the very concept of God demands that there is an actual existent God.
4. Moral Argument – Argues that if there are any real objectively valid moral values, then there must be an absolute from which they are derived.
5. Transcendental Argument – Argues that all our abilities to think and reason, require the existence of God.
6. Presuppositional Arguments – Argues that the basic beliefs of theists and non-theists require God as a necessary precondition.

- **PRESUPPOSITIONAL APOLOGETICS** - claims that presuppositions are essential to any philosophical position, and that there are no “neutral” assumptions from which a Christian can reason with a non-Christian.

- **MORAL APOLOGETICS** - states that real moral obligation is a fact.

Peter Kreeft said, “We are really, truly, objectively obligated to do good and avoid evil.”



- **SCIENTIFIC APOLOGETICS** - Contends that science and the Bible do not contradict each other, and that scientific fact supports Christian apologetics.
- **CREATION APOLOGETICS** - include young earth creationism, old earth creationism, and theistic evolution.
- **EXPERIENTIAL APOLOGETICS** - An appeal “primarily, if not exclusively, to experience as evidence for Christian faith.”

Three vital roles for apologetics

1. Shaping Culture

- Western culture is deeply in need of objective, reasoned truth.
- It is the apologists task to show that Christianity is still a viable rational optional belief in this culture

J Gresham Machen “False ideas are the greatest obstacles to the reception of the Gospel. We may preach with all the fervor of a reformer and yet succeed only in winning a straggler here and there, if we permit the whole collective thought of the nation to be controlled by ideas which prevent Christianity from being regarded as anything more than a harmless delusion”

2. Strengthening believers

- Parents need to be intellectually astute to answer questions their kids have.
- In many people lives apologetics has helped in their perseverance of faith
- Apologetics is a tremendous boost to evangelism

3. Evangelizing unbelievers

- There are people who are saved through hearing apologetics.

What do Good apologists have in common:

Augustine

- He held Scripture in higher authority than the church.
- He asserts that one must believe before he can know.
- Reason has a role.

Thomas Aquinas

- There are truths that surpass human reason (the Trinity), others within reason (existence of God)
- Truths of reason can be «seen» and truths of faith must be believed.

Karl Barth (1886-1968)

- God reveals Himself in nature and scripture.
- The authority of the Word of God is the foundation of religious belief.

Alvin Plantinga

- Belief in God is rational wholly apart from any evidence.
- Belief in God is properly basic.
- Man naturally apprehends Gods existence.

Two Types of arguments:

Deductive Argument - an argument that is intended by the arguer to be (deductively) *valid*, that is, to provide a *guarantee* of the truth of the conclusion provided that the argument's premises (assumptions) are true.

Inductive Arguments - is reasoning in which the premises seek to supply strong evidence for (not absolute proof of) the truth of the conclusion.

Ultimately, we must remember that it all rests in the hands of God. The role of the Holy Spirit is paramount in showing Christianity to be true

- If someone has objections to Christianity or questions we shouldn't just preach the gospel but use rational argumentation at same time.
- It is true that we can never argue someone into the Kingdom of Heaven
 - Don't focus on the argument more than the person.
 - Don't let apologetics get in the way of sharing the gospel.
 - Use rational argumentation after sharing the gospel.
 - Our primary aim in evangelism should be to present Christ.

Apologetics are about the Gospel

What is mission for you and me...it is the life purpose of a saved person.

- We are hospitable,
- We open our homes,
- We share meals,
- We help with needs,
- We become inclusive by seeking people for relationships,
- We live with authenticity and don't compartmentalize our faith.

This is how apologetics is effective...we live the apologetic with our lives and our reasoning both.

Spaces



Further Reading

William Lane Craig: On Guard

Francis Schaeffer: He Is There and He Is not Silent.

Greg Bahnsen: Always Ready.

Craig Blomberg: The Historical Reliability of the Gospels

Douglas Groothuis: Christian Apologetics

My Notes: