

Doctrine of Apologetics

The Christian's Response to Her Critics

1. The term apologetics comes from a Greek word, *apologia*, which means, "to give a replay" or, "to give an answer."
 - *1 Peter 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: 16 Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.*

Special Note.

Justin Martyr fulfilled this apostolic command when he wrote his First Apology (c. 155 BC) in order to defend the Christians against many false criticisms such as atheism, immorality, and disloyalty to the Roman Empire.

On February 22, AD 155, just prior to his death, Polycarp, the Bishop of Smyrna and former disciple of John, was given an opportunity to renounce Christ. Polycarp replied, "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and he never did me any injury; how then can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?"

2. There was a need for an intellectual defense of the gospel which gave to humanity a new world view to take the place of Greek Stoicism, Epicureanism, and other philosophical systems which were destroying humanity.
3. In the city of Athens, Paul, who saw the city given to idolatry, gave a defense of the gospel.
 - *Acts 17:16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. 17 Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.*
4. The basis of the early defense of the Christians, was the Logos who was with God, and who was God.
 - *John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*
5. The importance of the Christian concept of the Logos, was that it challenged the Greek philosophy of the Logos in their quest for unity and diversity in the universe.

Special Note.

The “one” and the “many” has perplexed the mind of man for centuries as the mystery of life, and all there is, is explored. What is the cause for the diversity that is all around us? Is there something, or Someone, who has made all this? Even an atheist, such as Carl Sagan, in his book, *Cosmos*, realized that there has to be some overarching principle to the universe that brings unity to diversity, or there will be chaos.

The world has order. It fits together. It makes sense. In Greek thought, the organizing principle was called the Logic, or the Logos. When John spoke of the Logos, he brought revelation to the concept by saying the Logos was God and God was manifested in the person of Jesus Christ.

- *John 1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.*

6. Some begin their apologetics with a defense of sacred Scripture. This approach can be exasperating when a person does not want to know truth, but only desires to debate due to a bias against Christianity. Nevertheless, in a spirit of meekness and fear, a defense of the gospel must be given, in order to stop the mouths of the critics.

- *Titus 1:11 Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.*

Special Note.

There is a positive approach, there is an offensive approach to apologetics whereby a Christian can present in a coherent way the truth claims of Christ. When this is done and the Lord blesses the labor of heart, souls saved and sanctified, and the kingdom of God is advanced.

7. Others begin apologetics with establishing a rationale argument for the existence of God.
8. Some argue that no rational defense should be given for the Bible or God, but presuppose these things as self-authenticating. The Bible cannot be subjected to any higher authority.
9. It is believed that to argue from anything other than a presuppositional position makes the other evidentiary material superior to God and the Bible. An intrinsic authority cannot be subjected to something else.
10. There is a bumper sticker which reads, “God says it, I believe it, which settles it.” But that is wrong. The bumper sticker should read, “God says it, that settles it.”
11. From an apologetic point of view, the God who exists is to be shown to be, and to have spoken.

12. The problem of self-authenticating apologetics is not satisfactory for three reasons.
- It can be argued that the self-authenticating approach is circulatory reasoning and therefore self-defeating.
 - It can be noted that there are other books claiming to be the Word of God, such as the Book of Mormons, and the Koran. Why are their claims not authentic? How can the fraudulent be exposed and the true be established?
 - In the end, God authenticates the real message that is from Him by miracles.
 - ❖ Moses asked this question – and his hand turned to leprosy. His staff turned into a snake. The tricks of the magicians were devoured by the real miracle of God.
 - ❖ In the NT we have Nicodemus and Jesus. We know you are from God by the works you do.
 - ❖ Jesus said believe me for the works I do.
 - ❖ The authority of the apostles was established by their wonders and powers.
13. The function of miracles is not to prove the existence of God, but to give credibility to those who say they are speaking for God.
14. Naturalistic philosophy starts out the presupposition that there are no miracles and so there is no God. Any miracles must be false. The Bible must be wrong because it declares miracles are in it.
15. The starting point for the apologist is the claims of the Bible. The Bible claims to be the Word of God and elevates the stake. So the question is, is the Bible inspired. What is the evidence?
- The Bible claims Christ is the Son of God
 - The Bible claims that Calvary is not a criminal being killed but atonement being made.
 - The Bible claims that Jesus was raised from the dead after three days.
 - The Bible claims that Jesus ascended into heaven.
16. These events could have happened without the Bible. But, if proven true, the Bible bears witness to them and so the credibility of the Scriptures is established on an objective basis and not a subjective basis.
17. The question of authority is the heart of the issue. In a dissertation the argument must be logical but also well documented. A legitimate authority gives credibility.

18. In sacred Scripture, we are looking for the Absolute Authority, we are looking for a Source that is omniscient, infallible, incorruptible and righteous, incapable of lying or erring or defect of any kind. We are looking for God.
19. Neither the church nor the world has agreed upon a common Authority. The Bible is attacked as the final authority.