

Doctrine of Apologetics

Why Apologetics?

1. An Apologetical defense of the gospel is a legitimate undertaking when sincere questions are raised about the Christian faith.
2. Sometimes, individuals do not want to hear the truth, they do not want an honest answer to their charges against the church, they simply want to remain biased, and hostile to the gospel.
3. There is the positive task of Apologetics, whereby the church provides for society a philosophical framework for life.
4. Christians have disagreed where to start in Apologetics.
 - Some believe the starting point is to establish the existence of God through rational argumentation.
 - Some believe the starting point is history, focusing on the resurrection.
 - Some believe the starting point is man.
 - Some believe the starting point is the Bible.
5. Christians have disagreed on whether or not to even start a discussion in Apologetics, since the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God.
 - *1 Corinthians 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*
6. While it is true that the natural man cannot receive the truths of God apart from the regenerating Spirit of God illuminating the heart and mind, Apologetics should still be engaged, because it is the known will of the Lord to do so.
 - *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.*
7. One of the great Apologists of the church was John Calvin who wrote, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Though Calvin realized the unbeliever cannot understand spiritual matters, he wrote his work to stop the mouths of the skeptics, not to convert their hearts.
8. Today, the truth claims of Christianity are objected to, and ridiculed. Nevertheless, the mouths of the skeptics can still be stopped by a reasonable response.
9. Scholars may not agree with Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, or Jonathan Edwards, but rarely do they ridicule these intellectual titans.

10. During the Middle Ages, Christianity was viewed as the Queen of the Science, and Philosophy was her handmaiden.
11. The purpose of Apologetics is to restrain the mouths of the ungodly. There is a rationale to Christianity that can put to open shame the unbelieving community.
 - *Psalms 14:1 To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David. The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.*
12. Today, the person who believes in God is considered by the world to be foolish. This is partly due to the fact the church has surrendered the tools, or the weapons of spiritual warfare, she once had to defend herself.
13. Christianity is rational, and it is scientific, despite the charge of the ungodly that Christianity is neither.
14. The truth is, it is irrational to deny the existence of God. It is unscientific to reject the historic truth claims of Christianity.
15. The church does not have to surrender rational thought, and empirical scientific data to the unbelieving world. God will give to individuals the mind, and the wisdom, to understand Himself, His creation, and the truth claims of Christianity.
16. By reclaiming rational thought, and empirical scientific data for Christ, some individuals can move from credulity, or superstition, to authentic faith. In other words, some people believe the right thing, but for the wrong reason. Apologetics provide confidence for faith.
17. In his Apologetical writings, John Calvin made an important distinction between proof and persuasion.
18. Calvin knew that a large amount of evidence could be marshalled to prove the truth claims of Christ, and Christianity. But, this proof would not necessarily be persuasive. Why? Because the heart of the unbeliever is biased against God, and will not be persuaded by human effort.

Special Note.

Jesus pointed this out in a conversation between Abraham and a rich man, who wanted Lazarus to return from the dead, and preach to his brethren.

- *Luke 16:23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. 25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.*

19. The task of the church is not to persuade, but to prove what it asserts. Only God can persuade. Only God can grant eternal life.

“People convinced against their will,
hold their original opinion still.”

20. Without the work of the Spirit, people will not surrender their ignorance, nor give up their bias against God. The gospel is an offense.

- *1 Corinthians 1:18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. 20 Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? 21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. 22 For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: 23 But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; 24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*

21. The heart of a Christian Apologist can be comforted with the knowledge that a person knows whether or not they prevail in an argument. The unbeliever may not acknowledge the truth, but he knows that his arguments against God, against Christ, and against the church, have failed.

22. When the mouth of a skeptic is silenced through Biblical apologetics, younger Christians are encouraged in their faith. If Satan can paralyze a Christian, he does not need to destroy a person's faith. Spiritual neutralizing is an effective satanic tool.