

Apologetics: An Introduction and Overview

By Dr. Gary M. Gulan, ©1992

Introduction: Apologetics assists the Christian defend the truths of Christianity and gives an answer for the hope of Christianity.

There are five areas that will help introduce you to the field of apologetics.

1. DEFINITION OF APOLOGETICS

A. The New Testament Usage:

1. a “defense” (Gr. “apologia”) Acts 22:1; Phil. 1:7,17
2. an “answer” (Gr. “apologia”) Acts 25:16; 1 Cor. 9:3; 2 Tim. 4:16; 1 Peter 3:15
3. a “clearing of one's self” (Gr. “apologia”) 2 Cor. 7:11
4. an “answer” (Gr. “apologeomai”) Luke 12:11; 21:14; Acts 24:10; 25:8; 26:1,2
5. “make a defense” (Gr. “apologeomai”) Acts 19:33
6. an “excuse” (Gr. “apologeomai”) Romans 2:15; 2 Cor. 12:19
7. to “speak for one's self” (Gr. “apologeomai”) Acts 26:24

(Greek-English Concordance To The New Testament{.ul off} by J. B. Smith, Scottdale: Herald Press, 1977, page 36).

B. An English Dictionary Definition:

“Explaining or defending in speech or writing,” the branch of theology that deals with the defense and proof of Christianity,” “a formal defense or justification.”

(The American Heritage Dictionary{.ul off} Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975, page 61.)

C. Technical Descriptions:

1. “The Greek word ‘apologia’ was employed classically as a technical term in law. It referred to that case which the defendant presented on the basis of testimonial and material evidence. A defense, then as now, depended squarely on the factual evidence marshaled...”

(Faith Founded On Fact by John Warwick Montgomery, Nashville: Nelson, 1978, page X, from a Evidential Apologetic approach.)

2. “Apologetics is the reasoned defense of the Christian religion.” “As a science it is putting together of the data common to all Christians in a consistent and scientific whole. It explains why Christians are Christians and why non-Christians should be Christians.”

(Classical Apologetics by R.C. Spoul, John Gerstner, and Arthur Lindsley, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984, page 13 and 16, from a Presuppositional Apologetic approach.)

2. TYPES OF APOLOGETICS

There are many different philosophical approaches to apologetics, but two main Christian approaches are:

A. Evidential Apologetics:

Which begins by arguing the existence of God from natural revelation. This approach is basically Arminian based in its theology. It places a great deal of emphasis on testability and factual assertions trying to appeal to the reasoning ability of man. Popular adherents are: Charles Hodge,

B.B. Warfield, Clark Pinnock, Gordon Lewis, Henry Morris, Josh McDowell, and John W. Montgomery.

B. Presuppositional Apologetics:

Which presupposes the existence of God or starts with the fact that God does exist and cannot be proven by reason. This approach is basically Calvinistic or Reformed in its theology. It believes many things are not totally provable outside of special revelation and must be taken by faith.

Popular adherents: John Gerstner, R. C. Spoul, Arthur Lindsley, Cornelius VanTil, Herman Dooyeweerd, and Robert Knudson.

3. BENEFITS FROM STUDYING APOLOGETICS

- A. It will confirm and solidify the students Faith.
- B. It will enable the student to withstand the attacks of rationalistic and irrationalistic unbelief.
- C. It will prepare the student to witness more knowledgeably.
- D. It will equip the student to challenge the pervasive attitudes of skepticism and unbelief.
- E. It will deepen the students appreciation of the truth of God's Word and its integrity.
- F. It will strengthen the students stand on the integrity of God.
(Many Infallible Proofs by Henry Morris, CLP: San Diego, 1974, page 2.)

4. VALUE OF APOLOGETICS

- A. It seeks to break through the rational defenses of the unregenerate heart.
- B. It seeks to weaken the trust placed in the flesh.
- C. It seeks to challenge the security that "self" has developed.
- D. It seeks to offer an alternative viewpoint that the world has overlooked.

V. LIMITATIONS WITHIN THE USAGE OF APOLOGETICS

- A. One can't adequately prepare to defend Christianity, God and the Bible against every known reason of attack, (the only true defense we can offer is concerning the faith that lies within us, 1 Peter 3:15).
- B. One can't argue someone into heaven or rationalize someone into accepting Christ as Savior, (the Spirit must convict them, John 16:7-11).
- C. Not everyone will respond positively to the truth defended, (example: Acts 17:5; 18:6).
- D. The Bible provides insurmountable information that can't be known from the study of nature or proved with scientific reason, (there is a place where reason ends and faith must take over, Hebrews 11:1-3).

E. An inner spiritual change is needed to fully understand special revelation, (example: Acts 8:30-31; 1 Corinthians 2:14).

Conclusion: The study of apologetics offers some great rewards for the Christian.