

# **AN INTRODUCTION TO APOLOGETICS**

## **I. WHAT IS APOLOGETICS?**

*The task of developing and sharing arguments for the truth and rationality of Christianity and the falsehood and irrationality of alternatives with the aim of strengthening the faith of believers and provoking non-believers to consider Christ*

## **II. WHAT ARE THE ORIGINS OF APOLOGETICS?**

### **A. The Concerns Of Justin Martyr And Others Of The 2'nd Century**

- 1. To Defend Christianity Against False Accusations**
- 2. To Argue For The Truth Of Christianity On The Basis That It Fulfilled O.T. Prophecy**
- 3. To Demonstrate That Christianity Was Superior To Or Even Fulfilled Greek Philosophical Ideas**

### **B. Tertullian's Rebuttal**

### **C. True Apologetics Originated In The New Testament (Luke / Paul)**

## **III. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE [TRI-FUNCTIONALITY] OF APOLOGETICS?**

### **A. Arguments For The Truth Of The Christian Faith (Vindication)**

### **B. Arguments Refuting Accusations Made Against The Christian Faith (Defense)**

### **C. Refutation Of Opposing Beliefs (Offense)**

## **IV. HOW DOES APOLOGETICS RELATE TO EVANGELISM?**

## **V. APPROACHES TO APOLOGETICS**

### **A. Depending On The Approach To Knowing God (Epistemologies)**

### **B. Depending On The Way Arguments Are Constructed**

- 1. Classical Method (William Lane Craig; R.C. Sproul; Norman Geisler)**
- 2. Evidential Method (Gary Habermas; John W. Montgomery; Clark Pinnock; Wolfhart Pannenberg; Josh McDowell)**
- 3. Cumulative Case Method (Paul D. Feinberg; C.S. Lewis)**
- 4. Presuppositional Method (Cornelius Van Til; John M. Frame; Greg Bahnsen; Francis Schaeffer)**
- 5. Reformed Epistemology Method (Alvin Prantinga)**

**C. Depending On Kenneth Boa's Way: Four Methodologies**

**(See Boa's Table Chart For Details And Characteristics Of The Four Approaches To Apologetics And The Way They Tend To Deal With The Most Common Apologetic Issues)**

**VI. COMMON OBJECTIONS TO THE TASK OF APOLOGETICS**

**A. Objections From The Bible**

- 1. Scripture Does Not Need To Be Defended**
- 2. God Cannot Be Known by Human Reason**
- 3. Natural (Depraved) Humanity Cannot Understand God's Truth**
- 4. Without Faith It Is Impossible To Please God**
- 5. Jesus Refused To Give Signs To Evil Men**
- 6. You Do Not Answer A Fool According To His Folly**
- 7. Apologetics Is Not Used In The Bible**

**B. Objections From Outside The Bible**

- 1. Logic Cannot Tell Us Anything About God**
- 2. Logic Cannot Prove The Existence Of Anything**

### 3. No One Is Converted Through Apologetics

#### VII. A BIBLICAL CASE FOR THE TASK OF APOLOGETICS

- A. **Acts 17:1-4** "...and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, opening and alleging..."
- B. **Acts 17:22-34** "...*whereof* he hath given assurance (*proof*) unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead."
- C. **Acts 26:24-29** "But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness (*reasonability*)."
- D. **Romans 1:18-20; 2:14-15 Romans 1:19 (KJV)** "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them." The evidence of Creation & Conscience.
- E. **II Corinthians 10:3-5; II Corinthians 10:5 (KJV)** "Casting down imaginations, (*demolishing arguments*) and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;"
- F. **Philippians 1:7,16** "...and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel..."
- G. **I Peter 3:13-16; I Peter 3:15 (KJV)** "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"

#### VIII. THE DYNAMIC OF APOLOGETIC DIALOGUE

- A. A Context For An Apologetic Interchange
  - 1. The Relationship Between The Two Parties
  - 2. The Immediate Situation
  - 3. The Broader Social, Cultural, Historical Context
- B. You: The Apologist
- C. A Questioner (See The Circumstantial Table)
- D. A Question/Issue

**E. An Answer**

**F. Always Bring The Conversation Back To Christ**

Transcendence of God	Noetic effects of sin	Starting point for apologetics	Historic examples	How can God be known?
Strong emphasis on both		The unique Christian experience of grace	Blaise Pascal; Søren Kierkegaard; Emil Brunner	Faith
Less strongly emphasised		Proofs from nature and historic evidences	Thomas Aquinas; Joseph Butler; Dominic Tennant	Reason
Less strongly emphasised	Strongly emphasised	Scripture (God's revelation)	Augustine of Hippo; Jean Calvin; Abraham Kuyper	Faith and reason

	Classical	Evidential	Reformed	Fideist
<b>Basis</b>	Reason	Fact	Revelation	Faith
<b>Form</b>	Rational	Empirical	Transcendental	Paradoxical
<b>Precursors</b>	Anselm; Aquinas	William Paley	Calvin; Thomas Reid	Luther; Kierkegaard
<b>C 20<sup>th</sup> advocates</b>	C. S. Lewis; Norman Geisler	J. W. Montgomery; Richard Swinburne	Cornelius Van Til; Alvin Plantinga	Karl Barth; Donald Bloesch
<b>Popular with</b>	Catholics; evangelicals	Arminians	Calvinists	Lutherans; neoevangelicals
<b>Knowledge</b>	Internal coherence – use reason to judge between truth claims	External coherence – arrive at truth by discovering and interpreting facts	Fidelity to Scripture – God as revealed in Scripture is foundational for all knowledge	Fidelity to Christ – truth about God is found in encounter with Him, not in thinking about Him
<b>Faith</b>	Faith is reasonable	Faith is not unreasonable	Unbelief is unreasonable	Not known by reason alone
<b>Philosophy</b>	Apologetics uses philosophy's ideas	Apologetics uses philosophy's tools	Apologetics confronts false philosophy	Apologetics confronts all philosophy
<b>History</b>	Right view of history requires right worldview (objectivity difficult)	Right view of history requires right method (objectivity possible)	Right view of history based on revelation (objective truth found in Scripture)	Faith cannot be based on historical knowledge
<b>Science</b>	Consistency model: Science, properly interpreted, is consistent with the Christian faith	Confirmation model: Science gives factual confirmation of the Christian faith	Conflict model: True science depends on the truth of God's revelation	Contrast model: Science deals with physical matters; faith deals with the personal
<b>Creation / evolution</b>	Typically generic creationism	Typically old-earth creationism	Typically young-earth creationism	Typically theistic evolutionism
<b>Experience</b>	Religious experience not irrational – test experiences by worldview	Religious experience may not be reliable – test experiences by facts	God's image in man is point of contact – test experiences by Scripture	Experience faith, don't defend it – experience of faith is self-validating
<b>Order of arguments</b>	1. Theism; 2. Christ; 3. Scripture as attested by Christ	1. Historicity of Scripture; 2. Christ and theism; 3. inspiration	1. Scripture's divine claims; 2. Irrationality of all alternatives	First and always, Scripture as witness to Christ
<b>Scripture</b>	Scripture is subject of apologetics – rationally verified authority of God  Fulfilled prophecy proves inspiration if God exists	Scripture is source of apologetics – factually verified story about Christ  Fulfilled prophecy proves inspiration, therefore God exists	Scripture is standard of apologetics – self-attesting authority of God  Fulfilled prophecy presupposes inspiration	Scripture is story of apologetics – self-attesting story about Christ  Fulfilled prophecy is God's advance witness to Christ
<b>Religions</b>	Disprove the worldviews underlying other religions	Present the unique factual, miraculous character of the Christian religion	Present the antithesis between Christian and non-Christian principles	Explain that the Christian faith is not a religion, but a relationship
<b>God</b>	Show that theism is the only or most rational worldview – cosmological and moral arguments are most common	Use various lines of argument and evidence to build a case for theism – design argument is most common	Show that God's existence is basic or foundational to all knowledge & proof – epistemic argument is most common	Explain that knowing God is a relational matter – all direct proofs are rejected; argument from paradox is used
<b>Evil</b>	Deductive problem: Is theism inconsistent?  Freewill defence: evil results from human choice	Inductive problem: Is theism likely?  Natural theology defence: evidence for God holds up	Theological problem: Is God sovereign over evil?  Compatibilist defence: God did not directly cause	Existential problem: Can God still be trusted?  God shows his goodness in Christ and His cross
<b>Miracles</b>	Miracles are possible – they are credible in a theistic worldview as part of special revelation	Specific miracles are probable – they provide evidence for theism in the context of biblical history	Biblical miracles are prophetic – they are credible to those who accept the Bible's authority	Christ's miracles are paradoxical – miracles, external and internal, given by God in response to faith
<b>Jesus</b>	Examine alternative views of Jesus to show that none can be rationally held	Detail evidence for Jesus' resurrection, fulfilled prophecies, etc.	Present Jesus' claim to be God as his self-attesting Word confirmed by Spirit	Call people to meet God's love in Jesus, the One no human could invent

# **APOLOGETIC STRATEGIES**

## **IN**

# **EVANGELISTIC ENCOUNTERS**

Stance regarding faith	Dominant approach	Typical questions / objections	Possible apologetic arguments
Disinterested / ignorant	Fideism	It doesn't matter to me if God exists or not.	If God exists, it matters! [Pascal's Wager] (F)
Sceptical	Reformed apologetics	God may be real to you, but he's not to me.	Is Jesus real enough for you? (F) You live every day as if God exists. (R)
Confused	Classical apologetics	How do you know there is a God?	Without God, there is no meaning. (R) No other worldview makes sense. (C) There are many lines of evidence. (E)
Has specific objections	Evidentialism / Classical apologetics	The stories in the Bible are hard to believe.  Why must we believe in the God of the Bible?  How do we know Jesus rose from the dead?  Wasn't Jesus just a great prophet or a good man?	If God exists, nothing is too hard for him. (C) God fulfilled prophecy and did miracles. (E) The tomb was empty and people saw Jesus. (E) Great prophets and good men don't claim falsely to be God. (C)
Feeling challenged	Reformed apologetics	Why is Christianity alone the truth?	God's claims in the Bible are exclusive – other religions cannot be true. (R)
Lingering doubts	Fideism	I'd like to believe, but I'm not sure.	Read the Gospels and get to know Jesus. (F)