

Why Apologetics? A Simple Apologetic 2

- We all look at **life** a certain way
- Our view of life is **formed** by a myriad of contributing factors, such as...
 - Our family
 - Our friends
 - Our Culture
 - Our heritage
 - Our Country
- These various factors and **more**, come together in us to form a **set** of presuppositions
 - In the word **presupposition** we hear the word “**suppose**” - Which is defined by the Macmillan Dictionary as, “**To believe that something is probably true, based on your experience, your knowledge, and any other information that you have**”
 - A synonym for supposition is **assumption** – To assume, is to “**believe something to be the case – even sometimes without proof**”
 - **Therefore**, when we presuppose it means that we “**tacitly, or implicitly assume at the beginning of a line of argument or course of action that something is the case**”
 - Most times we don't think **critically** about these assumptions, these things we believe, and yet they serve as a **guide** for how we interpret **all reality, life situations, and interactions**
 - All our understanding in **life** comes through our basic presuppositions

James Sire, Christian author and former editor of InterVarsity Press states that...

A worldview is a **commitment**, a fundamental orientation of the **heart** that can be expressed as a **story**, or in a set of **presuppositions**. These are **assumptions** which may be **true**, **partially true**, or **entirely false**, which we hold **consciously** or **subconsciously**, **consistently** or **inconsistently**, about the basic constitution of **reality**. And that provides the **foundation** on which we live and move and have our being.

Now that we've laid that foundation let's talk about apologetics

In the introduction to his book, Defending Your Faith, An Introduction to Apologetics, R.C. Sproul states...¹

“Years ago I was reading a novel (whose title and author escape my memory) in which a **dialogue** ensued between a **priest** and a scientist. The **scientist** remarked acidly, ‘You give me your **faith**, and I will give **you** my reason.’” Sproul **continues**, “This glib exchange underscores the **widespread assumption** in our day that reason and faith are **incompatible** and **antithetical**. **Religion** has been banished from the public square (**except** in times of national crises) and **exiled** to a reservation **ruled** by faith. **Faith** is viewed as a **subjective, emotive** quality leaned upon by the **weak** or **uneducated**. It is the **opiate** of the masses, the **bromide** for the unintelligent. **Faith** is a **crutch** to support the psychologically **crippled** – those who **lack** the scientific and sophisticated view of the real world.

¹ R.C. Sproul, *Defending Your Faith, An Introduction to Apologetics* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003), p. 13

1. So let's define Christian Apologetics

- a. The word **apologetics** comes from the Greek word, **apologia** which means to, **give a reasoned defense**
- b. It's used eight times in the New Testament (Acts 22:1; 25:16; 1 Cor. 9:3; 2 Cor. 10:5-6; Phil. 1:7; 2 Tim. 4:16; 1 Pet. 3:15)

Listen to the Apostle Peter in 1 Pet. 3:14b-16

1 Pe 3:14-16

Have no fear of them, **nor** be troubled, 15 but in your **hearts** regard Christ the **Lord** as holy, always being prepared to make a **defense** (*apologia*) to anyone who asks you for a **reason** for the **hope** that is in you; 16 yet do it with **gentleness** and **respect**, having a good **conscience**, so that, when you are **slandered**, those who revile your good behavior in **Christ** may be put to shame.

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- c. These that Peter wrote to, were experiencing **persecution** for their faith – So it is sensible to think that the apostle was **encouraging** them in every situation, whether it was an encounter with a friend in the **market**, or they had been dragged before an **authority** for their faith – they were to be ready to give a **rational defense**, an **apologia**, for their belief in Jesus Christ
- d. Apologetics, then, is not only a **rational, reasoned, defense** of our faith, it is an endeavor to bring **change** to a non-believer's basic **presuppositions** – it is an **effort** to change their world view

Douglas Groothuis, in his Christian Apologetics – A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith, defines apologetics, "...the rational defense of the Christian worldview as objectively true, rationally compelling and existentially or subjectively engaging" ²

This challenge is daunting – yet with the anointing and help of the Holy Spirit – it is not only possible, but has brought positive results for centuries.

Now let's talk about the use of apologetics in the New Testament

2. Apologetics in the New Testament

- a. First Luke, chapter one, verses one through four

Lk 1:1-4

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a **narrative** of the things that have been accomplished among us, 2 just as those who from the beginning were **eyewitnesses** and **ministers** of the **word** have delivered them to us, 3 it seemed good to me **also**, having followed all things **closely** for some time **past**, to write an orderly **account** for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 that you may have **certainty** concerning the things you have been taught.

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² Douglas Groothuis, Christian Apologetics – A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), p. 24

- i. Luke tells Theophilus here that he what he has written has been **cautiously** and **judiciously investigated** and that it is based upon **historical evidence**
- ii. **Consequently**, Luke is saying here that, “You can trust the things I have written”, **because** his document is an **precise account** of the historical facts
- iii. Then in verse four Luke encourages by saying **that**, “I have done this in order that you might have **certainty** concerning the things you have been taught”
- b. Luke relates an account in the book of Acts between the Apostle **Paul** and the **Stoic** and **Epicurean** philosophers in Athens, on Mars Hill
 - i. **Athens** was the center of not only **Philosophical**, but **intellectual**, and **religious** conversation in the time of Paul

From Acts seventeen, verse seventeen that Paul was speaking with both the Jews and the Gentile on a daily basis

Ac 17:17

17 So he **reasoned** in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the **marketplace** every day with those who happened to be there.

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- ii. Some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers **argued** with Paul and then invited him to continue the **debate** at the Areopagus on Mars Hill **saying**, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are **presenting**?” (Vs. 19)
- iii. Then in verses 22-31 Paul reasoned with the philosophers

In the Apologetics Study Bible, concerning these verses it puts forth, A model apologist, Paul developed an **argument** (natural theology) based on God’s self-revelation in **nature** to build bridges – and to challenge **prevailing** beliefs. He complimented the Athenians’ evident religious **inclinations**, drew upon **observable data** from the **natural** world regarding the God’s **nature** (the “unknown God”), **identified** this God for them, **established** a relationship between **God** and humans, **announced** the coming judgment by God of the **world**, and even marshaled **evidence** from the **pagan** (Stoic) poets for his **analysis** (Epimenides; Artus, who hailed from Paul’s own Cilicia). ³

- iv. Paul used apologetic technique to **persuade** and **change** the worldview of those that listened to him
- c. We see the same thing in the book of Romans as Paul takes on both the **Gentile** and Jew

For example in Romans, chapter one, verses 18-25 uses apologetic techniques

Ro 1:18-20

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from **heaven** against all **ungodliness** and **unrighteousness** of men, who **by** their unrighteousness **suppress** the truth. 19 For what can be known about **God** is **plain to them, because** God has **shown it to them**. (Continued)

³ The Apologetics Study Bible, Ted Cabal, Gen. Ed.(Nashville, TN, Holman Bible Publishers, 2007), p. 1653

20 For his invisible **attributes**, namely, his **eternal** power and **divine** nature, have been **clearly perceived**, ever since the creation of the **world, in the things that have been made**. So they are without **excuse**. ESV

- i. Why were they without excuse?
- ii. According to Paul it was because the invisible attributes of **God** could be “**clearly seen**” in creation
- iii. Paul was arguing that **God** had given them **empirical objective evidence** of His **existence** through the things that had been **made** – What more could they want?
- iv. It certainly may not be the **case** that someone could glean all there is to know about God’s **attributes** by observing **nature** – Yet based upon Paul’s **apologetic**, enough could be known to hold someone **accountable**

3. Apologetics in the early church

- a. There was no time for the formulation of **theology** in the early days of the church
- b. The nascent Christian community were accused of all **types** of evil owing to the **misunderstandings** of their **faith** in the Roman culture
 - i. It was no problem for a person of that time, who practiced the worship of **many** gods, to add **another** god into their ritual
 - ii. **Therefore**, emperor worship did not **present** any difficulties to them
 - iii. The Jews, although **monotheists**, had a **racial heritage** and **national origin**, so for the most part the Roman **officials** left them alone
 - iv. **However**, when it came to the Christian **community**, it was a different story
 - v. The Christians were **also** monotheists, yet unlike the **Jews**, had no specific **heritage** or **nation** of origin
 - vi. **Therefore**, the Romans were incensed at the fact that the **Christians** refused to give due **homage** to the emperor and the **cult** that surrounded his worship
 - vii. To the sophisticated **Romans**, the Christians were **atheists** and **cannibals** (that because of rumors surrounding the Lord’s Supper)

R.C. Sproul says of this, “In many apologetic writings of the **period** (for example, Justin Martyr’s **Apology** and **Athenagoras’s Plea**), we can see **four common accusations** against Christians. **First**, the Christian community was charged with **sedition** – Christians were regarded as **traitors** undermining the **authority** of the empire. As early as 29 B.C., emperor worship had emerged, most notably in the Asian city of **Pergamum**, and it continued well into the **second** century A.D. Reciting the phrase **Kaisar kurios** (Caesar is lord), burning incense to the emperor’s **image**, or **swearing** by his name was **required** in order to prove **loyalty** to the state. The Christians refused to grant worship to the **emperor** and so were seen as **disloyal** and as being involved in **political conspiracies**.⁴

- c. Justin Martyr, in his *apology* argued that **Christians** had every desire to **submit** to authorities; they paid public **taxes**, and honored the **civil** laws
 - i. **However**, Justin offered, **Christians** were not able to confess Caesar as lord
 - ii. It was **Jesus** that was **Lord** over all, as a **result**, the only one worthy of worship

⁴ R.C. Sproul, *Defending Your Faith*, An Introduction to Apologetics (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003), p. 14

- d. Along with **sedition** Christians were thought to be guilty of **atheism** as I mentioned earlier **because** they absolutely refused to worship the Roman deities
 - i. It was because of this charge that **Polycarp**, the Bishop of **Smyrna**, was brought before the emperor when he was in his **eighties**
 - ii. This **faithful man** of **God** was sentenced to death if he did not deny his **Lord** – and it was **because** of this stand that the old man was **executed** by being burned at the **stake** in an arena
 - iii. He was given a chance to **confess**, and state the **phrase**, “**Away** with the atheists”, referring to himself and other Christians
 - iv. Rather than **doing** so, from the stake he pointed up into the stands filled with spectators and **said**, “**Away** with the atheists”, referring to the **spectators** – and for this the torch was lit.
- e. Justin Martyr stated in his apology **that**, Christians were not **atheists** – they were **totally** committed theists
 - i. They **believed** in God
 - ii. **Therefore**, it was **impossible** for them to **accurately** fit the charge of Atheism
 - iii. It was just that they were **monotheists** – believing in the one **true** God – not **polytheists** as the Romans were.
- f. There were **two** more primary charges brought against the **Church** at that time
 - i. **Incest** and **perversion** was the **third** charge
 - ii. **Cannibalism** was the forth
 - 1. **Incest** and **perversion** was owing to the rumors that surrounded their secret **meetings** in the **catacombs** – As a result of these secret “**love feasts**” the Christian community was accused of hidden **incest** and **perversions**
 - 2. Concerning the **cannibalism**, of course, it was because they “**ate the flesh of Christ, and drank His blood**”

It is easy to see from these examples why a reasoned defense of the Christian faith was not only important, but imperative – Yet, what about the church today?

4. There are some primary reasons for apologetics in the Church today

- a. We live in a world that is progressively more **antagonistic** to **our** faith in particular – and **ambivalent** to a belief in any god – let alone the God of the **Bible**, to whom they are **accountable**
- b. If we are to fulfill the Great **Commission** to “**Make** disciples” from all nations, we **cannot ignore** the **fact** that we must **equip** ourselves to speak to the **culture** that surrounds us.
- c. **Also**, when applying ourselves to the **discipline** of apologetics, we receive the added **benefit** of being **strengthened** in our faith – Learning that we can trust the **truth-claims of Christianity**, **builds** us up.
- d. Although it might be hard to **imagine**, there may come a day in our society where we must **defend** our faith in the midst of very **difficult** circumstances

The question **is** according to the admonition in first **Peter**, chapter **three**, verses **fifteen** and sixteen, will we make sure that we are, “**always** prepared to make a **defense (apologia)** to anyone who asks us for a reason for our **hope**; with **gentleness** and **respect**?”

- **No matter the circumstance**
- **No matter the weight and heaviness of the pressure**
- **Because the Lord Jesus Christ is worthy**