

EVANGELISM FOR THE GLORY OF GOD

Practical Apologetics

“...but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; 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.” (I Pet 3:15-16)

I. Apologetics: Introduction

“Christian apologetics (which has nothing to do with ‘apologizing’) seeks to serve God and the church by helping believers carry out the mandate of I Pet 4:15-16. We may define it as *the discipline that teaches Christians how to give a reason for their hope.*” - John Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God*, I.

A. Apologetics as PROOF – presenting a rational basis for faith; “proving Christianity to be true”.

“Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.” (John 14:11)

B. Apologetics as DEFENSE – answering the objections of unbelief.

“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?” (Rom 6:1-2)

C. Apologetics as OFFENSE – attacking the foolishness of unbelief

“We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ...” (2 Cor 10:4)

II. Benefits/Purpose of Apologetics

A. Glory to God

B. Silencing Unbelievers

“...so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.” (I Pet 3:16)

C. Evangelism/Outreach

D. Edification of the Church

E. Protection of the Church

F. Promotes Theological Insight

III. Two Ways to “Do Apologetics”

- A. Option 1 - Dodge bullets
- B. Option 2 - Take away the gun

IV. The Critical Role of Presuppositions

- A. Our presuppositions about the nature of reality and knowledge will control what we accept as evidence and how we view it. (E.g., Speaking to a naturalist about miracles)
 - The Christian and non-Christian may agree to certain “facts”, but they will soon find that those facts are interpreted very differently because they each hold to opposing ultimate standards of interpretation, justification for beliefs, and fundamental assumptions about the way the world is, how one knows things, what is possible, the nature of morality, etc.
- B. The non-Christian may be unaware of their own presuppositions (!) and it may take time (i.e., multiple coffee meetings) to uncover them in conversation.
- C. True or False?
 - 1. Every non-Christian presupposition ultimately leads to irrational living and a meaningless existence.
 - 2. Not every non-Christian, equipped with anti-Christian presuppositions lives irrationally and with a meaningless existence.

*“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. 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.** ²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.” (Rom I:18-21)*

V. The Task of the Christian Apologist = Force the non-Christian to take the plane to Boston!

“The Christian apologist must place himself upon the position of his opponent, assuming the correctness of his method merely for argument’s sake, in order to show him that on such a position the ‘facts’ are not facts and the ‘laws’ are not laws. He must also ask the non-Christian to place himself upon the Christian position for argument’s sake in order that he may be shown that only upon such a basis do ‘facts’ and ‘laws’ appear intelligible.”

- Cornelius Van Til, *Christian Apologetics* (ed. William Edgar; 2nd ed.; Phillipsburg: NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2003), 129.