



# Christian Apologetics

## Volume 2

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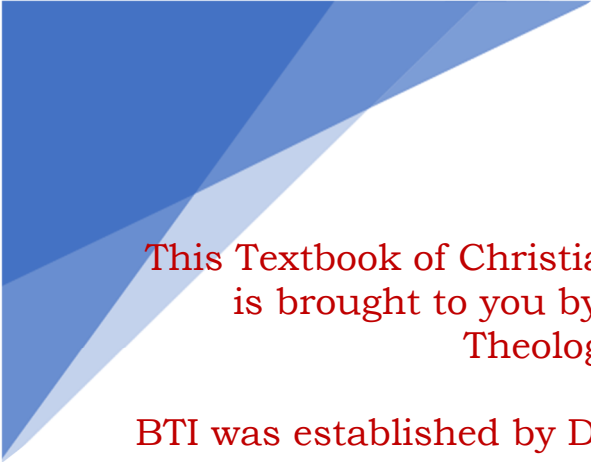
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## History of Christian Apologetics

Though Apologetics and Polemics are two different activities, their ultimate purpose is one and the same: to refute error and to establish truth. Till a few decades ago they could easily be separated from each other so that those who practice Apologetics did not need to know about Polemics, and those who specialized in Polemics did not have to study apologetics. But no more! All kinds of attacks against the Christian faith now borrow insights from each other, so that today every apologist must be an expert in polemics, and every polemicist must be an expert in apologetics.

History of Christian Apologetics

## The History

Many people have this misunderstanding that Christian Apologetics and Polemics are subjects of recent origin. Nothing could be farther from truth. Biblical Apologetics and Polemics are as old as the Bible itself is. Both the Old as well as the New Testament give us ample evidence of this.

**Apologetics In The Old Testament:** Attacks against the Word of God started as early as in the Old Testament period. Within the Old Testament record we can see many people who questioned whether the God of the Israelites is the true God, and we notice that in many cases God provided them suitable

answers and demonstrations. Some of these proofs have been mentioned on the previous pages of this book, thus a repetition is not needed.

It must be added, however, that the listing from the Old Testament given above is only a sample. The actual number of apologetic passages and incidents in the Old Testament is too numerous to be listed here in this book.

### *Apologetics Among The Jewish Fathers:*

The Jewish Fathers and Leaders had to face much opposition from the pagans because the Bible emphasizes many things which are resented by the Pagans. For example, right from Genesis, the Bible teaches that man is a sinner,

totally depraved, and unable to save himself. Grace is the only means available for salvation. This irritated and irked the pagans who had a Universalist theology.

Universalism teaches the salvation of everyone in the world irrespective of his religion. No exclusiveness of doctrines and practices is accepted by them. Thus it was natural for the Universalist pagans in Old Testament times to attack the Bible.

Though writing materials were not in abundance at that time, many of these critics of the Bible produced large numbers of books to attack the Old Testament. History is our witness that people who attacked the Bible always got

great reception from people, and consequently these critics were able to spread their messages very wide. Many of the Jewish Rabbis and scholars wrote countless volumes to counter the charges brought by these critics. One of the best-known Jewish apologetic works is *Contra Apion*, written by the first century Army officer and historian Flavius Josephus. This book is easily available today in many Seminary libraries as part of the Complete Works Of Josephus. Archaeologists have discovered numerous other Jewish apologetic works also.

**Apologetics In The New Testament:** With the establishment of the New Testament



Church came a new breed of heretics and critics. This was partially because of the extended influence of pagan philosophies coupled with easy availability of writing materials. The rise of professionals called "scribes" also made it possible for writings to be copied rapidly and economically. Thus, these heretics were able to make their voice heard widely.

Another reason for the rise of critics, heretics and heretical movements was the New Testament itself. Till the book of Malachi, doctrinal subjects were taught indirectly and often in a veiled manner. However, in New Testament doctrines related to man's sin, total depravity, salvation by grace alone and faith alone,

etc. were proclaimed more clearly. All the unique Biblical doctrines received clearer explanation and exposition in the New Testament. This made a lot of people uncomfortable.

As long as the divine message was partially veiled, these critics did not worry much. But clear proclamation to the Biblical message exposed their errors, biases, and prejudices clearly. No longer could they maintain their Universalism, Humanism, Accommodationism, etc. No longer could they maintain their brand of theology, seeing that now the fundamental tenets of biblical theology were spelled out clearly.

There were a large number of people who wanted to be called Christians, but who did not want to accept these biblical doctrines. Many of them were converts from various kinds of heathen faiths. They did not want to abandon their loyalty to the philosophies and theologies which they had believed before coming to the Church. Further, many of them loved the freedom for sensuality that was offered by their previously believed pagan philosophies. Thus, using all their literary and theological skill they tried to popularize their varieties of perverted teachings. The main aim was self-justification. Thus there were Judaizers who created problems in Galatia and other places.

The Epistle To Galatians is a refutation of their teachings. There were Gnostics who tried to synthesize Christian theology with occult philosophies. The Epistle To Colossians is an apologetic against them. The Epistle To Hebrews is an apologetic against another heresy. Jude had to remind his readers to contend for the faith against those who would like to distort the Christian message. Peter had to warn his readers against those who mocked at statements in portions of the New Testament, and so on. Thus, throughout the New Testament documents we notice the opposition of scornful people and heretics at distorting biblical truths. Instead of ignoring them, the New

Testament writers wrote extensively to expose error, to condemn it, and also to establish truth.

**Apologetics Among Church-fathers:** The availability of New Testament documents irritated Christians not only in the first century, but also in the centuries that followed. Wanting to hold on simultaneously to both the Bible and their own pagan philosophies, many of them spread heretical doctrines using all means available to them. We have already mentioned the name of Gnostics, Nestorians, Ebionites, Montanists, Pelegians, Arians, and many others. Several Church councils gathered together to condemn these heresies, and

that is one way in which these false teachings could be suppressed.

Many of the heretics were dedicated writers, and they produced a large number of voluminous books to spread their ideas. Consequently, the Church Fathers of the same period were also forced to write lengthy books to refute these errors. A large amount of these heretical writings and apologetic refutations have been discovered by archaeologists.

The availability of the New Testament documents irked not only the rebel Christians, but irritated many non-Christian writers. Most of these writers were inclined to atheism, universalism, humanism, hedonism, or narcissism.

Since the New Testament documents are totally contrary to these philosophies, they found it necessary (as self-justification) to attack the Bible.

Further, the Bible is the only religious book in the world that insists that every human is born a sinner, totally depraved, and unable to anything at all for his own salvation. This, coupled with the New Testament insistence of Bible Alone, Christ Alone, Grace Alone, and Faith Alone, also irritated many of them. Further, the fast spread of the Christian faith, and the deep commitment of these new converts also overwhelmed many of these non-Christian critics. Fearing that this spread of gospel would soon convert the whole world into the Christian faith

they launched out their tirades against the Bible, Jesus Christ, and Christianity.

A notable example is the rationalist writer Porphyry. Living in Sicily in the third century, he wrote a work entitled "Against Christianity". What is surprising is the size of this work which occupied a solid FIFTEEN volumes!! Obviously, such prolific writers were able to influence a large number of people. But here again the Church Fathers did not sit silent. Rather, they courageously combated Porphyry and similar rationalists and produced hundreds of volumes of Christian Apologetics and Polemics. Were it not for the warrior mentality of these Fathers, a



lot more of damage could have been done by these rationalists.

### Modern Creationism and Apologetics:

Though Christian Apologetics and Polemics was strong in the first five centuries of Church, it became somewhat dormant for almost a thousand years. This was the time when the Roman Catholic Church ruled the Christian world with an iron rod. Rather than reasoning and arguing with the dissenters, the Church found it easier and better just to kill them. Opposing voices were not heard much in public because of this life-threatening atmosphere.

Today very few people know that from about middle of the fourth century to the middle of the fourteenth century, the Roman Catholic church indulged in a great struggle for ecclesiastical as well as temporal power. In this struggle they silenced, tortured, and killed millions of dissenting people. A revolt brewed in the hearts of people, especially of the thinkers in Europe. However, the dictatorial rule of the Church prevented them from expressing themselves. Thus when the Reformation gave them the freedom coveted by all thinkers, they came out in torrents against the Church. Since most bitter people did not understand the difference between the Roman Catholic church, the true church

of Christ, and the Christ of the Bible, they opposed and rejected all of these things simultaneously. It was a case of throwing away the baby with the bathwater. This rejection of Christianity was coupled with the rise of a host of anti-Christian thinkers, philosophies, and movements. By the time the nineteenth century arrived, the number of such anti-Christian people and movements became simply mind boggling. What united them all was their opposition to the Bible and Christianity.

However, since the idea of creation was widely accepted by the masses (including most of the educated people), it was difficult for them to overthrow the authority of the Bible. They were

convinced that only a rejection of the Bible would solve the problem. By the middle of the nineteenth century there was a preparation of hearts and an expectation in the air that Christianity can now be challenged. But the crucial factor which could do this was nowhere in sight.

The Theory Of Evolution was there already, but it was there only in philosophical form. The rise of modern science had convinced them that even the best philosophical speculation has no feet to stand upon till it is given a scientific basis. It was just this time when Charles Darwin proposed his Theory Of Evolution. For the first time someone was able to propose this

hypothesis in the form of a theory of SCIENCE! That was the reason why all of these dissenting movements eagerly and immediately swallowed Darwin's theory and he became a hero overnight. Things changed rapidly and this theory took theology also into its influence by the close of the nineteenth century. The same was the period when infidels with degrees in theology were coming into positions of power in German universities. Some of these European and American evolutionists soon persuaded some theologians, especially in Germany, that evolution is a fact. A few of these theologians then began persuading other theologians and seminary teachers that now Christians

must now accept evolution as a fact. The bolder theologians among them even started teaching that portions of the Bible that deal with this record of creation should be abandoned altogether. Germany provided an ideal ground for breeding these thinkers because German theological institutes are controlled and funded by government money. Government is interested only in academic degrees, not in whether a person is born again and committed to the Bible.

Uncommitted and unregenerate radical German theologians had plenty of degrees, but not Christ in their hearts. Thus, they began to act as mercenaries, destroying belief in the Bible. Having a

clear agenda to destroy belief in the Bible, they aimed at destroying the foundations of Christianity first. Further, since Government funding was liberal, they had the financial muscle-power to print and spread their ideas worldwide. This is how the German atheists (though they called themselves Christians) were able to influence the entire world through their theology.

However, not everyone was willing to write off the Bible completely. Many were interested more in keeping both the beliefs together. Acceptance of evolution would make them respectable in the eyes of theological infidels, but at the same time acceptance of creation would keep them in the confines of evangelical

Christianity. Thus began an era of compromises. This is the era when compromise interpretations of Genesis came into vogue. Many of these interpretations became widespread, partially through the influence of Scofield, and partially through the influence of compromising seminaries.

Compromise is never good for truth, because it is truth that suffers most when it is mixed with falsehood. Thus this mingling of evolution with creation eventually destroyed the Biblical foundations to such a level that radicals, humanists, evolutionists, rationalists, and atheists had a field day attacking Christians. Things came to such alarming state that in the first half of the



twentieth century it was difficult to find qualified theologians in USA or Europe who would openly defend the Biblical story of creation. Since the Indian evangelical theology was mostly a copy of the Western theology, the Indian theologians also avoided defending the Biblical doctrine of Creation.

A few American Seventh Day Adventists were the only people who were willing to defend the idea of creation during this period. However, there was a small remnant in some conservative churches in USA who were willing to take a strong stand. In the first decade of the twentieth century they produced 12 volumes of books known as "The Fundamentals". While only a minority of scholars at that

time identified themselves with the stand taken in these books, their influence eventually helped to turn the tide in favor of the Bible.

American evangelical Christians began to notice in the fifties that compromise is a slow poison that ultimately destroys respect for truth. Some of them came together and started writing aggressively on themes defending the historical and scientific reliability of the Bible. This gave birth to the modern interest in Apologetics and Creationism. At the dawn of the twenty-first century the influence of this revival has spread all over the world, and today more than one hundred and fifty organizations function around the world, devoted solely to

apologetics. Their influence has been so strong that a large number of Seminaries all around the world have begun assert the historical and scientific reliability of the Bible.

**Creationism in India:** Indian theological situation has many a times been a copy of what happens in the West. Thus, with the rise of the German radical theology, most of the theologians and seminary-trained people in the mainline Protestant churches like the Lutherans, Methodists, CNI, CSI, and Marthoma churches became theologically radical. The situation is so bad that evangelical thinking is scorned in their seminaries, and it is difficult to discover theologians

and priests in their forties or below who have an evangelical commitment or who are willing to take a stand for the historical and scientific reliability of the Bible.

The separatist churches like the Brethren, the Pentecostals, and the Independent/Fundamental Baptists, and numerous other such evangelical groups were a little better. They did not forsake their high view of the Bible. At the same time almost all of them capitulated to compromise interpretations like Theistic Evolution and Gap Theory. The influence of C. I. Scofield is notable in spreading the Gap Theory.

The first Indian to take a strong stand against the Theory Of Evolution was the late Professor H. Enoch. This was in the early sixties. His English book Evolution Or Creation influenced a large number of young Indians, especially through the EU and EGF groups. He wrote many articles in the UESI student magazine also.

In the sixties and seventies no evangelical magazine was willing to publish articles defending the historicity of the Bible or creation. The only exception was Cross And Crown, a Pentecostal Magazine edited by Dr. Thomas Mathews from Udaipur, Rajasthan. This magazine took a firm stand in favor of the accuracy of the

Bible, and carried such articles in it regularly for decades.

In the seventies a fellowship of scientists came up known initially as FOCMOS (Fellowship Of Christian Men Of Science), and later as CSFI (Creation Scientists Fellowship Of India). This organization soon became defunct because of lack of commitment from members, and also because their interests lay elsewhere. However, A. K. Skaria, the secretary of this movement continues to be a tireless crusader for Creation and Apologetics.

A project known as Creation Research was founded by Dr. Johnson C. Philip in 1970. It functioned mainly through the publication of articles, and by the time of

the writing of this present book more than 10,000 articles have been published in more than 6 languages in almost a dozen countries around the world. This movement is now known as Trinity Graduate School Of Apologetics And Theology, and it offers full-length courses in creationism and apologetics. At the time that Trinity School's predecessor was founded in 1970, almost no standard Christian magazine in India was willing to publish articles defending inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible. Nor were any Bible seminaries willing to teach these subjects. However, three decades of crusading by Calvin School has given rise to a significant

movement in India for the defense of faith.

Another person who played a significant role in Christian Apologetics is Dr. Johnson George. Born in Kerala and brought up in MP, he became fluent in more than one language. Thus, his writings on apologetic themes in several languages have had a wide impact. Others who played a role in Apologetics would include Dr. Ezhamkulam Samkutty and Dr. Saneesh Cherian. Dr. Cherian is the co-author of the 800-page Christian Apologetics in Malayalam. Another person who has recently become very active in Apologetics is James Varghese (a retired IAS officer)



who has a science background. His lectures are well-received by people.

An apologetics organization that entered India recently is RZIM, founded originally in the USA by Dr. Ravi Zacharias. This society conducts training programs all over India. Their work tends to be more polemical and rhetorical than analytic.

**Gains Of Modern Apologetics:** The last half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century were times when most of the well-known Christian seminaries, journals, and publishing houses compromised with evolutionism and rationalism. This created such skepticism in the minds of

the average Christian that very few found the courage to take a public stand to defend the Bible or their faith.

Ultimately all this left Christian believers (especially the young ones) in a very sorry state in the rationalism-dominated times. This was one reason why Christians did not have the courage to oppose the anti-biblical, anti-social, and anti-morality movements of the forties and fifties, which culminated in the acceptance of the open immorality in the sixties in the USA. This immorality eventually invaded India also.

However, with the birth of the modern creationism and apologetics, a revival set in motion among the evangelical Christians. This group became quite

vocal and aggressive in the sixties, and by seventies they started exerting significant influence among theologians, thinkers, and the Bible teachers all over the world. Thousands of apologetic books, hundreds of magazines, and tens of thousands of articles have been produced defending the Bible since. In turn, this has started to diminish the influence of rationalists and radicals on Christens.

From the middle of the nineteenth to the middle of the twentieth century the rationalists had their heyday, snatching away millions of young people from their Christian faith and commitment. The wounds of this loss can be seen in Christendom even today, but at the

same time this loss has been greatly minimized now because of the work of Christian apologists.

Today anyone desiring to know about the Bible, and its connection with science, evolution, history, archaeology, has read any number of books on this topic. Literally thousands of titles are available, and he can choose anywhere from the most simple books to the most technically advanced ones.

Thus, the modern apologetics movement has been able to arrest the way in which rationalists have been bleeding the Christian church. What is more, this movement has been able to restore a lot of doubting people to strong faith. At the same time it has been able to strengthen

the faith of many believers who wanted to know what the truth is in all this conflict.

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## About The Authors



Dr. Johnson C. Philip is an expert in Quantum-nuclear Physics and has done research about the inner structure of Protons and Neutrons (Hadrons). He has doctorates in Theology, Alternative Medicine, Archaeology, and Communication also. He has authored hundreds of books and he hopes to join hands with Dr. Saneesh Cherian to produce a large number of ebooks.

Dr. Saneesh Cherian is an expert in Communication and Sociology. Having completed two doctorates in theology and a



masters in Sociology from a prestigious University, he has been working towards his next doctorate in sociology. He has authored more than 100 books so far.

The two writers have jointly authored several major hardbound books in Apologetics and Theology, Theology Dictionary and Bible Encyclopedias.

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