

Christian Apologetics

A black silhouette of a person with their arms outstretched horizontally, centered in the frame. The background is a teal and green gradient with a starry, nebula-like pattern.

Volume 3

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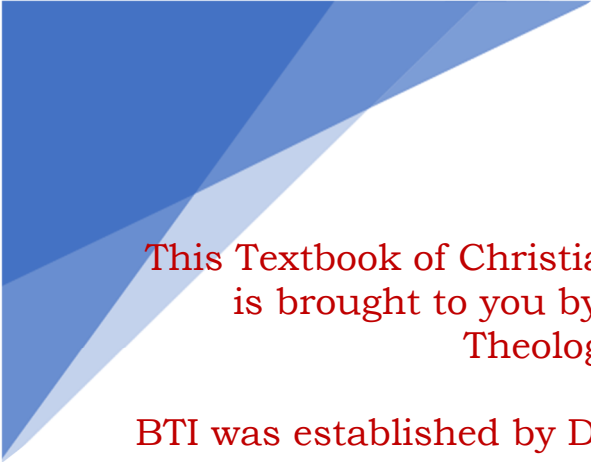
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The Importance Of Apologetics

Both the Old as well as the New Testament repeatedly emphasize that defense of faith is an important part of spiritual life. This is why both the Testaments contain numerous apologetic passages. The Jewish and the Church Fathers also understood these benefits, and that is why they devoted considerable time to refuting arguments brought against the Christian faith.

A perusal of the apologetic writings of the Bible and the Fathers would show that the nature of the attacks changed in each generation, and that the reply had to be tailored to meet the needs of each generation. In spite of this changing approach and

emphasis, the purpose of apologetics has remained unchanged for all the past millennia.

The Unchanging Purpose of Apologetics

The methods and priorities of Christian Apologetics keep changing with time, but the aims remain the same, and they are:

1-To refute all the accusations that are brought against the Bible and the Christian faith.

2-To demonstrate that only the Bible and the Christian way of life work in the actual life, and that only the Bible and the Christian

faith provide permanent peace and happiness.

3-To remove the sincere doubts in the hearts of believers and unbelievers, so that the hindrances to the growth and establishing their faith are eliminated.

4-To provide SUFFICIENT evidence for achieving the above goals. It is necessary for the apologist to understand the difference between sufficient and total proof.

Because man is finite and limited in his knowledge and perception, total proof is never possible for anything. Total proof is possible only if every case in the world related to the subject is examined. This is

humanly not possible. This is why scholars do not insist upon total proof for anything in any branch of science or history. Rather, everything is decided on the basis of sufficient proof. The same is the case with Christian Apologetics.

What Can Apologetics Do

Christian Apologetics is a constantly developing subject, with each day's arguments becoming more and more powerful than the previous days. In a fast expanding subject like this, people can often forget or overlook the role played by that subject. This is especially apparent in Christian Apologetics.

Thus, four different ways of thinking can be seen from time to time about Christian Apologetics, not all of them valid or biblically sound. These are:

SKEPTICISM: Despite the widespread acceptance of apologetics, there is a small group of people who are totally skeptical of Christian apologetics. They do not see any value in apologetics, and even oppose the defense of Christian faith.

Most skeptics are people who avoid grappling with real-life problems. Further, they totally overlook the numerous passages in the Bible itself which encourage apologetic activity. This group is only a microscopic minority in

Christendom, and has no serious thinkers or theologians advocating it.

CHRISTIAN RATIONALISM: According to this view, reason can completely demonstrate or prove the validity of the Christian position. Thus, all what is needed is to place a comprehensive set of arguments in favor of the Bible in front of a person, and he would be able to see the truth. However, everyone knows that things are not as optimistic as this viewpoint maintains.

Christian Rationalism places too much trust in the capacity of the human intelligence/intellect in perceiving and recognizing truth. They have such faith in the wisdom of the fallen man that they often

exclude the need or role of the Holy Spirit in illuminating the fallen and sinful human beings. Though very interesting, this viewpoint has never been widely accepted among Christian apologists.

LOGICAL CHRISTIANITY: According to this view, reason is the starting point of everything, and thus it goes a long way forward to the discovery of spiritual truth; the last steps of this process are taken by faith. This viewpoint is more Biblical than the first two, but it is still not fully correct.

Some proponents of the Logical Christianity view have gone to the extreme of claiming that since God can be known and understood through natural revelation alone, there is no need at all for the Bible.

Christian Apologists have never/widely accepted this viewpoint.

REASON DEFINITELY AIDS FAITH: This is the most widely held view among evangelical and fundamentalist scholars. According to it, faith is the starting-point of everything in the Christian faith; once faith is established, it can be shown to be consistent with truth and reason. This is a viewpoint which is Biblically tenable and acceptable, and it will form the backbone of this series of studies on apologetics.

Thus, the evangelical Christian apologist uses apologetics, not to create faith but to aid the creation and maintenance of faith. Even for this task he depends upon the role played

by God the Holy spirit in helping communicate the message to people. The recipients also need the help of the Holy Spirit to understand and accept the message.

The Purpose Of Apologetics

As said in the previous section, Christian Apologetics is a fast-growing discipline. Thus, it is possible to misunderstand or confuse the role, purpose, and contributions of apologetics. Students should take great care in noting what apologetics is meant to do, and also what it is not meant to do. The following points would help to clarify some of these issues:

Apologetics Is A Manward Operation: The purpose of developing a discipline like apologetics is to defend the reliability of the Bible. It therefore addresses both the reliability of scriptural narratives as well as the premises upon which the Christian faith stands. However, Christian Apologetics is not an activity directed towards the Bible. In other words, the purpose of Christian Apologetics is not to defend the Bible with the attitude as though it is a helpless book. Rather, it is a manward operation meant to help those who are perplexed or distressed due to doubts. the Bible is defended to them, so that they might overcome the doubts that they have.

The Scriptures are quite capable of self-defense. It has stood assaults successfully for four thousand years while the critics and their contentions have been passing away. Hence the purpose of apologetics is not to lend a helping hand to the Scriptures, but to help the sincere inquirer. Thus the defense of the Bible is presented not for preserving the Scriptures but to preserve the faith of the inquirer. This is what's meant by "manward operation".

Understanding this manward operation is necessary both for helping those who need apologetics and also for those who don't need it. Our churches have a lot of people who never had a problem with their faith. They never doubted anything in the Bible, nor did

they have to face any attacks against their faith in Christ. Many of these people can therefore become alarmed when they hear of "apologetics". They start thinking that the apologist is trying to defend the Bible for the sake of the Bible -- to ESTABLISH that the Bible is the word of God.

Since these people almost never faced any serious challenges to their faith, and since they know that the Scriptures do not need to be defended by man, they tend to become skeptical or hostile towards apologetics. Unless the apologist explains to them the manward role, there is a possibility of them rejecting apologetics due to their ignorance. Thus, to put the apprehensive people at ease, the apologist himself should first understand

the motive and aim of apologetics. Only this clear understanding will help him to employ the methods of apologetics with the proper motive and in the right manner to the right audience. He would understand that not every Christian is his target. Only a person with this understanding will be able to put tense and skeptical, but God-fearing, Christians at ease.

Apologetics Has Limits: Since apologetics is a manward operation, it can never be used to prove that the Bible is the word of God. The best that it can do in this matter is to point to the unusual character of the Bible in matters of unity, accuracy, consistency, historicity, and life-changing power. The rest is left to the inquirer. Accepting the Bible as

God's word comes only by an act of faith in which apologetics can play a very supportive role.

Thus, the purpose of apologetics is neither to establish the Bible as God's word, nor to create faith in skeptical minds. Rather, its purpose is to aid a person to see that the attacks brought up against the Bible are NOT valid. Once it is demonstrated that statements of the Bible and the facts of science do not conflict with each other, the way is cleared for the sincere inquirer for making the leap of faith.

Barrier Removal Is The Primary Target: The purpose of apologetics is not creation of faith as much as it is to remove the barriers that

hinder faith. Such a removal of hindering factors often helps sincere inquirers to take a leap of faith and accept the Lord Jesus as personal Savior. For others, who are already saved, the removal of barriers helps them to make a deeper commitment to Christ.

Rationalist Demands Are Often A Boon: Our rationalist age places a lot of demands before a statement is accepted as true. Many people think that this rationalism is sure to destroy the Bible. On the contrary, this is a blessing in disguise. Many demands placed by rational thinkers give us excellent standards with which to evaluate our statements objectively.

Enough information and evidence exists today to show, using the more sound principles of rational thinking, that the Bible is a unique book. But no amount of evidence can force a person, claiming to be a rationalist, against his will to believe. Even though the rational content of Christianity is fully logical, accurate, and reliable, Christian Apologetics is not meant for these people. Apologetics is meant for those sincere seekers who want to know how reliable the rational content of the Bible is.

Proclamation Is Not To Be Minimized: The saving message of the Bible will bring much fruit whenever it is proclaimed -- even if there is much unbelief in the air. Therefore, the purpose of apologetics is not to establish the

divinity of the Bible first so that the gospel can follow. Unbelief will not change even if the most amazing proofs are presented. The purpose of apologetics is, therefore, to help that person who wants to abandon his unbelief that has been there due to his lingering but sincere and honest doubts.

Apologetics Demands Willing Reception:

Apologetics is not treatment for deliberate unbelief. Rather, it is meant to serve as a cure for sincere doubts. It can work wonders when presented at the right time in the right manner for helping sincere inquirers.

There is no cure for unbelief except divine intervention. The best thing to do in such cases is to use the sword of the Spirit

repetitively. It will discern and pierce the thoughts and intents of the heart. Apologetics, if needed, should be used only after such a breakthrough.

Apologetics Helps Seekers Most: Apologetics has a definite value when one presents the gospel to unbelievers. Sincere and true seekers, whether from a Christian or non-Christian background, definitely have many doubts that hinder them from taking the leap of faith necessary to trust in Christ. Apologetics helps by removing these barriers.

However, the purpose of apologetics is not to prove the divinity of the Bible first, so that the gospel could be presented on that basis.

This would be only putting the cart before the horse. The gospel message works by its own power, and there is no need to convince the unbeliever of this power. At the same time, if he expresses his doubts, apologetics can be used to point to the uniqueness of the Scriptures. By doing so, the messages (the gospel and the defense) are placed in the proper sequence.

Apologetics Is Not Scientism: Scientism is the belief that ultimately everything has to be explained with the help of science. This is a false belief.

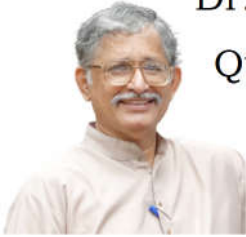
Modern science has been developed only for studying matter and energy. Thus, nothing beyond matter or energy can be studied with

the help of modern physical science. Thus the apologist recognizes that his aim is not to explain everything with the help of science. Rather, he uses science where it is a scientific subject, history where it is a historical subject, logic where it is a logical subject, and so on. He also recognizes that in some places none of these subjects apply, but that the subject can be understood only with faith. In such places he emphasizes faith.

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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



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