

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 simply 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”**
 - 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 cripples – those who lack the scientific and sophisticated view of the real world.

1. So let’s define Christian Apologetics

- The word apologetics comes from the Greek word, *apologia* which means to, give a reasoned defense

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

- 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)

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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- 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
- 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

2. Apologetics in the New Testament

1. 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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- Luke tells Theophilus here that he what he has written has been cautiously and judiciously investigated and that it is based upon **historical evidence**
 - Luke is saying here that, “You can trust the things I have written”, because his document is an precise account of the historical facts
 - 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”
2. Luke relates an account in the book of Acts between the Apostle Paul and the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers in Athens, on Mars Hill
 - Athens was the center of not only Philosophical, but intellectual, and religious conversation in the time of Paul

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

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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- 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)
- 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

- Paul used apologetic technique to **persuade** and **change** the worldview of those that listened to him
 - We see the same thing in the book of Romans as Paul takes on both the Gentile and Jew
3. 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**. 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.

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- Why were they without excuse?
- According to Paul it was because the invisible attributes of God could be “**clearly seen**” in creation
- 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?
- 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

- There was no time for the formulation of theology in the early days of the church

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

- The nascent Christian community were accused of all types of evil owing to the misunderstandings of their faith in the Roman culture
 - It was no problem for a person of that time, who practiced the worship of many gods, to add another god into their ritual
 - Therefore, emperor worship did not present any difficulties to them
 - The Jews, although monotheists, had a racial heritage and national origin, so for the most part the Roman officials left them alone
 - However, when it came to the Christian community, it was a different story
 - The Christians were also monotheists, yet unlike the Jews, had no specific heritage or nation of origin
 - 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
 - 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 notable 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

- Justin Martyr, in his *apology* argued that Christians had every desire to submit to authorities; they paid public taxes, and honored the civil laws
 - However, Justin offered, Christians were not able to confess Caesar as lord
 - It was Jesus that was Lord over all, as a result, the only one worthy of worship
- Along with **sedition** Christians were thought to be guilty of **atheism** as I mentioned earlier because they absolutely refused to worship the Roman deities
 - It was because of this charge that Polycarp, the Bishop of Smyrna, was brought before the emperor when he was in his eighties
 - 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
 - He was given a chance to confess, and state the phrase, "Away with the atheists", referring to himself and other Christians
 - 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.
- Justin Martyr stated in his apology that, Christians were not atheists – they were totally committed theists
 - They believed in God
 - Therefore, it was impossible for them to accurately fit the charge of Atheism
 - It was just that they were monotheists – believing in the one true God – not polytheists as the Romans were.
- There were two more primary charges brought against the Church at that time
 - Incest and perversion was the third charge
 - Cannibalism was the forth

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

- 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
- Concerning the cannibalism, of course, it was because the “ate the flesh of Christ, and drank His blood”

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

- 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
- 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.
- 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.
- 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