

Foundational Apologetics

Definition

Classical definition: a reasoned defense of the Christian faith

“In defending the Christian faith, the most important question before us is ‘What sort of defense will best glorify our God (1 Cor. 10:31)?’ God forbid that in seeking to defend the faith before others we should in that very act compromise it.” John Frame.

*“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, **do all** to the glory of God” 1 Cor. 10:31.*

Working definition: A biblical **defense** of the Christian faith against the attacks of a sinful world with the purpose of spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The definition above implies at least four important truths:

1. We must defend the faith in submission to our ultimate authority, i.e., the Bible.

Apologetics is “a biblical defense...”

1 Peter 3:15

GCC Counseling ministry: “ministering guidance and hope for everyday life through the sufficiency of God’s Word.”

We must never compromise our ultimate commitment to the truthfulness and authority of the Bible for the sake of an argument. We defend the faith as Christians who are under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. We should never act or speak as though Jesus is not Lord of all.

According to our convictions, the Bible is God’s Word. Moreover, Jesus rules over his people through his Word. As such, we cannot attribute ultimate authority to any other source. The Bible must be supreme.

In apologetics, we must honor:

- God’s **truth**
 - About himself
 - About men
 - About the fall
 - About sin
 - About Jesus

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- About salvation
- About everything

“Those who follow Christ are distinct from the world and the ways of the flesh. As Christ says in John 17:17, they are consecrated or ‘set apart’ from the world, and the distinctive thing about Christians is that they have the truth. Being not of this world, believers are ‘set apart’ by the truth. And Jesus asserts in the same verse the ‘God’s Word is truth.’

As we walk before the unbeliever then, the thing that makes us different is our submission to the Word of God. Our lives and thinking are founded on Scripture, while the essence of the unbeliever’s life is the rejection of the revelation of God. Our presupposition of Scripture’s truth is at diametric odds with that of the world, and because we have been given the Word of God, the world hates us. From the outset, the focus of the world’s opposition to the faith is the Word of God itself.” Greg Bahnsen

In view of this, how can we dishonor God in apologetics?

How do we know the Bible is true?

“The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man, or church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof: and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God.”

Westminster Confession of Faith

2 Peter 1:19-21; 1 Thess. 2:13

“We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scriptures. And the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the of the only way of man’s salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God: yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.”

Westminster Confession of Faith

Bottom line: *“Every word of God proves true...” Proverbs 30:5*

Our effectiveness in apologetics is directly proportional to our confidence in the truthfulness, power, and authority of God’s Word.

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“For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.” 2 Corinthians 10:4-5

In Christ *“are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” Colossians 2:3*

“How firm a **foundation**,
you saints of the Lord,
is laid for your faith in his excellent **Word**,
What more can he say than to you he hath said,
to you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?”

2. What we defend is not religion in general, but Christianity in particular.

Apologetics is “a biblical **defense** of the Christian faith...”

Our supreme desire is not that people will come to the belief that *a god* exists. What we proclaim is the existence of the Only God who is the true God, namely, the God of the Bible as professed in the Christian faith.

Classical arguments for the existence of God

- Cosmological (Aristotle – Unmoved Mover; Thomas - “first efficient cause; the contingency of the universe necessitates a non-contingent cause, etc). In short, it is the cause-effect argument. The universe and everything in it is the effect. Therefore, there must be a cause.
- Ontological – (the transcendent nature of reason and absolutes)
- Teleological (purpose, harmony and order).
- Moral (moral consciousness, sense of justice/injustice, reward/punishment, etc).
- Universal consent (religion as a world-wide, inescapable phenomena)
- Historical/theological (there’s purpose in history, moving to a final end).

Two problems:

1. These arguments do not define who the First Cause, Unmoved Mover or God is. They simply argue for the possible existence of a supreme being.
2. These argument, although not necessarily bad, if misused, imply something about the nature of humanity and of God that denies two key Scriptural truths, namely, 1) the depravity of the human heart and 2) the inescapable display of God’s glory.

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These arguments may be said to be the outcome of our faith but never the foundation of it.

God is not the conclusion of an apologetic argument. Rather, God is the beginning and end of any argument.

*“The fear of the Lord is the **beginning** of knowledge.” Proverbs 1:7*

*“The fear of the Lord is the **beginning** of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.” Proverbs 9:10*

The foolishness of the world lies in the fact that it does not fear the Lord (Rom. 3:18)