

Apologetics 101

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Origin

Apologetics comes from the
Greek word apologia
“A written or verbal defense”

Christian Apologetics

The discipline of rationally justifying one's belief in Christianity through systematic discourse.

Extra-biblical and Biblical

Christian Apologetics sometimes enters into areas not directly addressed in the Bible but always integrates the Christian worldview.

Worldview Overview

- A framework for generating, sustaining, and applying knowledge, which affects one's conduct.
- It is one's system of beliefs; their ideology.
- It is how one sees the world.
- Everyone has a worldview, whether or not they can articulate it.

Christian Worldview

- There exists a personal triune God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit)
- God created the heavens and the Earth
- The universe had a beginning (it is not eternal-past)
- Jesus is the Son of God
- There is a spiritual realm
- Natural causes are not the only causes in space-time
- Miracles happen

Christian Worldview

- The virgin birth and resurrection of Jesus were real events in history
- We are more than just matter – we are spirit and matter
- Life is not merely the result of chance + time + energy
- The universe is designed
- Morality is universal and objective based on divine command
- Our existence does not cease at the grave

Islamic Worldview

- There exists a God (Allah) – He is not triune
- Allah created the heavens and the Earth (seven universes in layers)
- The universe had a beginning from a solid mass of water
- Jesus is not the son of Allah but a great prophet – Muhammad is the greatest and last prophet (570-632AD)
- There is a spiritual realm
- Natural causes are not the only causes in space-time
- Miracles happen

Islamic Worldview

- Jesus was virgin born, spoke in the cradle but was not crucified (Allah “lifted him up to his presence”)
- We are matter and spirit
- Life is not the merely result of chance + time + energy
- The universe is designed
- Morality is universal and objective based on the commands of Allah
- Our existence does not cease at the grave

Atheist Worldview

- God does not exist
- The universe is a “brute fact”
- The universe did not have a beginning – it is eternal-past
- Jesus was just a man – if he existed at all
- There is no spiritual realm
- There are no supernatural causes
- Miracles do not happen

Atheist Worldview

- The virgin birth and resurrection events are not real historical events
- We are mere matter
- Life is the result of chance + time + energy
- The universe may appear designed, but isn't
- Morality is relative: simply the product of socio-evolutionary processes
- We cease to exist at the grave

Bill Nye, The Science Guy

"If we raise a generation of students who don't believe in the process of science, who think everything that we've come to know about nature and the universe can be dismissed by a few sentences translated into English from some ancient text, you're not going to continue to innovate,"

What is the Ultimate Goal of Christian Apologetics?

Lead the honest truth-seeker to an openness where the Gospel is shared

Rom 10:17 – “Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ”

Be Prepared!

1 Peter 3:15 – “But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an **answer** to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect”

Being Persuasive

- Apologetics has as a goal, to persuade.
- Persuasiveness is a good thing - it means to *“win someone over.”*

Paul Persuaded

1Cor. 9:19-23: Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

Paul Reasoned

Acts 17 (1-3 and 16,17) When they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he **reasoned** with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead ...While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. So he **reasoned** in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there.

Should we worry about what to say?

Matthew 10:19 - But when they **arrest you**, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say...

Luke 12:11 - When you are **brought before synagogues**, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will **defend** yourselves or what you will say...

God is our defender in times of trouble!
(Psalm 9, 41, 59)

We should **not** take these verses to imply - *one need not concern themselves with how they share the Gospel.*

One option is to just upload the message...

Is it effective in bringing unbelievers to salvation to merely stand on a street corner holding a sign with the reference: “John 3:16”

Why or why not?

If an unbeliever were to share their disbelief in the Bible and their negative past experience in the Church, would you respond by quoting: “John 3:16”

Why or why not?

Most of Us Do Not Upload

Because it is not persuasive!

Our approach to reaching out to the unbeliever is important and God gives us many tools for the job.

- Sometimes it is the right word at the right time guided by the Holy Spirit
- Sometimes it is a prophetic word or verse of Scripture.
- Sometimes we are called to merely listen.
- Sometimes we are to **give an answer** back for the hope we have....

Secularized Culture

Oftentimes we have a tough challenge presenting biblical truths and the Gospel to unbelievers because of the culture we live in...

Worldly Philosophy

Colossians 2:8 – “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.”

Correctly Handle – Not Avoid

So that we are not taken captive by the World's philosophy we should be prepared to correctly handle the truth – Take everything to Christ!

READ:

- 2 Corinthians 10:5 – “take it to Christ”
- Proverbs 23:23 – “buy the truth”
- 1 Thessalonians 5:21 – “test everything”
- 2 Timothy 2:14-15 – “correctly handle”
- 2 Timothy 3:16 – “especially the Word”

Christian Apologetics Uses Reason –Logic

- ✓ • Ministerial Use of Reason - this is the use of logic/reason as a servant or "handmaid" to the Bible and theology. Logic/reason is not put on par with or above the Bible, but stands in a subordinate role to God's revelation.
- ✗ • Magisterial Use of Reason - this is the placing of logic/reason on par with or actually above the Bible. Here logic/reason (that of the individual or a group) is allegedly the final judge, arbitrator, or authority of truth.

Apologetics For the Believer

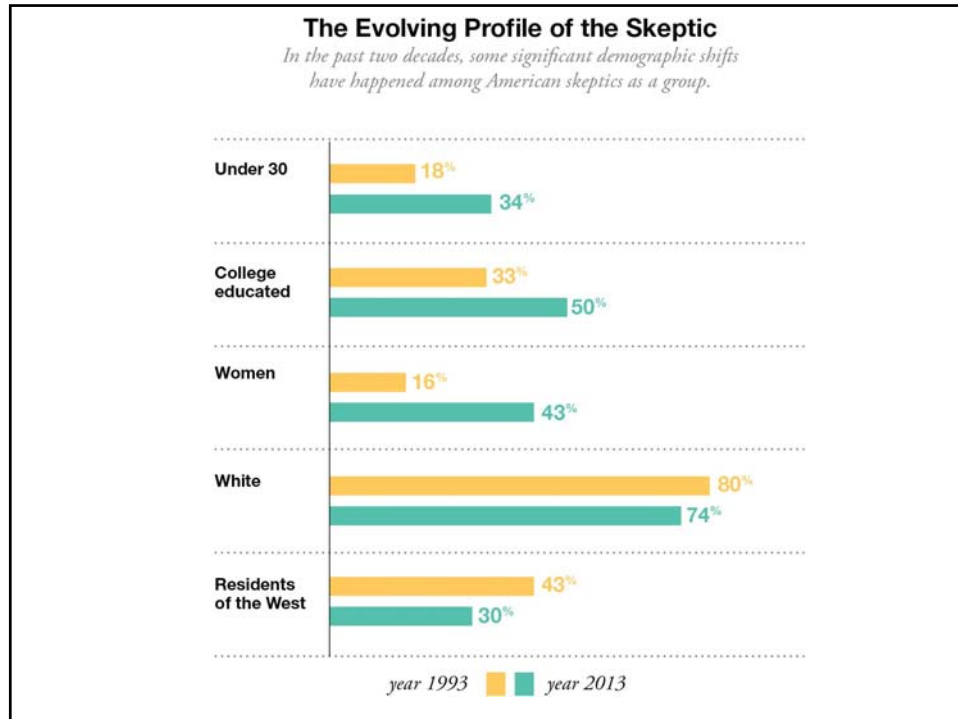
- Ministering to other believers to help with epistemic tension (though doubt is primarily a spiritual battle!)
- Check your brains at the door: often suggested as a reason to pursue apologetics – but it misses the point and puts the focus on us (and our self-esteem) instead of service to God

Pre-Evangelism or Apologetics for the Unbeliever

*In preparation of presenting the Gospel...but only one tool
(introducing Law before Gospel is pre-evangelism for example)*

Weeding the field analogy – sometimes we help to sow the seed; sometimes we help in the harvest; sometimes as the apologist we get to weed the field by removing false ideas.

Removing the boulders analogy – getting rid of the boulders in front of the door (Jesus) one must go through for salvation.



Skeptics' Opinion of Christian Churches

- Groups who share a common physical space, have some common religious views, but not personally connected to each other in meaningful or life-changing ways
- Organizations that add little, if any, value to their communities; their greatest value stems from the limited times they serve the needy in the community
- Organizations that stand for the wrong things and who mix religious beliefs with political policy.
- Led by people who have not earned their positions of influence and are thus not deserving of trust.

Skeptics Take Aim at Christians

“Most atheists and agnostics agree with the idea that radical Christianity is just as threatening in America as is radical Islam.”

“At the same time, two-thirds of Christians (63%) who have an active faith perceive that the nation is becoming more hostile and negative toward Christianity.”

(“Active faith” was defined as simply having gone to church, read the Bible and prayed during the week preceding the survey.)

Our Spheres of Influence

The apologetic impact can go beyond our immediate evangelistic contacts to affect change in the atmosphere of our homes, workplaces, and even the church

Avoid Quarreling

Romans 12:16-18: Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

A good apologist knows when to not respond!
Read 2 Timothy 2:23-24

Online Apologetics Resources

- www.bethinking.org – excellent audio archive for beginner to advanced apologetics
- www.VERITAS.org – The VERITAS Forum
- www.Leaderu.com – Leadership University
- www.TheOCCA.org – Oxford Center for Christian Apologetics
- www.RZIM.org – Ravi Zacharias International Ministries
- www.ReasonableFaith.org – WLC's Site
- www.ARN.org – Access Research Network
- www.UncommonDescent.com – William Dembski's weblog on Intelligent Design
- www.studyLight.org and www.biblegateway.com (excellent Bible resource sites)
- www.apologetics.net