

The What

Christian apologetics is primarily concerned with providing an intellectual defense of the truth claims of the faith.

The term apologetics comes from the Greek word *apologia*, which literally means "a reasoned statement or a verbal defense." To give an apology, then, unlike the more current definition of "I'm sorry," is to defend and argue for a particular point of view.

The work of apologetics rests upon a biblical command. We find a mandate in Scripture to defend the faith, a mandate that every Christian must take seriously.

In 1 Peter 3:14b–16, the apostle writes,

"Have no fear of them [those who would harm you], nor be troubled, but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; 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 (emphasis added)."



"Defending the faith to the best of our ability is not a luxury or an indulgence in intellectual vanity. It is the task given to each one of us as we bear witness to our faith before the world.¹"

Sproul, R. C. (2003). <u>Defending your</u> *faith: an introduction to apologetics* (p. 9). Wheaton, IL: Crossway.

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Defining the Terms

APOLOĠET'IC, APOLOĠET'IC-AL, a. [Gr. απολογεομαι, to speak in defense of; απο and λογος, speech.]

Defending by words or arguments; excusing; said or written in defense, or by way of apology; as an *apologetic* essay. *Boyle*. ¹

¹ Webster, N. (1828). <u>Noah Webster's first edition</u> of An American dictionary of the English



The Why

1. First and foremost, the Word of God *commands us to be ready* to defend the faith (recall **1. Peter 3:15**).

- 2. Studying apologetics helps us to *know our faith*.
- 3. Apologetics is an attempt to *rescue people from hell*.
- 4. We need to be able to *counter the bad image* that Christianity has received in the media and in our culture
- 5. Apologetics helps us dealing with many *false teachings* out there that try to influence the minds of believers and non-believers all over the world.
- 6. The *rise of immorality* in America is a threat not only to society but also to Christianity.
- 7. Many *schools and Universities* are not friendly towards Christianity and our youth desperately need solid answers.

1 Peter 3:15—In your hearts revere 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.

2 Corinthians 10:5—We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

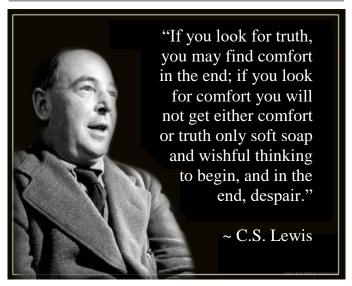
Colossians 4:5-6—Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

1 Timothy 4:16—Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them both, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Proverbs 15:23—A person finds joy in giving an apt reply—and how delightful is a timely word!



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Types of Apologetics

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(e.g. William Lane Craig, R.C. Sproul, Norman Geisler, Stephen T. Davis, Richard Swinburne) Aims to establish theism through arguments from nature then to present evidences to prove that Christianity is the correct version of theism. Most proponents of this method claim that there is no point presenting arguments from historical evidence until the person has embraced a theistic worldview, as they will always interpret them based on their own worldview.

Evidential Method

(e.g. Gary R. Habermas, John W. Montgomery, Clark Pinnock, Wolfhart Pannenberg) Uses both historical and philosophical arguments but focuses primarily on historical and other evidence for the truth of Christianity. Will argue at the same time both for theism in general and Christianity in particular.

The Reformed Epistemology Method

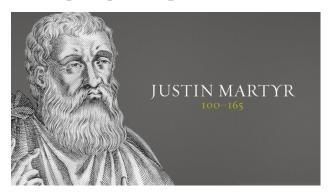
(e.g. Kelly James Clark, Alvin Platinga, Nicholas Wolterstorff, George Mavrodes, William Alston) Argues that people believe many things without evidence and that this is perfectly reasonable. Although positive arguments in defence of Christianity are not necessarily wrong, belief in God does not need the support of evidence or argument to be rational. The focus, therefore, tends to be more on negative apologetics, defending against challenges to theistic belief.

Presuppositional Method

(e.g. John M. Frame, Cornelius Van Til, Gordon Clark, Greg Bahnsen, Francis Schaeffer)
Emphasises the noetic effects of sin to the degree that believers and unbelievers will not share enough common ground for the preceding three methods to accomplish their goal. The apologist must presuppose the truth of Christianity as the proper starting point for apologetics. All experience is interpreted and all truth known through the Christian revelation in the Scriptures.

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Early Apologetics



Justin Martyr's Apology - dated to between AD 155-157. Justin responded to the Roman authorities over several misconceptions. Here are a few of the charges rebutted in his "Apology".

1. The 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, 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.

2. The Second

The charge of atheism was leveled against the early church, because of the Christians' refusal to worship the pantheon of Roman gods.

3. The Third

Charges brought against early
Christianity came because of rumors
concerning their secret meetings in
places like the catacombs.
From the practice of "love feasts"
(where early Christians partook in a
common meal—including Holy
Communion—attesting to their unity
with Christ and each other) came
rumors of incest and sexual
perversion.

4. The Fourth

They were charged with cannibalism (eating and drinking of human flesh and blood.)





An early glimpse of this collision between the Christian faith and pagan philosophy can be seen in Acts 17, the famed account of the apostle Paul on Mars' hill.





Faith VS. Reason: Is Faith opposed to Reason?

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What is Faith?

- Mark Twain: "Faith is believing what you know ain't so."
- Sam Harris: "[Faith is] the license religious people give themselves to keep believing when reasons fail."
- Richard Dawkins: "Faith is the great cop-out, the great excuse to evade the need to think and evaluate evidence. Faith is belief in spite of, even perhaps because of, the lack of evidence."

Faith is the Substance of Hope

¹¹ Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. ² This is what the ancients were commended for.

Faith is the Evidence of things not seen

³ By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

Faith is believing in God

⁴ By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead. (Hebrews 11 1-4 NIV)

• Faith is anchored in Truth

Many people think that the conflict today between science and religion is a conflict between reason and irrationality. But the Bible does not call us to believe in the divine act of creation simply through a leap of faith or by a crucifixion of the intellect by which we ignore what reason can teach us. The great theologians of church history—people like Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, for example—distinguished between faith and reason but insisted that what is embraced by faith is never irrational.¹





Faith VS. Reason: Is Reason in conflict with Faith?

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What is Reason?

Reason is the capacity of consciously making sense of things, establishing and verifying facts and applying logic.

- Reason is a process of order
- Reason is an attribute
- Reason is a verb
- Is not in conflict with our beliefs.
- Is not antichristian.
- Is part of Faith not an enemy to it
- Reason is...the what and why of our beliefs and is not held captive.

"Today we have been infected by something called "Fideism." Fideism says, "I don't need to have a reason for what I believe. I just close my eyes like tiny Alice and take a deep breath, scrunch up my nose, and if I try hard enough, I can believe and jump into the arms of Jesus. I take a blind leap of faith." The Bible never tells us to take a leap of faith into the darkness and hope that there's somebody out there. The Bible calls us to jump out of the darkness and into the light. That is not a blind leap. The faith that the New Testament calls us to is a faith rooted and grounded in something that God makes clear is the truth.

Sproul, R. C. (2003). <u>Defending your faith: an introduction to apologetics</u> (pp. 24–25). Wheaton, IL: Crossway.

