

LECTURE 1: APOLOGETICS DEFINED AND DEFENDED

Definition of apologetics

English dictionary definition (Webster)

“Apology . . . 1. Something said or written in defense or justification of what appears to others to be wrong, or of what may be liable to disapprobation . . . in strict use implies no admission of guilt or error but a desire to make clear the grounds for some course, belief, or the like”

“Apologetics . . . Systematic argumentative discourse in defense, esp. of the divine origin and authority of Christianity”

Different connotation from modern word “apology”

NT usage

ἀπολογέομαι *apologeomai* (verb, 10x), “to answer a charge, make a defense”

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,

Luke 21:14, But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves.

Acts 19:33, The Jews pushed Alexander to the front, and some of the crowd shouted instructions to him. He motioned for silence in order to make a defense before the people.

Acts 24:10, When the governor motioned for him to speak, Paul replied: “I know that for a number of years you have been a judge over this nation; so I gladly make my defense.

Acts 25:8, Then Paul made his defense: “I have done nothing wrong against the law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar.”

Acts 26:1, Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You have permission to speak for yourself.” So Paul motioned with his hand and began his defense.

Acts 26:2, “King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews,

Acts 26:24, At this point Festus interrupted Paul's defense. "You are out of your mind, Paul!" he shouted. "Your great learning is driving you insane."

Rom 2:15, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.

2 Cor 12:19, Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you? We have been speaking in the sight of God as those in Christ; and everything we do, dear friends, is for your strengthening.

ἀπολογία *apologia* (noun, 8x), "answer, defense"

Acts 22:1, "Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense."

Acts 25:16, "I told them that it is not the Roman custom to hand over any man before he has faced his accusers and has had an opportunity to defend himself against their charges.

1 Cor 9:3, This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me.

2 Cor 7:11, See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter.

Phil 1:7, It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me.

Phil 1:16 (v. 17 in KJV), The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel.

2 Tim 4:16, At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them.

1 Pet 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,

Working definition

"Apologetics is the systematic defense of the Christian faith. It seeks to define, establish, defend, and vindicate the presuppositions of Christian theology in the areas of metaphysics, epistemology, and axiology. It also seeks to defend and vindicate the Christian system of truth in every area of thought or investigation."

Importance of apologetics

Some common excuses

- “Philosophy is not for me!”
- “The Bible defends itself.”
- “Apologists don’t agree.”
- “I don’t know enough.”
- “People aren’t interested in these arguments.”

The biblical command

1 Pet. 3:15-16, “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, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.”

Note from these verses:

- Christ occupies your heart first
- You have the hope (resurrection, kingdom)
- People know you have this hope
- You have a reason for this hope which you can verbalize
- You must be ready to give this reason to non-believers
- You must answer with gentleness and respect (NIV and ESV); NASB has “reverence”; NKJV has meekness and fear
 - Respect for God, not pride
 - Respect for person
 - This person in God’s image
 - This person may be elect
 - You were once unconverted
 - Respect even if you are mistreated
- You must have clear conscience (life backs up words)

Titus 1:9-11 [speaking of qualifications of elders], “He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

“For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group. They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain.”

Note from passage:

- Enemies of Christianity have base motives and false doctrines, and cause much damage to the church
- Enemies of Christianity must be refuted, silenced
- Elders must have sufficient knowledge and steadfastness to do two things:
 - Encourage church through sound doctrine
 - Refute those who oppose sound doctrine

These passages show that the NT requires all Christians, as well as church leaders, to be ready to defend their beliefs before an unbelieving world.

Importance recognized by theologians

Benjamin B. Warfield (evidentialist), “It is not true, that the Christian cannot soundly prove his position. It is not true that the Christian view of the world is subjective merely, and is incapable of validation in the forum of pure reason. It is not true that the arguments adduced for the support of the foundations of the Christian religion lack objective validity.

“Face to face with the tremendous energy of thought and the incredible fertility in assault which characterizes the world in its anti-Christian manifestation, Christianity finds its task in thinking itself thoroughly through, and in organizing, not its defense only, but also its attack.”

Cornelius Van Til (presuppositionalist), “Thus there is absolutely certain proof for the existence of God and the truth of Christian theism. . . . The Reformed apologist maintains that there is an absolutely valid argument for the existence of God and for the truth of Christian theism. He cannot do less.”