

Christian Apologetics

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1. A Definition

Apology is a formal written or oral defense of some ideas, view point, religion, philosophy. Apologetics refers to that discipline of theology that is concerned with the defense of, or proofs for Christianity. In the time of the Early Church, Christian theologians were called apologists because they wrote apologies for Christianity. Justin Martyr's *First and Second Apology*, and *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew II*, Aristides *Apology*, Athanagoras' *Supplication for Christians* and *On the Resurrection of the Dead*. Quadratus and Tatian were also apologetists. They stressed the moral superiority and antiquity of monotheism. They applied contemporary philosophical criticism of Greek and Roman popular myths against the religions themselves. Against the Jews the apologists argued that Christ had fulfilled the prophecies.

2. The Process of Development

In the 3rd Century, Christians had to face serious intellectual criticisms leveled against Christianity. Clement of Alexandria's *Protrepticus*, and Origen's *Contra Celsum* defend Christianity in a way that appeals to Hellenistic culture and philosophy. Tertullian's *To the Pagans* and *Apology*, continue apology for Christians. In the 4th Century, Eusebius' *Preparation of the Gospel* and *The Proof of the Gospel* is a defense against the criticisms of Porphyry. Eusebius advocates a political theology and argues for the Christianization of the Roman Empire.

St. Augustine's *De Civitate Dei* offers a critique of political theology. The fall of Rome led to the accusation that conversion to Christianity, and the refusal to give homage to the Roman gods were responsible. Augustine answers that charge in part with an alternative political theology. The notion of the two cities underscores the transcendent eschatology of Christian faith.

In the Medieval Church, the chief apologies were directed against Islam and Judaism.

A highly influential Catholic apologist was Thomas Aquinas who presented five arguments for God's existence in the *Summa Theologiae*. His approach, which adapted Aristotelian thought, is known as Thomism, and has dominated both Roman Catholic and Protestant approaches.

The post - Reformation period constitutes a decisive change from the Medieval apologetic because the post Reformation apologetic became a controversial theology about disputed issues of Christian faith within Christianity. The Roman Catholic - Protestant controversies led to the formulation of new theological tracts. The issues focused on papacy, sacraments, justification and theological method, especially the relationship between scripture and tradition.



3. Modern Approaches to Apologetics

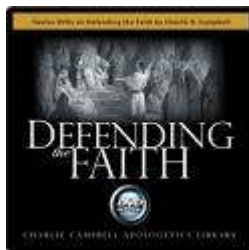
Some of the distinctive modern approaches to apologetics are as follows:

i Christianity as true religion: Marsilio Ficino's *On Christian Religion* presents the truth of Christianity as the true religion.

ii The distinctive essence: Schleiermacher spoke of apologetics as a part of philosophical theology. Apologetics establishes the distinctive theological mode of Christian faith in relation to other religious communities. Polemic on the other hand analyses deviations from the historically established essence.

iii Johann Sebastian von Drey known as the father of the Tübingen school spoke of apologetics as a distinct apologetic discipline. Von Drey demonstrated the revealed foundation of Christianity in his three volume work *Apologetics*.

iv Apologetics as Political Theology: The Enlightenment and the French Revolution led to the development of an apologetical political theology called *New Apologetics*. Abbé Felicité de Lamennais *Essay on Indifference in Matters of Religion*, Joseph de Maistré's *On the Pope, Catholicism, Authority, and Order* stressing the social and functional



v Apologetics and Muarice Blondel developed what is immanence. The method opposes traditional arguments from correspondence between human desire and need, and objects of faith. Pierre Rousselot showed the importance of human subjectivity in the discernment of the signs and evidences of credibility.

vi Transcendental Apologetics: Karl Rahner's *Foundations of the Christian Faith* relates the basic tenets of Christian faith to human existential subjectivity. He continued the apologetical direction of Blondel and Rousselot and the movement of the new theology called *New Apologetics*.

Juan Donoso Cortes' *Essay on* defended Christianity by utility of religion.

Method of Immanence: called a method of the extrinsicism of the miracles. Instead, it shows a

4. Conclusion

Contemporary apologetics has branched out in four different areas.

1. Apologetics as Internal

The truthfulness and meaning of Christianity have become questionable to many within Christianity, and so, apologetics, seeks to communicate Christianity's claims to Christians themselves.

2. The Ground for Apologetics

This is the second issue and it forms the basis of apologetics. Traditionally, one sought to argue for the Christian faith from an independent or neutral stand point shared by one's opponents; human reason, a particular philosophy. This approach is questionable. Current hermeneutical theory seeks to show that the world of religious language opens a vision and a world that should influence and form experience.

3. Apologetical Demonstration

The growing understanding that apologetics and systematic theology should not be separated from one another because it is not possible to argue for one's faith conviction from a neutral standpoint. Arguments must be based on life practice.

4. Apologetics and Ecumenical Dialogue

There exists an interrelationship between truth and the discovery of truth. Open conversation and dialogue is a path to discover truth. Such dialogues lead diverse religions to clarify the distinctiveness of their beliefs and truth claims, and show how religions deal with ever transcending problems and crises of human life. Apologetic concern for truth is not surrendered but opened to a mutual search and learning.

