

Faith Has Its Reasons

**Integrative Approaches
to Defending the Christian Faith**

by

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and

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Second Edition

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Preface

How to relate the Christian worldview to a non-Christian world has been the dilemma of Christian spokespersons since the apostle Paul addressed the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers in Athens. Twenty centuries of experience have not simplified this task, as new challenges have arisen in every century and new methods and approaches to defending the Christian faith have been formulated in response.

In this introductory textbook on Christian apologetics—the study of the defense of the faith—you will be inducted into this two-millennia-long discussion. You will overhear the greatest apologists of all time responding to the intellectual attacks on the Bible in their day. You will take a guided tour of the four major approaches to apologetics that have emerged in the past couple of centuries. Along the way you will pick up insightful answers to such questions as:

- Why is belief in God rational despite the prevalence of evil in the world?
- What facts support the church's testimony that Jesus rose from the dead?
- Can we be certain Christianity is true?
- How can our faith in Christ be based on something more secure than our own understanding without descending into an irrational emotionalism?

At least formal differences in theory and method have sharply distinguished leading Christian apologists. At the same time, many apologists draw on a variety of methods and do not fit neatly into a single 'cookie-cutter' theory of how to defend the Christian faith. In this book, we will identify four 'approaches' or idealized types of Christian apologetic methodologies. We

will look at the actual apologetic arguments of leading apologists and see how their methods compare to those idealized approaches. We will then consider the work of apologists who have advocated directly integrating two or more of these four basic approaches. Our goal is to contribute toward an understanding of these different apologetic methods that will enrich all Christians in their defense of the faith and enable them to speak with clearer and more relevant voices to our present day and beyond.

Sarah and Murali

While apologetics as an intellectual discipline seeks to develop answers to questions that at times may seem abstract, ultimately its purpose is to facilitate bringing real people into a relationship with the living and true God. In this book we will illustrate how the various apologetic methods would be applied in conversations with two very different hypothetical individuals: Sarah and Murali.

Sarah is a college sophomore pursuing a degree in psychology at a state university. Raised in a conservative Protestant home, she began to question the faith of her childhood in high school, as Christianity increasingly seemed a harsh and uncaring religion to her. In her first year at the university she took introductory courses in philosophy, psychology, and English literature that cast doubt on Christian beliefs and values. Her philosophy professor especially had gone out of his way to ridicule “fundamentalism” and had attacked the Christian worldview at its root. Sarah found the “problem of evil”—the question of why a good, all-powerful God would allow so much evil in his world—to be an especially strong argument against Christianity. She was also exposed to theories of biblical criticism that denied the historical accuracy of the Bible

and reinterpreted the biblical miracles as myths. When she went home for the summer after her first year at State, Sarah was a self-confessed skeptic.

Murali came to the United States from India to attend medical school and ended up staying and establishing a practice there. Although he was raised as a Hindu and still respects his family's religion, Murali is not particularly devout. Troubled by the centuries of conflict in the Indian subcontinent between Hindus and Muslims, he has concluded that all religions are basically good and none should be regarded as superior to another. Absolute claims in religion strike him as both unprovable and intolerant, and he resents efforts by both Muslims and Christians to convert him or his family to their beliefs. Although religions speak about God and adherents experience the transcendent in different ways, he believes it is all really the same thing. When Muslims or Christians attempt to convince him that their religion is the truth, Murali asks why God has allowed so many different religions to flourish if only one of them is acceptable to God.

Throughout this book we will periodically ask how a skilled and astute advocate of a particular approach to apologetics would respond to Sarah and Murali. In this way we will see how the various apologetic methods can be applied in concrete situations. We will see their weaknesses as well as their strengths. This will help us think through how the different apologetic methods may be integrated to greater effectiveness in defending the faith.

Fundamental to apologetics is answering questions commonly raised by non-Christians about the truth of Christianity. While many such questions are broached in this book, we will concentrate on those that are basic and crucial to the validity of the Christian faith. These questions are part of the unbelieving stance typified by our model non-Christians, Sarah and Murali. Those questions are the following:

1. Why should we believe in the Bible?
2. Don't all religions lead to God?
3. How do we know that God exists?
4. If God does exist, why does he permit evil?
5. Aren't the miracles of the Bible spiritual myths or legends and not literal fact?
6. Why should I believe what Christians claim about Jesus?

Tom, Joe, Cal, and Martina

In this book we will be analyzing four basic approaches to apologetics. Again, these are idealized types; when we consider the apologetic work of actual Christian apologists we find that there are actually many more than four approaches. However, most of the methods that Christians use in apologetics are closely related to one of these four basic approaches. We might think of them as 'families' of apologetic approaches, with those classified in the same type as sharing certain 'family resemblances' with one another. Membership in one family does not preclude some resemblances to another family. Our analysis of apologetic approaches into these four types closely parallels that found in other surveys of major types of apologetics, though with some minor differences (see the Appendix.)

What distinguishes these four basic approaches to apologetics? To put the matter as simply as possible, each places a distinctive priority on reason, fact, revelation, and faith respectively. In our illustrations with Sarah and Murali, we will also present four Christians utilizing the four approaches in an astute, representative manner. For reasons that will become clear by the end of Part One, we call these four apologists Tom (after Thomas Aquinas, a thirteenth-century theologian), Joe (after Joseph Butler, an eighteenth-century Anglican bishop),

Cal (after John Calvin, the sixteenth-century French Reformer), and Martina (after Martin Luther, the sixteenth-century German Reformer). Tom's apologetic approach places a strong emphasis on logic, and is called *classical apologetics*. Joe's approach emphasizes facts or evidences, and is called *evidentialism*. Cal's approach emphasizes the authority of God's revelation in Scripture; because of its close identification with Calvinist or Reformed theology, this approach is here called *Reformed apologetics*. Finally, Martina's approach emphasizes the need for personal faith and is referred to here as *fideism* (from the Latin *fide*, "faith"). These are differences in emphasis or priority, since apologists favoring one approach over another generally allow some role for reason, facts, revelation, and faith. (Even fideism, which is typically suspicious of apologetic argument, offers a kind of apologetics that uses reason and fact.)

The four approaches diverge on apologetic method or theory regarding the following six questions, all of which will be discussed in this book in relation to each of the four views:

1. On what basis do we claim that Christianity is the truth?
2. What is the relationship between apologetics and theology?
3. Should apologetics engage in a philosophical defense of the Christian faith?
4. Can science be used to defend the Christian faith?
5. Can the Christian faith be supported by historical inquiry?
6. How is our knowledge of Christian truth related to our experience?

Although each approach answers these questions in different ways, those answers are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In practice, many apologists do not fit neatly into one of the four categories because they draw somewhat from two or even more approaches to answer these

questions about apologetics. We see this as a healthy tendency. In fact, we will argue that all four approaches have value and should be integrated together as much as possible.

The Plan of the Book

This book is divided into six parts. Part One introduces the subject of apologetics, and includes a review of the thought of leading apologists in church history and an overview of the four basic approaches to apologetics.

Parts Two through Five present parallel treatments of each of the four approaches. Each part is divided into four chapters. The first chapter of each part traces the roots of the apologetic approach and introduces the thought of five major apologists (chapters 4, 8, 12, and 16). These five apologists are associated with that approach or idealized type in different ways: some are precursors to that approach as it has emerged in modern times, some are advocates of a “pure” form of that approach, and some represent significant variations in that approach. The second chapter analyzes the method and its view of the six questions mentioned above concerning knowledge, theology, philosophy, science, history, and experience (5, 9, 13, and 17). The third chapter examines the method’s answers to the six questions about Scripture, other religions, God, evil, miracles, and Jesus (6, 10, 14, and 18). The fourth chapter of each part summarizes the method and illustrates it with a sample dialogue between our two fictional non-Christians and one of the four model Christian apologists (7, 11, 15, and 19). Each of these latter chapters also discusses the major strengths and weaknesses of the apologetic approach illustrated in the dialogue.

Finally, Part Six discusses ways to integrate the four basic approaches. Its structure closely parallels Parts Two through Five, and thus it begins with a chapter noting the precursors

to an integrative strategy and introducing the thought of five modern apologists who have proposed or utilized such integrative systems (chapter 20). These five apologists integrate the four approaches in different ways, with one approach typically dominating to some extent. The next two chapters propose integrative strategies to understanding the relation of apologetics to theories of knowledge, theology, philosophy, science, history, and experience (21), and to answering the six questions concerning Scripture, other religions, God, evil, miracles, and Jesus (22). We are *not* here advocating a ‘fifth approach’ or offering an integrative system of our own to replace or supplant other apologetic systems. Rather, we are encouraging Christians to use whatever method or methods they find useful while enriching their defense of the faith by learning from apologists who favor other approaches. The final chapter makes the case for a plurality of apologetic methods in view of the differences among apologists and non-Christians, the different needs people have, and the different questions people ask (23). The following table shows the overall plan of the book from Part Two through Part Six.

This second edition of *Faith Has Its Reasons* has been thoroughly updated and in other respects revised. Wherever possible we have drawn on more recent publications of living apologists and made note of recent studies pertaining to apologists and apologetic issues. A number of reviewers of the first edition made some insightful criticisms that we have taken into consideration in this revision. It may be impossible, even in a book of this length, to treat such a vast array of thinkers and diversity of issues without simplifying and even omitting some significant aspects of the subject matter. We encourage you to use this book as an *introduction* to the field of apologetics—a handbook to your reading of the groundbreaking apologists of the past and the present.

We pray that this book will be useful in helping you to “sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence” (1 Peter 3:15).

PART TWO	PART THREE	PART FOUR	PART FIVE	PART SIX
4. APOLOGISTS/ REASON	8. APOLOGISTS/ FACT	12. APOLOGISTS/ REVELATION	16. APOLOGISTS/ FAITH	20. APOLOGISTS/ INTEGRATION
Roots	Roots	John Calvin	Roots	Precursors
B. B. Warfield	Joseph Butler	Modern Roots	Martin Luther	Edward J. Carnell
C. S. Lewis	James Orr	Herman Dooyeweerd	Blaise Pascal	Francis A. Schaeffer
Norman L. Geisler	Clark H. Pinnock	Cornelius Van Til	Søren Kierkegaard	David K. Clark
Peter Kreeft	John Warwick Montgomery	Gordon H. Clark	Karl Barth	C. Stephen Evans
William Lane Craig	Richard Swinburne	Alvin Plantinga	Donald G. Bloesch	John M. Frame
5. CLASSICAL APOLOGETICS: Reasonable Faith	9. EVIDENTIALIST APOLOGETICS: Faith Founded on Fact	13. REFORMED APOLOGETICS: Christianity in Conflict	17. FIDEIST APOLOGETICS: Reasons of the Heart	21. CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH
Rational Tests for Determining Truth	Methods for Discovering Truth	Biblical Standard for Defining Truth	Divine Call to Obey the Truth	Perspectival Approaches to Defending Truth
Foundation of Theology	Defense of Theology	Vindication of Theology	Making Theology Personal	Apologetics & Theology
Constructive Use of Philosophy	Critical Use of Philosophy	Toward a Christian Philosophy	Critiquing the God of the Philosophers	Apologetics & Philosophy
Christianity Consistent with Science	Christianity Vindicated by Science	Christianity Against False Science	Christianity & the Reality Beyond Science	Christianity & Science
Revelation Confirmed in History	History as the Medium of Revelation	Revelation Interpreting History	Revelation Transcending History	Revelation & History
Proof from Experience	Experience Founded on Evidence	Problem with Experience	Faith Is Experience	Apologetics & Experience
6. THE RATIONALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW	10. PRESENTING EVIDENCE THAT DEMANDS A VERDICT	14. TAKING EVERY THOUGHT CAPTIVE	18. CALLING PEOPLE TO ENCOUNTER GOD	22. REASONS FOR HOPE
Scripture as Conclusion	Scripture as Source	Scripture as Foundation	Scripture as Witness	Scripture as Truth
Disproving Other Worldviews	Uniqueness of Christianity	Antithesis between Christian & Non- Christian Religion	Christian Faith: Not Another Religion	Myth, Truth, & Religion
Proving God's Existence	The Case for God	Belief in God as Basic	To Know God Is to Know God Exists	God Who Makes Himself Known
Deductive Problem of Evil	Inductive Problem of Evil	Theological Problem of Evil	Personal Problem of Evil	Solutions to the Problems of Evil
Miracles as the Credentials of Revelation	Miracles as Evidence for God	Miracles as Revealed by God	Miracles as God Revealing Himself	Miracles as Signs
Jesus: Alternatives	Jesus: Evidence	Jesus: Self-Attesting	Jesus: Christ of Faith	Jesus: The Answer
7. APOLOGETICS/ LIMITS OF	11. APOLOGETICS/	15. APOLOGETICS/	19. APOLOGETICS/	23. SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN

REASON	INTERPRETATION OF FACT	AUTHORITY OF REVELATION	SUBJECTIVITY OF FAITH	LOVE
Classical Model	Evidential Model	Reformed Model	Fideist Model	One Body, Many Gifts: Apologists
Classical Apologetics Illustrated	Evidentialism Illustrated	Reformed Apologetics Illustrated	Fideist Apologetics Illustrated	One World, Many Individuals: People
Strengths	Strengths	Strengths	Strengths	One Process, Many Stages: Needs
Weaknesses	Weaknesses	Weaknesses	Weaknesses	One Faith, Many Questions: Problems