

Introduction to Apologetics

- **Definition of Apologetics**

Apologetics is the branch of Christianity that deals with the defense and establishment of the Christian faith.

- *Oxford Dictionary:* “reasoned arguments or writings in justification of something typically a theory or religious doctrine.”
- The term apologetics etymologically derives from the Classical Greek word *apologia*. In the Classical Greek legal system two key technical terms were employed: the prosecution delivered the *kategoria* (κατηγορία), and the defendant replied with an *apologia*. To deliver an *apologia* meant making a formal speech or giving an explanation to reply and rebut the charges, as in the case of Socrates' defense. This Classical Greek term appears in the Koine (i.e. common) Greek of the New Testament. The Apostle Paul employs the term *apologia* in his trial speech to Festus and Agrippa when he says "I make my defense" (Acts 26:2). A cognate term appears in Paul's Letter to the Philippians as he is "defending the gospel" (Philippians 1:7 & 16), and in 1 Peter 3:15 believers must be ready to give an "answer" for their faith. The word also appears in the negative in Romans 1:20: unbelievers are *αναπολόγητοι* (anapologētoi) (without excuse, defense, or apology) for rejecting the revelation of God in creation.¹
- **The Prerequisites** (1 Peter 3:14-16)
 - Be saved. (vs. 15)
 - Be bold (vs. 14)
 - “Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts” (vs. 15)
 - Be ready (vs. 15)
 - Have an attitude of gentleness to men and reverence to God (vs. 15)

¹ “Apologetics - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia”, n.d.,
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apologetics#Etymology>.

- “Keep a good conscience” (vs. 16)
- **Apologetic Systems**
 - *Classical Apologetics*: Reason Undergirds Faith
 - “The *classical method* is an approach that begins by employing natural theology to establish theism as the correct worldview. After God’s existence has thus been shown, the classical method moves to a presentation of the historical evidences for the deity of Christ, the trustworthiness of Scripture, et cetera, to show that Christianity is the best version of theism, as opposed to, say, Judaism and Islam.”²
 - “This approach is comprised of natural theology and Christian evidences. Among its practitioners are such great figures as Thomas Aquinas with his famous Five Ways of demonstrating God’s existence and his appeal to the signs of credibility (miracles and prophecy) to validate Christian doctrines not demonstrable by reason alone.”³ - William Lane Craig
 - Plato → Thomas Aquinas → R.C. Sproul, etc.
 - Cosmological argument, Teleological argument, Ontological argument, etc.
 - *Evidential Apologetics*: Evidence Undergirds Faith
 - “Evidential apologetics stresses evidence such as miracles, fulfilled prophecies, etc., and uses reason to support them.”⁴ - Matt Slick
 - The evidential method has much in common with the classical method except in solving the issue concerning the value of miracles as evidence. Evidentialism as an apologetic method may be characterized as the “one-step” approach. Miracles do not presuppose God’s existence (as most contemporary classical apologists assert) but can serve as one sort of evidence for God. . . It tends to

² S.B. Cowan, S.N. Gundry, and W.L. Craig, *Five Views on Apologetics*, Counterpoints: Exploring Theology (Zondervan Pub. House, 2000), 15.

³ Ibid., 28.

⁴ “Evidential Apologetics | Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry”, n.d., <http://carm.org/evidential-apologetics>.

focus chiefly on the legitimacy of accumulating various historical and other inductive arguments for the truth of Christianity.⁵

- B. B. Warfield, John Warwick Montgomery, Clark Pinnock, etc.
- *Presuppositional Apologetics*: Faith Undergirds Reason
 - Due to the noetic effects of sin, presuppositionalists usually hold that there is not enough common ground between believers and unbelievers that would allow followers of the first three methods to accomplish their goals. The apologist must simply presuppose the truth of Christianity as the proper starting point in apologetics. Here the Christian revelation in the Scriptures is the framework through which all experience is interpreted and all truth is known. Various evidences and arguments can be advanced for the truth of Christianity, but these at least implicitly presuppose premises that can be true only if Christianity is true. Presuppositionalists attempt, then, to argue transcendentally. That is, they argue that all meaning and thought—indeed, every fact—logically presupposes the God of the Scriptures.⁶
 - “[We] should present the biblical God, not merely as the conclusion to an argument, but as the one who makes argument possible”⁷ - John Frame
 - “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.” - Proverbs 1:7
 - “Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I say this in order that no one may delude you with persuasive argument.” - Col. 2:2b-4
 - “I believe in order to understand”- Augustine
 - Solomon → Paul → Augustine → Calvin → Van Til
- Other Methods

⁵ Cowan, Gundry, and Craig, *Five Views on Apologetics*, 16-17.

⁶ Ibid., 19.

⁷ Ibid., 220.

- Reformed Epistemology
- “Cumulative Case Method”
- “Existential Apologetics”

Summary: There is much overlap between the three major systems. Classical apologists regularly utilize evidential arguments and vice-versa. Presuppositionalists will even use arguments from the other two traditions but only if the biblical God is first assumed as the starting point. God is both the premise and the conclusion of the Presuppositionalist’s arguments. There are also Classical apologists who will utilize the transcendental argument, however, in order to do so they must be inconsistent with their belief in man’s autonomy.

Presuppositionalism is the biblical apologetic used by Paul at Mar’s Hill. It is the only way to reason with a nonbeliever in such a way that he is not made autonomous. All “evidential” and “Classical” arguments must be framed in a presuppositional way in order to “answer a fool according to his folly.”

	Classical	Evidential	Presuppositional
Ultimate Authority	Reason (Man)	Evidence (Man)	The Word of God
Arguments	cosmological, teleological, ontological	fulfilled prophecy, historical proof, scientific arguments	the transcendental argument
Strategy	Progressively build a case for the Bible starting with blank theism and adding components.	Prove a bare-bones or “mere” Christianity by proving that certain things in the Bible are accurate based on modern historical method.	Prove the biblical or “reformed” Christian worldview as a “package deal” that cannot be rejected without appealing to logical absurdity.

- **Basic Philosophy**
 - *Epistemology*: How do we know?
 - *Metaphysics*: What can be known?

- *Ethics (or “Value”) Theory:* What types of things are good or bad?

The three components of philosophy depend on each other. A system that attempts to answer all three questions in a consistent way is called a “worldview.”

