

Introduction To Integrated Christian Apologetics

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The word "apologetics" confuses many into thinking that it refers to some kind of apologizing. Actually this word is not derived from the English word "apology", but from the Greek word "apologia", which is a word referring to "making a defense". Apologetics is a general term, signifying a formal defense of any kind. On the other hand, Christian Apologetics is that branch of Christian theology that answers the question "is Christianity believable". Integrated Apologetics stands for the special approach developed by us in our course material where we integrate the best from all schools of thought in Christian Apologetics.

In the past four centuries, all kinds of religious and spiritual beliefs have come under intense attack at the hands of radical philosophers and critics. Of this assault, the Christian faith has received the major portion because of a number of historical reasons some of which will be mentioned later.

These criticisms against the Christian faith have received so much media coverage that even a good number of well informed non Christians are aware of some of the major charges labeled against the Christian faith. Interestingly, books published against the Christian faith and sold from secular shops become bestsellers even in countries where the buyers are not Christians. This is the result of all this adverse publicity against the Christian faith.

Today all around us there is an atmosphere where criticism of the Bible and related subjects is widespread. Most of the Christian students have to face these attacks from other students in some form or other. It is quite common to meet Christian college-students who are perplexed by questions that are hurled against their faith. The volley of questions come with such high frequency that they find themselves at a loss in answering even a portion of them all. Moreover, since most of them never faced these questions before this assault, they usually do not know what to think and what to answer. Further, they often fall into the trap of thinking that if they do not know the answer, then correct or satisfactory answers do not exist.

Once a person erroneously concludes that answers do not exist for the questions raised against the Bible, his own faith is the next victim. His faith in the inspiration, authority, and the infallibility of the Scriptures suffer very much. He then finds himself in a split mentality: he knows that it is these Scriptures which have brought the message of true salvation to him, but at the same time he does not know what all things written in this Book are believable !

Apologetics is the solution to this problem. A person who has some background in the Christian apologetics can help this person to see the answers to the problems and questions which he is facing. Further, a Christian Apologist can pass on information to the doubting person, using which he can better face the people who raise questions against the Bible.

The last four to five centuries have been a time in history when anti Christian philosophies and thought patterns have flourished to the full extent in Christian societies. Humanism, a philosophy in which man has been elevated to the position of God, is the philosophy of the present times. It is the foundation of almost all the present-day ways of thinking and education. Therefore, students who have been brought up in any of the present day schools or colleges learns many things which are contrary to the Word of God. By the time a person passes out of his college, he accumulates hundreds of such ideas against the Christian faith. The cumulative

weight of these ideas give so much doubt to young believers that all over the world they are struggling to overcome problems of distrust and doubt.

No individual can possibly solve each and every doubt that these people have, but with the help of apologetics they can definitely help the people in doubt. An apologist can give answers to a good number of their problems, and can then teach them the basics of the humanistic philosophy. This will help the inquirers not only to overcome their doubts, but will also help them to see the root causes of the problems. This will also give them a capability to deal effectively with at least a good number of questions as they come to them in future.

There is no person in this world who does not face problems. Everyone faces puzzles, questions, and fears of different kinds. Such difficult situations will not go away merely by ignoring them or by pretending that they do not exist. Facing a problem is a difficult affair, and people do resort to tactics which avoid them instead of facing them. This can be seen frequently in relation to the Bible. The attacks against the Scriptures come from such diverse fields and sometimes from people of such high learning that it becomes difficult to answer all of them. No one can ever hope to master all the disciplines of study from which these questions are raised. It is precisely this difficulty which induces many people to avoid facing the issues. But there is actually no need for doing this. Acquiring the basic tools of Christian apologetics will be sufficient to face most of the attacks.

No person can ever hope to answer all the questions that are put to him, but every Christian should definitely know something about what godly men are doing in the field of Christian apologetics. Today the Christian society has numerous highly qualified and dedicated men belonging to all disciplines of study who are trying to answer each and every question that has been hurled against the Bible. No individual can face all of it, and it is natural for individuals to become fearful of these attacks, but once a person realizes that so many people are working on these problems, then he can rest assured that it will not be long before the answer is published. In fact, today there are several thousand scholars around the world who are publishing their conclusions in defense of the Christian faith through hundreds of professional journals and popular magazines. They are accessible to anyone who is willing to take interest.

The Bible shall always be attacked, and there will always be people whose faith will be shaken by such attacks. Only the proper use of Christian Apologetics will help such people.

A Biblical Basis for Christian Apologetics

We have already seen that Christian Apologetics is that branch of Christian studies that deals with the defense of the Christian faith. This is fully a Biblical activity because it has been advised and demonstrated in the Bible at various places. For example, the Scripture commands: "Always be prepared to make defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15, RSV). This means that making a defense of one's faith to those who question the Christian faith is a part of our spiritual duty. The word "Apologetics" comes from the Greek word APOLOGIA used here, and translated as "defense". So apologetics is a defending of the faith, not making of apologies as some might wrongly conclude from the English word 'apologetics'.

A good definition of the character and function of Christian apologetics can be found in Scripture when it says: "We live in the flesh, of course, but the muscles that we fight with are not flesh. Our war is not fought with weapons of flesh, yet are strong enough, in God's cause, to demolish sophistries, and the arrogance that tries to resist the knowledge of God ; every thought is our prisoner, captured to be brought into obedience to Christ" (II Corinthians 10:3-6, Phillips)

Almost all of the book of Job is an apologetics to justify God's dealings with man. In the face of opposition from his friends and family, Job tries to vindicate the reasons for his loyalty and confidence in the Lord. He makes it very clear that the Lord of Israel was not like the gods of pagans around them; rather, He is a faithful God who would never fail those who trust in Him.

Psalms 14 and 19 are also apologetic in character. Romans 1:20 confirms this when it says that the marvels of the nature are enough to indicate the existence of an intelligent and all powerful God. The message which the Holy Spirit delivered through Paul in Acts 17 is another example where an apologetic approach is used to preach the gospel to skeptical unbelievers.

APOLOGETIC APPROACHES IN THE BIBLE: Though the Bible places great stress upon faith and belief, and though it condemns deliberate skepticism and unbelief, it does not speak against reason and investigation. The Bible encourages the use of reason and investigation when they are done sincerely and as an aid to honest inquiry. Both the Old as well as the New Testament furnish ample evidence of this. What's more, God Himself gives evidence in numerous places to lead people into faith.

When God commanded Moses to go to Pharaoh, He gave two signs to Moses so that he could establish that it is God who sent Him. Whether Pharaoh believed or not is a different subject, but we should not ignore that God provided demonstration when Pharaoh asked for it. We see the same thing in the case of Gideon who twice requested for signs, and was granted the request both the times. We see the same in the case of Hezekiah who was given a choice of signs to confirm that the Lord has spoken (1 Kings 20:5-12).

When Daniel and his friends spoke to the man who was in-charge over them, he suggested that this steward should "prove" (investigate and conclude) them for ten days. Again this is the experimental approach, where a decision is taken on the basis of investigation.

Jesus and his biographers repeatedly stressed that the primary purpose of the miracles performed by Jesus were to demonstrate who He was, and not merely to bring health to the world. In many other places the Scripture stress that the miracles in the New Testament church were meant to ATTEST that God was behind all these things. Though Jesus chided "doubting Thomas" for his skepticism, He did not refuse to give proof. Rather, He invited Thomas and even other disciples to examine Him physically and conclude that He is risen.

Thus the Bible furnishes ample examples to indicate the necessity and the important role played by apologetics for the Christians as well as non Christian hearers of God's message. Though the Bible condemns unbelief, it encourages sincere inquiry. And that is where Apologetics plays an important role.

APOLOGETICS AND POLEMICS: An important companion of Apologetics is Polemics. While Apologetics deals with objections and attacks originating from people outside the Christian faith, Polemics deals with attacks originating from within the Church. Many of the readers might be surprised when we mention attacks from "within" the church because none of us expects our own people to attack our blessed faith. However, people have always existed within the Jewish and the Christian faith who have attacked the Old and the New Testament.

These attacks come in two forms. First, in the form of distorted Bible interpretation. Second, through those false cults who claim that they are a true Christian group.

People who attack the Bible from inside the Church would include everyone who

teach perverted doctrines. During the New Testament period this included the Ebionites, Pelegians, Montanists, Nestorians, Arians, and many others from within the Church. At the dawn of the twenty-first century this would include the radicals, the ecumenists, the Christian New Agers. This would also include those who teach salvation through baptism, those who attack the person of Christ (Smithism/Poonenism), and those who Hinduize Christian doctrines (Prajapati Proponents, Christian Vedantists), etc.

False Cults which claim to be Christian but who still attack the fundamentals of the Christian faith include, Jehovah Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, Mormons, TPM (Ceylon Pentecostal Mission), Roman Catholics, The Toronto Movement, etc. Their number is growing constantly, and the leaven of their erroneous teachings is also spreading.

Though Apologetics and Polemics are two different activities, their ultimate purpose is one and the same: to refute error and to establish truth. Till a few decades ago they could easily be separated from each other so that those who practice Apologetics did not need to know about Polemics, and those who specialized in Polemics did not have to study apologetics. But no more ! All kinds of attacks against the Christian faith now borrow insights from each other, so that today every apologist must be an expert in polemics, and every polemicist must be an expert in apologetics.

History Of Christian Apologetics

Many people have this misunderstanding that Christian Apologetics and Polemics are subjects of recent origin. Nothing could be farther from truth. Biblical Apologetics and Polemics are as old as the Bible itself is. Both the Old as well as the New Testament give us ample evidence of this.

APOLOGETICS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Attacks against the Word of God started as early as in the Old Testament period. Within the Old Testament record we can see many people who questioned whether the God of the Israelites is the true God, and we notice that in many cases God provided them suitable answers and demonstrations. Some of these proofs have been mentioned on the previous pages of this book, thus a repetition is not needed.

It must be added, however, that the listing from the Old Testament given above is only a sample. The actual number of apologetic passages and incidents in the Old Testament is too numerous to be listed here in this book.

APOLOGETICS AMONG JEWISH FATHERS: The Jewish Fathers and Leaders had to face much opposition from the pagans because the Bible emphasizes many things which are resented by the Pagans. For example, right from Genesis, the Bible teaches that man is a sinner, totally depraved, and unable to save himself. Grace is the only means available for salvation. This irritated and irked the pagans who had a Universalist theology.

Universalism teaches the salvation of everyone in the world irrespective of his religion. No exclusiveness of doctrines and practices is accepted by them. Thus it was natural for the Universalist pagans in Old Testament times to attack the Bible.

Though writing materials were not in abundance at that time, many of these critics of the Bible produced large numbers of books to attack the Old Testament. History is our witness that people who attacked the Bible always got great reception from people, and consequently these critics were able to spread their messages very wide. Many of the Jewish Rabbis and scholars wrote countless volumes to counter the charges brought by these critics. One of the best known Jewish apologetic works is Contra Apion, written by the first century Army officer and historian

Flavius Josephus. This book is easily available today in many Seminary libraries as part of the Complete Works Of Josephus. Archaeologists have discovered numerous other Jewish apologetic works also.

APOLOGETICS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT: With the establishment of the New Testament Church came a new breed of heretics and critics. This was partially because of the extended influence of pagan philosophies coupled with easy availability of writing materials. The rise of professionals called "scribes" also made it possible for writings to be copied rapidly and economically. Thus these heretics were able to make their voice heard widely.

Another reason for the rise of critics, heretics and heretical movements was the New Testament itself. Till the book of Malachi, doctrinal subject were taught indirectly and often in a veiled manner. However, in New Testament doctrines related to man's sin, total depravity, salvation by grace alone and faith alone, etc. were proclaimed more clearly. All the unique Biblical doctrines received clearer explanation and exposition in the New Testament. This made a lot of people uncomfortable.

As long as the divine message was partially veiled, these critics did not worry much. But clear proclamation to the Biblical message exposed their errors, biases, and prejudices clearly. No longer could they maintain their Universalism, Humanism, Accommodationsim, etc. No longer could they maintain their brand of theology, seeing that now the fundamental tenets of biblical theology were spelled out clearly.

There were a large number of people who wanted to be called Christians, but who did not want to accept these biblical doctrines. Many of them were converts from various kinds of heathen faiths. They did not want to abandon their loyalty to the philosophies and theologies which they had believed before coming to the Church. Further, many of them loved the freedom for sensuality that was offered by their previously believed pagan philosophies. Thus using all their literary and theological skill they tried to popularize their varieties of perverted teachings. The main aim was self-justification.

Thus there were Judizers who created problems in Galatia and other places. The Epistle To Galatians is a refutation of their teachings. There were Gnostics who tried to synthesize Christian theology with occult philosophies. The Epistle To Colossians is an apologetic against them. The Epistle To Hebrews is an apologetic against another heresy. Jude had to remind his readers to contend for the faith against those who would like to distort the Christian message. Peter had to warn his readers against those who mocked at statements in portions of the New Testament, and so on. Thus throughout the New Testament documents we notice the opposition of scornful people and heretics at distorting biblical truths. Instead of ignoring them, the New Testament writers wrote extensively to expose error, to condemn it, and also to establish truth.

APOLOGETICS AMONG CHURCH FATHERS: The availability of New Testament documents irritated Christians not only in the first century, but also in the centuries that followed. Wanting to hold on simultaneously to both the Bible and their own pagan philosophies, many of them spread heretical doctrines using all means available to them. We have already mentioned the name of Gnostics, Nestorians, Ebionites, Montanists, Pelegians, Arians, and many others. Several Church councils gathered together to condemn these heresies, and that is one way in which these false teachings could be suppressed.

Many of the heretics were dedicated writers, and they produced a large number of voluminous books to spread their ideas. Consequently, the Church Fathers of the same period were also forced to write lengthy books to refute these errors. A large

amount of these heretical writings and apologetic refutations have been discovered by archaeologists.

The availability of the New Testament documents irked not only the rebel Christians, but irritated many non Christian writers. Most of these writers were inclined to atheism, universalism, humanism, hedonism, or narcissism. Since the New Testament documents are totally contrary to these philosophies, they found it necessary (as self-justification) to attack the Bible.

Further, the Bible is the only religious book in the world that insists that every human is a born sinner, totally depraved, and unable to anything at all for his own salvation. This, coupled with the New Testament insistence of Bible Alone, Christ Alone, Grace Alone, and Faith Alone, also irritated many of them. Further, the fast spread of the Christian faith, and the deep commitment of these new converts also overwhelmed many of these non Christian critics. Fearing that this spread of gospel would soon convert the whole world into the Christian faith they launched out their tirades against the Bible, Jesus Christ, and Christianity.

A notable example is the rationalist writer Porphyry. Living in Sicily in the third century, he wrote a work entitled "Against Christianity". What is surprising is the size of this work which occupied a solid FIFTEEN volumes !! Obviously, such prolific writers were able to influence a large number of people. But here again the Church Fathers did not sit silent. Rather, they courageously combated Porphyry and similar rationalists and produced hundreds of volumes of Christian Apologetics and Polemics. Were it not for the warrior mentality of these Fathers, a lot more of damage could have been done by these rationalists.

MODERN CREATIONISM AND APOLOGETICS: Though Christian Apologetics and Polemics was strong in the first five centuries of Church, it became somewhat dormant for almost a thousand years. This was the time when the Roman Catholic Church ruled the Christian world with an iron rod. Rather than reasoning and arguing with the dissenters, the Church found it easier and better just to kill them. Opposing voices were not heard much in public because of this life-threatening atmosphere.

Today very few people know that from about middle of the fourth century to the middle of the fourteenth century, the Roman Catholic church indulged in a great struggle for ecclesiastical as well as temporal power. In this struggle they silenced, tortured, and killed millions of dissenting people. A revolt brewed in the hearts of people, specially of the thinkers in Europe. However, the dictatorial rule of the Church prevented them from expressing themselves. Thus when the Reformation gave them the freedom coveted by all thinkers, they came out in torrents against the Church.

Since most bitter people did not understand the difference between the Roman Catholic church, the true church of Christ, and the Christ of the Bible, they opposed and rejected all of these things simultaneously. It was a case of throwing away the baby with the bath-water. This rejection of Christianity was coupled with the rise of a host of anti-Christian thinkers, philosophies, and movements. By the time the nineteenth century arrived, the number of such anti-Christian people and movements became simply mind boggling. What united them all was their opposition to the Bible and Christianity.

However, since the idea of creation was widely accepted by the masses (including most of the educated people), it was difficult for them to overthrow the authority of the Bible. They were convinced that only a rejection of the Bible would solve the problem. By the middle of the nineteenth century there was a preparation of hearts and an expectation in the air that Christianity can now be challenged. But the

crucial factor which could do this was nowhere in sight.

The Theory Of Evolution was there already, but it was there only in philosophical form. The rise of modern science had convinced them that even the best philosophical speculation has no feet to stand upon till it is given a scientific basis. It was just this time when Charles Darwin proposed his Theory Of Evolution. For the first time someone was able to propose this hypothesis in the form of a theory of SCIENCE ! That was the reason why all of these dissenting movements eagerly and immediately swallowed Darwin's theory and he became a hero overnight.

Things changed rapidly and this theory took theology also into its influence by the close of the nineteenth century. The same was the period when infidels with degrees in theology were coming into positions of power in German universities. Some of these European and American evolutionists soon persuaded some theologians, specially in Germany, that evolution is a fact. A few of these theologians then began persuading other theologians and seminary teachers that now Christians must now accept evolution as a fact. The bolder theologians among them even started teaching that portions of the Bible that deal with this record of creation should be abandoned altogether. Germany provided an ideal ground for breeding these thinkers because German theological institutes are controlled and funded by government money. Government is interested only in academic degrees, not in whether a person is born again and committed to the Bible.

Uncommitted radical German theologians had plenty of degrees, but not Christ in their hearts. Thus they began to act as mercenaries, destroying belief in the Bible. Having a clear agenda to destroy belief in the Bible, they aimed at destroying the foundations of Christianity first. Further, since Government funding was liberal, they had the financial muscle-power to print and spread their ideas worldwide. This is how the German atheists (though they called themselves Christians) were able to influence all the world through their theology.

However, not everyone was willing to write off the Bible completely. Many were interested more in keeping both the beliefs together. Acceptance of evolution would make them respectable in the eyes of theological infidels, but at the same time acceptance of creation would keep them in the confines of evangelical Christianity. Thus began an era of compromises. This is the era when compromise interpretations of Genesis came into vogue. Many of these interpretations became widespread, partially through the influence of Scofield, and partially through the influence of compromising seminaries.

Compromise is never good for truth, because it is truth that suffers most when it is mixed with falsehood. Thus this mingling of evolution with creation eventually destroyed the Biblical foundations to such a level that radicals, humanists, evolutionists, rationalists, and atheists had a field day attacking Christians. Things came to such alarming state that in the first half of the twentieth century it was difficult to find qualified theologians in USA or Europe who would openly defend the Biblical story of creation. Since the Indian evangelical theology was mostly a copy of the Western theology, the Indian theologians also avoided defending the Biblical doctrine of Creation.

A few American Seventh Day Adventists were the only people who were willing to defend the idea of creation during this period. However, there was a small remnant in some conservative churches in USA who were willing to take a strong stand. In the first decade of the twentieth century they produced 12 volumes of books known as "The Fundamentals". While only a minority of scholars at that time identified themselves with the stand taken in these books, their influence eventually helped to turn the tide in favour of the Bible.

American evangelical Christians have begun to notice in the fifties that compromise

is a slow poison that ultimately destroys respect for truth. Some of them came together and started writing aggressively on themes defending the historical and scientific reliability of the Bible. This gave birth to the modern interest in Apologetics and Creationism. At the dawn of the twenty-first century the influence of this revival has spread all over the world, and today more than one hundred and fifty organizations function around the world, devoted solely to apologetics. Their influence has been so strong that a large number of Seminaries all around the world have begun assert the historical and scientific reliability of the Bible.

CREATIONISM IN INDIA: Indian theological situation has many a times been a copy of what happens in the West. Thus with the rise of the German radical theology, most of the theologians and seminary-trained people in the mainline Protestant churches like the Lutherans, Methodists, CNI, CSI, and Marthoma churches became theologically radical. The situation is so bad that evangelical thinking is scorned in their seminaries, and it is difficult to discover theologians and priests in their forties who have an evangelical commitment or who are willing to take a stand for the historical and scientific reliability of the Bible.

The separatist churches like the Brethren, the Pentecostals, and the Independent/Fundamental Baptists, and numerous other such evangelical groups were a little better. They did not forsake their high view of the Bible. At the same time almost all of them capitulated to compromise interpretations like Theistic Evolution and Gap Theory. The influence of C. I. Scofield is notable in spreading the Gap Theory.

The first Indian to take a strong stand against the Theory Of Evolution was the late Professor H. Enoch. This was in the early sixties. His English book Evolution Or Creation influenced a large number of young Indians, specially through the EU and EGF groups. He wrote many articles in the UESI student magazine also.

In the sixties and seventies no evangelical magazine was willing to publish articles defending the historicity of the Bible or creation. The only exception was Cross And Crown, a Pentecostal Magazine edited by Dr. Thomas Mathews from Udaipur, Rajasthan. This magazine took a firm stand in favour of the accuracy of the Bible, and carried such articles in it regularly for decades.

In the seventies a fellowship of scientists came up known initially as FOCMOS (Fellowship Of Christian Men Of Science), and later as CSFI (Creation Scientists Fellowship Of India). This organization soon became defunct because of lack of commitment from members, and also because their interests lay elsewhere. However, A. K. Skariah, the secretary of this movement continues to be a tireless crusader for Creation and Apologetics.

A project known as Creation Research was founded by Dr. Johnson C. Philip in 1970. It functioned mainly through the publication of articles, and by the time of the writing of this present book more than 1500 articles have been published in more than 6 languages in almost a dozen countries around the world. This movement is now known as Calvin School Of Apologetics And Theology, and it offers full-length courses in creationism and apologetics.

At the time that Calvin School's predecessor was founded in 1970, almost no standard Christian magazine in India was willing to publish articles defending inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible. Nor were any Bible seminaries willing to teach these subjects. However, three decades of crusading by Calvin School has given rise to a significant movement in India for the defense of faith.

Another person who played a significant role in Christian Apologetics is Dr. Johnson George. Born in Kerala and brought up in MP, he became fluent in more than one

language. Thus his writings on apologetical themes in several languages have had a wide impact. Others who played a role in Apologetics would include Dr. Ezhamkulam Samkutty, J. C. Dev, E. S. Thomas, and Paul K. Ramakrishnan. Their apologetic writing ministries being in Malayalam, the spread of the articles remain limited to Kerala.

An apologetics organization that entered India recently is RZIM, founded originally in the USA by Dr. Ravi Zacharias. This society conducts training programmes all over India. Their stand is highly biblical except on creation where they teach the compromise-doctrine of day-age theory or even the gap theory. Their work tends to be more polemical and rhetorical than analytic.

GAINS OF MODERN APOLOGETICS:The last half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century were times when most of the well-known Christian seminaries, journals, and publishing houses compromised with evolutionism and rationalism. This created such skepticism in the minds of the average Christian that very few found the courage to take a public stand to defend the Bible or their faith.

Ultimately all this left Christian believers (specially the young ones) in a very sorry state in the rationalism-dominated times. This was one reason why Christians did not have the courage to oppose the anti biblical, anti social, and anti morality movements of the forties and fifties, which culminated in the acceptance of the open immorality in the sixties in the USA. This immorality eventually invaded India also.

However, with the birth of the modern creationism and apologetics, a revival set in motion among the evangelical Christians. This group became quite vocal and aggressive in the sixties, and by seventies they started exerting significant influence among theologians, thinkers, and the Bible teachers all over the world. Thousands of apologetic books, hundreds of magazines, and tens of thousands of articles have been produced defending the Bible since. In turn, this has started to diminish the influence of rationalists and radicals on Christians.

From the middle of the nineteenth to the middle of the twentieth century the rationalists had their heyday, snatching away millions of young people from their Christian faith and commitment. The wounds of this loss can be seen in Christendom even today, but at the same time this loss has been greatly minimized now because of the work of Christian apologists.

Today anyone desiring to know about the Bible, and its connection with science, evolution, history, archaeology, has read any number of books on this topic. Literally thousands of titles are available, and he can choose anywhere from the most simple books to the most technically advanced ones.

Thus the modern apologetics movement has been able to arrest the way in which rationalists have been bleeding the Christian church. What is more, this movement has been able to restore a lot of doubting people to strong faith. At the same time it has been able to strengthen the faith of many believers who wanted to know what the truth is in all this conflict.

Chapter -- 2 **The Importance Of Apologetics**

Both the Old as well as the New Testament repeatedly emphasize that defense of faith is an important part of spiritual life. This is why both the Testaments contain numerous apologetic passages. The Jewish and the Church Fathers also understood

these benefits, and that is why they devoted considerable time to refuting arguments brought against the Christian faith.

A perusal of the apologetic writings of the Bible and the Fathers would show that the nature of the attacks changed in each generation, and that the reply had to be tailored to meet the needs of each generation. In spite of this changing approach and emphasis, the purpose of apologetics has remained unchanged for all the past millennia.

THE UNCHANGING PURPOSES OF APOLOGETICS: The methods and priorities of Christian Apologetics keep changing with time, but the aims remains the same, and they are:

1-To refute all the accusations that are brought against the Bible and the Christian faith.

2-To demonstrate that only the Bible and the Christian way of life work in the actual life, and that only the Bible and the Christian faith provide permanent peace and happiness.

3-To remove the sincere doubts in the hearts of believers and unbelievers, so that the hindrances to the growth and establishing their faith are eliminated.

4-To provide SUFFICIENT evidence for achieving the above goals. It is necessary for the apologist to understand the difference between sufficient and total proof.

Because man is finite and limited in his knowledge and perception, total proof is never possible for anything. Total proof is possible only if every case in the world related to the subject is examined. This is humanly not possible. This is why scholars do not insist upon total proof for anything in any branch of science or history. Rather, everything is decided on the basis of sufficient proof. The same is the case with Christian Apologetics.

What Can Apologetics Do

Christian Apologetics is a constantly developing subject, with each day's arguments becoming more and more powerful than the previous days. In a fast expanding subject like this, people can often forget or overlook the role played by that subject. This is specially apparent in Christian Apologetics.

Thus four different ways of thinking can be seen from time to time about Christian Apologetics, not all of them valid or biblically sound. These are:

SKEPTICISM: Despite the widespread acceptance of apologetics, there is a small group of people who are totally skeptical of Christian apologetics. They do not see any value in apologetics, and even oppose the defense of Christian faith.

Most skeptics are people who avoid grappling with real-life problems. Further, they totally overlook the numerous passages in the Bible itself which encourage apologetic activity. This group is only a microscopic minority in Christendom, and has no serious thinkers or theologians advocating it.

CHRISTIAN RATIONALISM: According to this view, reason can completely demonstrate or prove the validity of the Christian position. Thus all what is needed is to place a comprehensive set of arguments in favour of the Bible in front of a person, and he would be able to see the truth. However, everyone knows that things are not as optimistic as this viewpoint maintains.

Christian Rationalism places too much trust in the capacity of the human intelligence/intellect in perceiving and recognizing truth. They have such faith in the wisdom of the fallen man that they often exclude the need or role of the Holy Spirit in illuminating the fallen and sinful human beings. Though very interesting, this viewpoint has never been widely accepted among Christian apologists.

LOGICAL CHRISTIANITY: According to this view, reason is the starting point of everything, and thus it goes a long way forward to the discovery of spiritual truth; the last steps of this process are taken by faith. This viewpoint is more Biblical than the first two, but it is still not fully correct.

Some proponents of the Logical Christianity view have gone to the extreme of claiming that since God can be known and understood through natural revelation alone, there is no need at all for the Bible. Christian Apologists have never/widely accepted this viewpoint.

REASON DEFINITELY AIDS FAITH: This is the most widely held view among evangelical and fundamentalist scholars. According to it, faith is the starting-point of everything in the Christian faith; once faith is established, it can be shown to be consistent with truth and reason. This is a viewpoint which is Biblically tenable and acceptable, and it will form the backbone of this series of studies on apologetics.

Thus the evangelical Christian apologist uses apologetics, not to create faith but to aid the creation and maintenance of faith. Even for this task he depends upon the role played by God the Holy spirit in helping communicate the message to people. The recipients also need the help of the Holy Spirit to understand and accept the message.

The Purpose Of Apologetics

As said in the previous section, Christian Apologetics is a fast growing discipline. Thus it is possible to misunderstand or confuse the role, purpose, and contributions of apologetics. Students should take great care in noting what apologetics is meant to do, and also what it is not meant to do. The following points would help to clarify some of these issues:

APOLOGETICS IS A MANWARD OPERATION: The purpose of developing a discipline like apologetics is to defend the reliability of the Bible. It therefore addresses both the reliability of scriptural narratives as well as the premises upon which the Christian faith stands. However, Christian Apologetics is not an activity directed towards the Bible. In other words, the purpose of Christian Apologetics is not to defend the Bible with the attitude as though it is a helpless book. Rather, it is a manward operation meant to help those who are perplexed or distressed due to doubts. The Bible is defended to them, so that they might overcome the doubts that they have.

The Scriptures are quite capable of self-defense. It has stood assaults successfully for four thousand years while the critics and their contentions have been passing away. Hence the purpose of apologetics is not to lend a helping hand to the Scriptures, but to help the sincere inquirer. Thus the defense of the Bible is presented not for preserving the Scriptures but to preserve the faith of the inquirer. This is what's meant by "manward operation".

Understanding this manward operation is necessary both for helping those who need apologetics and also for those who don't need it. Our churches have a lot of people who never had a problem with their faith. They never doubted anything in the Bible, nor did they have to face any attacks against their faith in Christ. Many of these people can therefore become alarmed when they hear of "apologetics". They

start thinking that the apologist is trying to defend the Bible for the sake of the Bible -- to ESTABLISH that the Bible is the word of God.

Since these people almost never faced any serious challenges to their faith, and since they know that the Scriptures do not need to be defended by man, they tend to become skeptical or hostile towards apologetics. Unless the apologist explains to them the manward role, there is a possibility of them rejecting apologetics due to their ignorance.

Thus, to put the apprehensive people at ease, the apologist himself should first understand the motive and aim of apologetics. Only this clear understanding will help him to employ the methods of apologetics with the proper motive and in the right manner to the right audience. He would understand that not every Christian is his target. Only a person with this understanding will be able to put tense and skeptical, but God-fearing, Christians at ease.

APOLOGETICS HAS LIMITS: Since apologetics is a manward operation, it can never be used to prove that the Bible is the word of God. The best that it can do in this matter is to point to the unusual character of the Bible in matters of unity, accuracy, consistency, historicity and life-changing power. The rest is left to the inquirer. Accepting the Bible as God's word comes only by an act of faith in which apologetics can play a very supportive role.

Thus the purpose of apologetics is neither to establish the Bible as God's word, nor to create faith in skeptical minds. Rather, its purpose is to aid a person to see that the attacks brought up against the Bible are NOT valid. Once it is demonstrated that statements of the Bible and the facts of science do not conflict with each other, the way is cleared for the sincere inquirer for making the leap of faith.

BARRIER REMOVAL IS THE PRIME TARGET: The purpose of apologetics is not creation of faith as much as it is to remove the barriers that hinder faith. Such a removal of hindering factors often helps sincere inquirers to take a leap of faith and accept the Lord Jesus as personal Saviour. For others, who are already saved, the removal of barriers helps them to make a deeper commitment to Christ.

RATIONALIST DEMANDS MIGHT BE A BOON: Our rationalist age places a lot of demands before a statement is accepted as true. Many people think that this rationalism is sure to destroy the Bible. On the contrary, this is a blessing in disguise. Many demands placed by rational thinkers give us excellent standards with which to evaluate our statements objectively.

Enough information and evidence exists today to show, using the more sound principles of rational thinking, that the Bible is a unique book. But no amount of evidence can force a person, claiming to be a rationalist, against his will to believe. Even though the rational content of Christianity is fully logical, accurate, and reliable, Christian Apologetics is not meant for these people. Apologetics is meant for those sincere seekers who want to know how reliable the rational content of the Bible is.

PROCLAMATION IS NOT TO BE MINIMIZED: The saving message of the Bible will bring much fruit whenever it is proclaimed -- even if there is much unbelief in the air. Therefore the purpose of apologetics is not to establish the divinity of the Bible first so that the gospel can follow. Unbelief will not change even if the most amazing proofs are presented. The purpose of apologetics is, therefore, to help that person who wants to abandon his unbelief that has been there due to his lingering but sincere and honest doubts.

APOLOGETICS DEMANDS WILLING RECEPTION: Apologetics is not treatment

for deliberate unbelief. Rather, it is meant to serve as a cure for sincere doubts. It can work wonders when presented at the right time in the right manner for helping sincere inquirers.

There is no cure for unbelief except divine intervention. The best thing to do in such cases is to use the sword of the Spirit repetitively. It will discern and pierce the thoughts and intents of the heart. Apologetics, if needed, should be used only after such a breakthrough.

APOLOGETICS HELPS SEEKERS MOST: Apologetics has a definite value when one presents the gospel to unbelievers. Sincere and true seekers, whether from a Christian or non Christian background, definitely have many doubts that hinder them from taking the leap of faith necessary to trust in Christ. Apologetics helps by removing these barriers.

However, the purpose of apologetics is not to prove the divinity of the Bible first, so that the gospel could be presented on that basis. This would be only putting the cart before the horse. The gospel message works by its own power, and there is no need to convince the unbeliever of this power. At the same time, if he expresses his doubts, apologetics can be used to point to the uniqueness of the Scriptures. By doing so, the messages (the gospel and the defense) are placed in the proper sequence.

APOLOGETICS IS NOT SCIENTISM: Scientism is the belief that ultimately everything has to be explained with the help of science. This is a false belief.

Modern science has been developed only for studying matter and energy. Thus nothing beyond matter or energy can be studied with the help of modern physical science. Thus the apologist recognizes that his aim is not to explain everything with the help of science. Rather, he uses science where it is a scientific subject, history where it is a historical subject, logic where it is a logical subject, and so on. He also recognizes that in some places none of these subjects apply, but that the subject can be understood only with faith. In such places he emphasizes faith.

Practical Value Of Studying Apologetics

Christian Apologetics as a distinct discipline of study and communication is at least two thousand years old now. Practical observation in these two millennia coupled with what the scriptures say have led to the recognition of many practical values of studying apologetics.

CONSERVATION OF OWN FAITH: It is possible for a person to be a good believer in Christ but still remain ill-informed about problems in the real world. Many of these problems and movements attempt to question his faith, and therefore if he suddenly meets them one fine day, there is a high possibility of shock, surprise, and even withdrawal.

On the other hand, if a person has at least some idea about the challenges coming from all kinds of errant movements, then he will be better able to face them when such an occasion comes. Spiritual life is a warfare, and a person who has studied the enemy's tactics and terrains is better prepared for war than one who is ignorant.

Withdrawal from physical strain makes our bodies weak, while exercise and hard work makes our bodies strong. The same way, successfully facing the attacks against the Bible helps one's own faith to become stronger in the longer run.

BETTER ABILITY TO COMBAT: The way in which the Christian faith has been attacked has changed from generation to generation. Some arguments come back to force in every generation while some are affective only in a certain period of history. At the same time, answers to these questions have been becoming more exact, refined, and powerful. No person can now know the major lines of attack or the appropriate answers without studying apologetics.

A formal and systematic study of apologetics gives not only sufficient background, but also makes the person discerning as to which line of reasoning and answering is likely to have the greatest impact on the listeners.

ABILITY TO RECOGNIZE REFINED ENEMY TACTICS: Every generation of critics is bound to raise up some new objections. A person who lacks preparation or background might suddenly find himself at a loss of words, but a trained person might be able to hold the ground even if the attack comes in an completely unexpected manner.

Actually, all accusations fall into certain broad categories. a person who has a systematic introduction to apologetics will be able to see the question and immediately understand the category to which it belongs. He will therefore be able to hold his ground without a sudden loss of words.

AID IN WITNESSING: In turn all of the above activities aid one's ability to witness powerfully for Christ. The resistance to the gospel from the rationalists has become very strong. (These days rationalists are found not only outside the Church but also within it). They exert considerable influence upon young minds.

Thus the young people come to the gospel with many doubts that block them from taking a leap of faith. However, a person having some background in apologetics can help this young person when he puts forward his sincere doubts.

Non-interest In Christian Apologetics

Among Christians there are some who do not take any interest and who do not give any encouragement to Christians interested in Apologetics. They do so not due to any fault of apologetics, but mainly due to their own misconceptions, and misunderstandings. Such people can be divided into six categories:

- 1-People who never had any doubts in these subjects.
- 2-People who never had to face questions and attacks from scornful people.
- 3-People who have indeed faced personal doubts and external attacks, but who have been running away from facing the challenge.
- 4-People who believe that the Bible does contain errors.
- 5-People who have lost sensitivity towards the pains and problems of others.
- 6-Pseudo Apologists who love prestige, but who have never mastered the subject.

THOSE WHO NEVER HAD DOUBTS: Of these five, people who have never faced any problems are fortunate, but they should not assume that others will have a similar experience. Nor should they assume that others are having doubts because they lack spiritual commitment. A healthy person should never feel proud against a sick one. The right Christian response would be sensitivity and sympathy.

THOSE WHO NEVER HAD TO FACE ATTACKS: People who never faced any attacks against their faith from friends, coworkers or the popular literature have no justification to assume that others are equally safe or insulated. In fact the majority of people among our young educated people face some sort or other of attack from their peers or contemporaries. Thus people need to be sensitive to their doubts, rather than ignoring their need for apologetics.

PEOPLE WHO FLEE (Escapists): People who have faced doubts and external attacks, but who are running away from it all are doing great harm to themselves and also to others. Doubts and fears never decrease by avoiding them. These have to be faced objectively and courageously. Those who run away never develop a balanced or whole spiritual life. The fear they are trying to hide will gradually eat up their mental peace.

PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE IN ERROR-PRONE BIBLE: Some people believe that the Bible contains errors. They prefer diluting the historical and scientific accuracy of the Bible. They want the best of both the worlds (which in itself might be a legitimate desire), and feel that the Bible should be diluted to achieve this goal (which is a wrong assessment). Consequently many of them become quite hostile when they spot anyone defending the Bible.

People who believe that the Bible contains errors become panicky when someone defends the Bible. Unfortunately, and unknown to many of us, there are plenty of these people within the Christian world. They get annoyed when someone starts talking of a literal creation, historicity of the Bible, or anything that seems to imply that the scriptures are beyond error. They are spiritual compromisers, and they will surely attack anyone who takes a non compromising attitude.

PEOPLE INSENSITIVE TO OTHERS: Some people become spiritually so insensitive to other believers that even the slightest mention by others of their spiritual problem or doubts provokes great anger, hostility and contempt from them. Since apologetics starts with the assumption that people can have problems and difficulties in believing the Bible, any mention of this subject acts as a great provocation to insensitive people.

People who have become insensitive towards the needs and pains of others are never able to appreciate the problems faced by others. Most of such people live in an artificial world of their own selfish creation, where they never have to be sensitive to the needs of others. Thus they become more and more hardened towards others who face real-world problems and dilemmas.

PSEUDO APOLOGISTS: The Christian world has many pseudo-apologists. Usually these people have some qualification in the sciences or humanities, but very little training in apologetics. When faced with troubling questions, they use their own human knowledge to build up a private system of apologetics. Not having a background in theology or apologetics, and not having come in contact with Christian apologists, their private system of apologetics might be quite deficient or even outright faulty. Yet due to non-contact with real bible-based apologetics, they continue to live happily with their own brand of apologetics in their world of ignorance.

Many of them recognize this deficiency as soon as they hear the presentation of a trained apologist. Thus they feel quite threatened when they listen to apologists. Instead of broadening their grasp of the subject by mutual interaction, they take recourse to attacking other apologists.

Of the six categories of people mentioned above, none has a valid biblical objection against the discipline of Christian Apologetics. Their objections and oppositions stem

from their personal prejudices and ignorances. Consequently, the apologist should never worry about the opposition they put up. Rather, he should always expect some antagonism from them and try to use these to examine and refine further his presentation of the subject.

People who believe that the Bible contains errors, who are insensitive to others, and who would not like anything except their own private system of apologetics find their world collapsing when they see Christian Apologists in action. This is not a problem of theological origin. Rather, it is a personal problem that has no easy solution. Further, these people are not truth-seekers or sincere inquirers. Their aim is to impose their erroneous views upon others, and therefore their conversation is not marked for humility or the spirit of free, objective inquiry. Rather, their aim is to impose their erroneous views upon others. Thus it is a waste of time arguing or discussing with them.

The first three category of people above might readily listen to a good apologist if he is willing to explain the whole situation to them -- that a lot of genuine seekers are indeed struggling due to these questions, and also that they should not run away from their own doubts. However, the last two categories (the compromisers and the spiritually insensitive people) may not listen all that easily. One should be quite discerning when talking with them lest one end up wasting time and losing patience.

The Lord Jesus Himself provides a good example that proof seekers are not to be shunned. When doubting Thomas demanded proof of resurrection, the Lord did not refuse his request. Rather, at the appropriate occasion he Himself personally, and with all compassion, invited Thomas to attempt his empirical verification.

The Lord did say that "blessed are they that have not seen, and yet believe", but surely this was not a rebuke for doubt but only a comparison of insights that different people had about Lord Jesus. This becomes very clear in the light of what the Lord Jesus did to other disciples even without their asking.

Most Bible readers overlook the fact that the Lord Himself was the first to offer empirical evidence to ALL the disciples, even without the disciples asking for it. The gospel says, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself : handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have" (Luke 24:39).

Doubt about spirituals is common even among dedicated Christians. If such people are sincere, one should surely help them by emulating what the Lord did with Thomas and the rest of the disciples.

Opposition to Apologetics

There are some Christians who are opposed to the very idea of apologetics. They do this because of a number of reasons, some of which are as follows:

DISTRUST OF REASON: Some people oppose apologetics because they are completely distrustful of human reason in spiritual realm. According to them, faith and reason are to be placed in totally separate compartments, having no role to play in each other's realm. For them, reason is for the natural world while faith is something for the spiritual world. However, such a view that compartmentalizes truth lacks coherence. The Christian approach to truth is an integrated one where one has to accept that faith and reason do mix with each other in many realms of spiritual truth.

FEAR: Some people oppose apologetics because they find them selves ill equipped to face the attacks. So instead of facing the problems, and instead of making a defense for the faith that is in them, they prefer to run away from it all. Since

apologetics is a very difficult subject to study and master, running away from the reality is easier for them than facing it. However, cowardice is NOT the way of Christian thought or practice.

Faith is the starting-point of Christianity, and once faith is established Christianity can be shown to be consistent with truth and reason. There are many who will be strengthened in their faith if this consistency is shown to them, and it is the task of the apologist to help every genuine inquirer.

WILLFUL BLIND OPPOSITION: Many people oppose Christian Apologetics due to their ignorance. Such people can be engaged in mutual conversation and a reasonable explanation will convince them that their opposition is ill founded. However, some people oppose Christian Apologetics and Biblical Creationism willfully and due to their stubbornness. It is usually futile to waste time upon them.

All serious apologists should expect some hostility. They should not waste their time either in worrying about the attack or in trying to counter the hostile parties. They should realize that a person willfully opposing apologetics is not a sincere inquirer. Further, there is no medicine to cure willful opposition.

In summary, every apologist should expect intense hostility from some people, but they should steer clear of them for the sake of their own effectiveness.

Public Debates With Hostile People

The purpose of Christian Apologetics is not winning debates, but establishing the truth. Our generation is known for lack of time for listening to prolonged debates, abounding with superficial people, and high on loaded words. In such milieu debating is NOT a good strategy for discussing spiritual truth. Thus the apologist should avoid debating in public, except in front of a mature crowd made up of a small number of seekers dominated by a true spirit of inquiry. Further, the other side of the debate should be presented by one or more persons who are not given to loaded words or to ridicule. People who are given to scorn can manipulate the audience in such ways that they can turn the public against the apologist even though they have nothing of substance against him.

Also, even when the apologist delivers straight lectures in a non debating fashion, some of these people (from the audience) will try their best to engage him in face-to-face (speaker-to-audience) debates. Usually this will be a trap meant to discredit the apologist by subtle mockery. Apologists should develop practical strategies to foil their deceptive plans.

An apologist should never forget that a willful debater can very easily disturb his public presentation by resorting to mockery, sarcasm and other disturbing or distracting tactics. They should never be allowed to take control. The apologist should keep presenting his subject without allowing anyone with the spirit of mockery to dominate. Anything and everything they say destroys the serious mood of the audience, and once that is done the impact of even the best apologetic presentation can reduce to nothing.

Apologetics Through Compromise

Though the very essence of Christian Apologetics is non-compromise, some people do not seem to understand this. When this type of people see a conflict between two systems of thought, their response is that everyone should somehow find a middle position. Unfortunately, this kind of a compromise is a slow poison that does more harm to truth than the fiercest attack directed against the Christian faith.

Two apparently conflicting reports can be reconciled with each other if they represent two different aspects of one and the same truth. For example, when the four blind men give four different reports about the elephant, their conflicting reports can be reconciled into a single picture. Or, when different people report different colours for the same chameleon, these accounts can be unified into one. This is made possible in every such case because the conflicting reports present DIFFERENT aspects related to one and the same entity. On the other hand, if conflicting reports come due to fundamental differences in the basic system itself, they cannot be reconciled.

For example, the demands of evolution and creation cannot be reconciled with each other because they represent two fundamentally different, mutually hostile, and mutually exclusive systems. They do not represent various aspects of the same truth, but rather two mutually opposing systems. They differ and diverge from each other right from the presuppositional level so that any attempt at reconciling them is a vain exercise. What's needed in such cases is to scrape the inferior set of presuppositions, so that the remaining better set of presuppositions provides the more authentic picture of reality.

Further, whenever two opposing systems are synthesized into one, it is the truth that always suffers. When fresh food is mixed with decaying one, it is always the fresh one that suffers not the other way round. This is because all compromise hurts and eclipses the truth. The best example is the attempted reconciliation between evolution and creation.

To unify the radically differing principles of evolution and creation some compromise has to be made. Since evolution-believers would not give an inch of their territory, all burden for compromise falls on the side of creation. Consequently we find that all synthesis of evolution-creation begins with the direct or indirect denial of the Genesis creation account.

The synthesis between evolution and creation is usually designated by the name "Theistic Evolution". There are many shades of theistic evolution, but all of them agree that God used evolution as the method of creating the universe. When such a thesis is advocated, a question arises about the Genesis account of creation: If God created all, including man, using evolution then what about the story of Adam, Eve, the garden of Eden, the tree of knowledge and the serpent. All theistic evolutionists assure their readers that all this is only "poetic language" and that these are not to be taken literally. Thus by a stroke of pen the theistic evolutionist abandons the reliability of the Genesis account. With that goes the foundation on which the entire Christian doctrine stands.

Whenever two contradictory systems of thought are reconciled with each other, the truth always suffers. Opposites can be synthesized only at the cost of truth, and that is an alarming possibility for any apologist.

In this book we take an unashamed stand in favour of truth, total truth, and truth alone. There will be no attempt to mingle error with truth. Tens of thousands of Protestant Reformers sacrifice their lives to defend the truth expressed in the following statements:

Sola Scriptura (Bible Alone)

Sola Gratia (Grace Alone)

Sola Fide (Faith Alone)

Solus Christus (Christ Alone)

Soli Deo Gloria (To God Alone Be Glory)

We unashamedly stand with the Fathers of the Reformation. The above statements form the presuppositions upon which this book rests. Since presuppositions play a very important part in apologetics, polemics, hermeneutics, and theology, we would devote another document to a discussion of presuppositions of various groups of Christians as well as non Christians.

About The Authors

Dr. Johnson C. Philip is a Christian Apologist based in Ernakulam. He received the degree of Th.D. in Apologetics in 1984 and Ph.D. in Physics (Quantum Chromodynamics) in 1991. He was awarded the DSc in Alternative Medicines in 2003 and DNYS in 2004. So far he has authored more than 2500 popular articles and research papers and more than 50 books in the fields of physics, communication, apologetics, and theology. This includes many Indian "firsts" like a Systematic Theology and a 4-volume Bible Encyclopaedia, both in the Malayalam language.

He is a voting member of numerous professional societies including: Creation Research Society, American Scientific Affiliation, The Society Of Christian Philosophers, Indian Physics Association, etc. He is a founder and life member of the Indian Association Of Physics Teachers.

Dr. Saneesh Cherian is a Christian communicator and theologian based in Ernakulam, Kerala. He studied for his BTh and MDiv with Brethren Bible Institute, DMin with IICM, and ThD with International School of Theology, India. He is the author of numerous books and articles. He is also a co-author of many theology textbooks including, Systematic Theology, 4-volume Bible Encyclopedia, Dictionary of Theology, and Integrated Christian Apologetics, all in the Malayalam language.

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Appendix -- 1

Annotated Bibliography In Apologetics

Douglas Groothuis, Ph.D., Denver Seminary

<http://www.denverseminary.edu/dj/articles2004/0400/0401.php>

This list makes no claim to be exhaustive. Some books are listed more than once if they fit under more than one category.

A. Recommended reference and general books in philosophy and apologetics

1. Audi, Robert, ed. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1995; second ed., 1999). Excellent, thorough, one-volume reference work.
2. Craig, Edward, ed. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. New York: Routledge, 1998. Best contemporary, in-depth, multi-volume reference work. Available in the library. Also comes in a one-volume, condensed edition.
3. Edwards, Paul, ed. *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. New York: Collier-Macmillan. 1967. Classic for the time period, but shows a prejudice against Christianity, which is not as pervasive in more recent works, such as *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* or *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

4. Evans, C. Stephen. *Pocket Dictionary of Apologetics and Philosophy of Religion*. Downers Grove: IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002. Excellent short reference. Ideal for those with little or no background in these areas.
5. Flew, Anthony, ed. *Dictionary of Philosophy*, revised second ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984). A shorter work helpful for those with little philosophical background.
6. Geisler, Norman. *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*. Baker Books, 1999. This must be used with caution. No one person can cover this much material at a high level of quality. Explicitly philosophical topics are often addressed better in other works. (For instance, the entry on "Alvin Plantinga" is inadequate.) However, there is much helpful material, such as the essay on prophecy, the problem of evil, the virgin birth, etc.
7. Kreeft, Peter and Ronald Tacelli. *Handbook of Christian Apologetics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994). Well-written, witty, covers many important topics fairly briefly. Defects include their view of salvation in other religions and an ill-fated attempt to downplay that theological differences between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. The authors are Roman Catholic.
8. Weston, Anthony. *A Rulebook for Arguments*, third edition (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2001). A concise guide to philosophical argumentation in writing papers. It is not written from a Christian perspective, and takes even some shots at Christianity; but a helpful resource, nevertheless. This book will help students with no background in philosophy to learn how to write philosophical papers
9. American Philosophical Society Home page: <http://www.apa.udel.edu/apa>. Not an apologetics cite by any means, but much helpful material about the profession of philosophy and the state of the discipline.

B. Recommended scholarly journals that often address questions of apologetics.

1. *Faith and Philosophy*. The Journal of the Society of Christian philosophers.
2. *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*. Carries mostly articles on biblical studies and theology, but some material on apologetics.
3. *Philosophia Christi*. Journal of the Evangelical Philosophical Society.
4. *Religious Studies*.
5. *Sophia*.

C. General Books on Christian Apologetics

The following books cover a variety of topics, as I try to explain in the annotation. They also fill out the spectrum of *intellectual difficulty* (not *overall quality*) from basic (B) to intermediate (I) to advanced (A). (I)/(A) means: "intermediate to advanced" or "between intermediate and advanced."

1. Archer, Gleason. *Encyclopedia of Biblical Difficulties*. Grand Rapids, Baker, 1982. A respected Old Testament scholar assesses the major problem passages in both Testaments. (I)
2. Blamires, Harry. *The Christian Mind*. Servant Publications, 1997; orig. pub., 1963. Although some aspects of the author's high Anglicanism won't suit some evangelicals, Blamires laments the lack of a Christian mind, outlines its essence, and contrasts it with secular thinking. A classic. (I)
3. Blomberg, Craig. *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987. Classic modern defense. (I)/(A)
4. Blomberg, Craig. *The Historical Reliability of John*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002. Major modern defense of the reliability of John.

(I)/(A)

5. Burson, Scott R. and Jerry L. Walls. *C.S. Lewis and Francis Schaeffer: Lessons for a New Century from the Most Influential Apologists of Our Time*. Grand Rapids, MI: InterVarsity Press, 1998. Good exposition of both thinkers, but the author's like things in Lewis that lean in a more liberal direction and do not like Schaeffer's Calvinism very much. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile overall. See my longish review at Denver Journal: <http://www.denverseminary.edu/dj/articles1999/0500/0501.php> (I)
6. Carnell, Edward John. *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1948. Pioneering work in the "cumulative case method" of apologetics. The first book by a brilliant young leader of the then young evangelical movement. (I)
7. Carroll, Vincent and David Shiflett. *Christianity on Trial: Arguments Against Anti-Religious Bigotry*. San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2001. My comments from the back cover: "This important and well-written book convincingly argues that Christianity has not been bad news for civilization-despite popular cliches, half-truths, and outright lies to the contrary. It presents a strong case that Christian ideals are behind many beneficial aspects of culture, including an appreciate of science and education, equality before the law, universal suffrage, the structure of American government, and more."
8. Carson, D. A., ed. *Telling the Truth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000. Collection of essays on reaching postmodern culture. Especially excellent are essays by Carson and Ajith Fernando. (I)
9. Carson, D.A. *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996. (I) Comprehensive biblical and theological critique of pluralistic theologies.
10. Chesterton, G. K. *Orthodoxy*. Many editions. Classic defense of orthodoxy against heresy and confusion. Rare wit and insight from 1908. Available in various editions. (I)
11. Chesterton, G. K. *Everlasting Man*. Image Books. Important, witty, and wise apologetic work that influenced C.S. Lewis considerably. (I)
12. Clark, David. *Dialogical Apologetics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994. An approach that highlights the person-sensitive and relational aspects of apologetic argument. (I)
13. Clark, Gordon. *A Christian View of Men and Things*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1953. Attempts to deduce Christian perspectives on various issues with a focus on epistemology. (I)
14. Clark, Gordon. *Thales to Dewey: A History of Philosophy*. Trinity Foundation. First published by a secular publisher as a textbook, this history, which focuses on epistemology, has an implicit apologetic for Christian theism. It is one of the rare books of its kind to discuss Jesus' philosophy as well. A worthy reference. Republished by the Trinity Foundation in several editions. (I)
15. Clark, Kelly James, ed. *Philosophers Who Believe*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993. Important Christian philosophers, such as Alvin Plantinga, Stephen T. Davis, and Nicholas Wolterstorff, explain why they believe in Christianity.
16. Copan, Paul, ed. *Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up?* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998. A debate between William Lane Craig and John Crosson, with responses by others (including Craig Blomberg) on both sides of the issue. (I)
17. Copan, Paul. Ronald Tacelli, eds. *Jesus' Resurrection: Fact or Fiction?* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000. Debate between William Lane Craig and Gerd Ludeman with responses by others on both sides of the issue. (I)
18. Corduan, Winfried. *Neighboring Faiths: A Christian Introduction to World Religions*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998. Includes an important

- chapter on Native American religion, a topic not usually covered in these sorts of volumes. (I)
19. Corduan, Winfried. *No Doubt About it* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, Holman, 1997). An excellent and wide-ranging work of apologetics. Readable and challenging. (B)/(I)
 20. Cowan, Steven, ed. *Five Views of Apologetics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999. Presentations and critiques from William Lane Craig (Classical apologetics), Gary Habermas (Evidentialism); Paul Feinberg (Cumulative Case Method); John Frame (Presuppositionalism); and Kelly James Clark (Reformed Epistemology). See my review of this book in the Denver Journal at: <http://www.denverseminary.edu/dj/articles2000/0400/0401.php> (A).
 21. Craig, William Lane. *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994. Excellent and thorough treatment by a leading Christian philosopher. Nothing on the problem of evil or creation-evolution, however. (I)/(A)
 22. Dembski, William, ed. *Mere Creation: Science, Faith, and Intelligent Design*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998. Path-breaking material from a major conference on intelligent design. Contributions from Phillip Johnson, Michael Behe, and other notables. (I)/(A)
 23. Dembski, William. *Intelligent Design*. Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 1999. Major statement of the theory behind the Intelligent Design Movement. (I)/(A).
 24. Downing, David. *Most Reluctant Convert: C.S. Lewis's Journey to Faith*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002. Excellent assessment of the reasons why Lewis moved from atheism to Christianity. It thus has biographical and apologetic significance. (I)
 25. Edwards, Paul. *Reincarnation: A Critical Examination*. New York: Prometheus Books, 1996. Edwards is an atheist, so some of his arguments against reincarnation (such as, the mind cannot exist apart from the body) also cut against Christian beliefs in the afterlife. Nevertheless, the arguments specifically against karma and previous lives are applicable to Christian apologetics. (I)
 26. Evans, C. Stephen. *Philosophy of Religion*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985. Excellent nonsimplistic introduction to the subject offering many important apologetic points. (I)
 27. Erickson, Millard. *Truth or Consequences*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001. Thorough and careful assessment of postmodernism. One of the best evangelical treatments available.
 28. Geisler, Norman and Paul Hoffman, eds. *Why I Am A Christian: Leading Christians Explain Why They Believe*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001. Very good contributions overall by top-notch scholars, such as William Lane Craig, Gary Habermas, and Hugh Ross, on a variety of standard apologetic topics. (B)/(I)
 29. Geisler, Norman and Abdul Saleeb. *Answering Islam*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993. Examines Islam theologically and historically and gives apologetic arguments against its claims to usurp Christianity. (I)
 30. Geisler, Norman. *Christian Apologetics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1976. Gives extensive attention to apologetic methodology, assesses non-Christian worldviews, and develops a neo-Thomist approach to defending evangelical Christianity.
 31. Geivett, Douglas R. and Gary R. Habermas, eds. *In Defense of Miracles: A Comprehensive Case for God's Action in History*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977. Excellent contributions from leading scholars, such as William Lane Craig, Stephen T. Davis, and David Clark, on all the important aspects of the question of miracles. (I)

32. Groothuis, Douglas. *Unmasking the New Age: Is There a New Religious Movement Trying to Transform Society?* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986. An exposition and analysis of New Age thinking now somewhat dated. Nevertheless, it still addresses the main themes of what is now called "the new spirituality" or just "spirituality." (I)
33. Groothuis, Douglas. *Confronting the New Age: How to Resist a Growing Religious Movement.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988. An apologetic and action-oriented approach to addressing the New Age worldview and its social manifestations. (I)
34. Groothuis, Douglas. *Christianity That Counts: Being a Christian in a Non-Christian World.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994. A collection of essays on ethics, culture, and apologetics. Includes important chapters by Rebecca Merrill Groothuis on abortion and worship. (B)/(I)
35. Groothuis, Douglas. *Are All Religions One?* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996. Booklet comparing Christianity, Islam, and nondualist Hinduism in order to show that religions are not all one. (B)/(I).
36. Groothuis, Douglas. *Jesus in an Age of Controversy.* Eugene, OR; Wipf and Stock reprint, 2002. Defends the biblical view against mostly New Age alternatives. Out of print in US; but available at Denver Seminary Bookstore and from Kingsway publishers in UK. (I)
37. Groothuis, Rebecca Merrill. *Women Caught in the Conflict: The Culture War Between Traditionalism and Feminism.* Wipf and Stock reprint, 1997. An award-winning and rationally rigorous analysis of the logic of the gender debate in the church. (I)
38. Groothuis, Rebecca Merrill. *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997. A careful treatment of the theology and hermeneutics of the gender debate. Important material for apologetics given our culture's view of Christianity as anti-women. (I)
39. Guinness, Os. *The Dust of Death.* Crossway, 1994. Originally published in 1973 (by InterVarsity) and now updated, this study of the philosophy of the counterculture still has apologetic value in its critique of secular humanism and Eastern mysticism. (I)
40. Guinness, Os. *The Gravedigger File.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983. Explains the social conditions-privatization, pluralization, secularization-that tend to impede Christian witness. Written in a kind of Screwtape Letters format. Takes important material from the sociology of religion and makes it more accessible. (I).
41. Guinness, Os. *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994. A short by powerful assessment of anti-intellectualism in American evangelicalism and what can be done about it. (I)
42. Guinness, Os. *God in the Dark.* Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1994. Classic treatment of the problem of doubt in the Christian life. Originally published by InterVarsity Press as *In Two Minds*. (I)
43. Guinness, Os. *Long Journey Home.* Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook, 2001. A rare apologetics book oriented toward the person who has some inkling that there is something more to life, but is not yet drawn to Christianity. (B)
44. Guinness, Os. *A Time for Truth.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000. Short, but cogent critique of the postmodern loss of truthfulness and a call to restoration. (I)
45. Habermas, Gary. *The Historical Jesus.* Joplin, MO: College Press, 1996. Excellent on historical and extra-biblical evidence for Jesus. (I)
46. Halverson, Dean, ed. *Compact Guide to World Religions.* Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1996. Excellent introductory exposition and apologetic engagement on major religions. Supplemental apologetic material also. (B)

47. Henry, Carl F. H. *God, Revelation, and Authority*. 6 volumes. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1999. This monumental, erudite, and wide-ranging work of philosophical theology covers many pertinent apologetic topics. Written by a pivotal evangelical intellectual who helped spark and sustain modern evangelicalism. (I)/(A)
48. Jenkins, Philip. *Hidden Gospels: How the Search for Jesus Lost Its Way*. Oxford University Press, 2001. A critical look at the impetus behind the reconstructions of Jesus by liberal scholars. See my review in *The Christian Research Journal*, on line at www.equip.org. (I)
49. Johnson, Phillip E. *Darwin on Trial*, revised ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993. A penetrating critique of naturalistic theories of macro-evolution on the basis of the logical and evidential problems with the theory itself. (I)
50. Johnson, Phillip E. *Reason in the Balance: The Case Against Naturalism in Science, Law, and Education*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995. Traces the wider implications of naturalism and its philosophical problems. (I)
51. Johnson, Phillip E. *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997. Simplified version of *Darwin on Trial* with an emphasis on spotting logical problems in Darwinism. (B)
52. Johnson, Phillip E. *Objections Sustained*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998. Collection of essays on evolution and culture. (I)
53. Johnson, Phillip E. *The Wedge of Truth*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000. Explains the rationale of the Intelligent Design Movement's attempt to overthrow the domination of naturalism in modern science. (I)
54. Keener, Craig and Glenn Usry. *Defending Black Faith: Answers to Tough Questions About African-American Christianity*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997. A follow-up volume to *Black Man's Religion* (see below). (I)
55. Kierkegaard, Soren. *The Sickness Unto Death*. Kierkegaard is not usually considered an apologist, at least of the traditional sort. He was in some ways a fideist. However, this masterful book gives a kind of psychological apologetic for the Christian view of sin-an account that was pivotal in my own conversion. This book read me in 1976. (A)
56. Lewis, C.S. *Mere Christianity*. Many editions. Good on the moral argument and the deity of Jesus; weak on some theological points, such as the atonement. Marvelously written, of course. (B)/(I)
57. Lewis, C.S. *The Abolition of Man*. MacMillan, 1947. Brilliant attack on relativistic naturalism. (I)
58. Lewis, C.S. *Miracles: A Preliminary Study*. New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc, 1978. A classic study of the supernaturalism of Christianity in relation to naturalism and pantheism. (I)
59. Lewis, C.S. *God in the Dock*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970). Superior collection of essays, many related to apologetics. (I) See especially the essay, "Christian Apologetics."
60. Lewis, Gordon. *Testing Christianity's Truth Claims*. University Press of America, 1990. An excellent analysis of various modern apologetic methodologies, with special emphasis on E. J. Carnell. (I)
61. McGrath, Alister E. *Intellectuals Don't Need God and Other Modern Myths*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993. A generally helpful approach to modern apologetics and much better than *A Passion for Truth*, which I critique in my book, *Truth Decay*. (B)/(I)
62. Montgomery, John Warwick. *Faith Founded on Fact*. 1978. Montgomery is one of the leading evidentialist apologists with a long and distinguished career of debates and publications. An excellent collection of essays.
63. Moreland, J.P. *Love Your God With All Your Mind*. Colorado Springs: NavPress,

1997. Excellent introduction to developing a Christian mind, with many practical suggestions (about the church and personal spiritual disciplines) as well as philosophical arguments. (I)
64. Moreland, J.P. *Christianity and the Nature of Science*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1989. High-level work on the relationship of philosophy of science and the Christian worldview. Excellent material on how the biblical view of creation is not unscientific. (I)/(A)
65. Morris, Thomas V., ed. *God and the Philosophers: The Reconciliation of Faith and Reason*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994. Collection of essays by leading philosophers, such as Arthur Holmes and George Mavrodes, who are also theists (mostly Christians), which addresses the rationality of theism and Christianity.
66. Murray, Michael J., ed. *Reason for the Hope Within*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999. Collection of essays on apologetics written by younger Christian philosophers. Many of the essays tend to be a bit timid apologetically, but it is encouraging and instructive to find Christian philosophers early in their careers joining the apologetic cause. See my review of his book at <http://www.denverseminary.edu/dj/articles2001/0400/0401.php>. (I)
67. Netland, Harold. *Dissonant Voices: Christians and Religious Pluralism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991. Excellent discussion of the teachings of major world religions and how Christians should assess other religious worldviews theologically and apologetically. Descriptively accurate on the nature and teachings of religions as well as philosophically acute.
68. Nicholi, Armand. *The Question of God: C.S. Lewis and Sigmund Freud Debate God, Love, Sex, and the Meaning of Life*. New York: Free Press, 2002. Stellar presentation, heavy on pertinent biographical material. Nicholi does not state his conclusions, but Lewis's Christian worldview and life is seen as more winsome than Freud's atheism. See my web page for a short review of this book (originally published in *The Denver Post*): <http://www.gospelcom.net/ivpress/groothuis/pubs-DG/review-nicholi.pdf>. (I)
69. Pascal, Blaise. *The Mind on Fire*, ed. James Houston. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Press. An edited collection of Pascal's works. Excellent introduction by Os Guinness. For the complete *Pensées*, see the Penguin edition (1966), edited by A. Krailsheimer. (I)
70. Phillips, Timothy and Dennis Okholm, eds. *Christian Apologetics in the Postmodern World*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995. Essays are mixed in quality (the Kenneson piece is abysmally atrocious, as I point out in *Truth Decay*), but all give an understanding of the postmodern challenge. (I)
71. Plantinga, Alvin. *Warranted Christian Belief*. Oxford University Press, 2002. Major work defending the "Reformed epistemology" perspective on apologetics. Excellent critiques of the anti-Christian theories of Freud, Marx, postmodernism, etc. I am more skeptical of his positive proposal. *Philosophia Christi* (available in our library), the journal of the Evangelical Philosophical Society has a book symposium on *Warranted Christian Belief* (Series 2, Volume 3, Number 2, 2002.) See also my review-article (originally published in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*) on my web page: <http://www.gospelcom.net/ivpress/groothuis/pubs-DG/review-plantinga.pdf>. (A)
72. Ramachandra, Vinoth. *Faiths in Conflict: Christian Integrity in a Multicultural World*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999. (I) Challenges the idea that religious conflict is the major cause of all conflict between cultures.
73. Schaeffer, Francis A. *The God Who is There*, 30th anniversary ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998. First published in 1968. A prophetic book that roused many from their anti-apologetics slumbers. Still worth pondering. A pivotal book in my journey into apologetics and Christian witness. (I)

74. Schaeffer, Francis A. *The Collected Works of Francis Schaeffer*. Five volumes. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Publishers, 1985. From the late 1960s until his death in 1984, Schaeffer wrote raft of important books covering theology, apologetics, ethics, and cultural criticism-all collected here. These books, while not technical scholarship (and sometimes a bit swashbuckling), influenced scores of young evangelicals-myself included-to apply Christian truth in the world of ideas and culture. Young evangelicals of the 21rst century would do well to read these works as well. (I)
75. Sheler, Jeffery L. *Is the Bible True: How Modern Debates and Discoveries Affirm the Essence of the Scriptures*. New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1999. A religion journalist from US News and World Report investigates the reliability of both Testaments. Basic, but helpful. (B)
76. Sire, James W. *The Universe Next Door*, 3rd edition. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997. A model work on world view comparisons. Very well written with many illustrations from literature. A durable and outstanding work. (I)
77. Sire, James W. *Why Should Anyone Believe Anything at All?* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994. A readable case for Christianity, emphasizing the identity of Jesus. (I)
78. Sire, James W. *Habits of the Mind*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000. A wonderful book on how a Christian ought to develop the life of the mind. (I)/(A)
79. Sproul, R.C. *Not a Chance: The Myth of Chance in Modern Science and Cosmology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994. An able philosophical critique of the metaphysical status of chance in contemporary naturalism. (I)
80. Strobel, Lee. *The Case for Christ*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998. Strobel takes a journalistic approach by interviewing experts-such as Craig Blomberg, William Lane Craig, and J.P. Moreland-on the historicity and identity of Jesus. The result is an introductory survey of the case for the reliability of the NT and the deity of Christ. For the more developed apologetic arguments, read the people Strobel interviews. (B)
81. Strobel, Lee. *The Case for Faith*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000. This follow up to *The Case for Christ* uses the same form of interviewing Christian experts-such as Peter Kreeft, Norman Geisler, and Ravi Zacharias-on apologetic questions. This time objections to faith are in view, such a the problem of evil and evolution. (B)
82. Usry, Glen and Craig S. Keener. *Black Man's Religion: Can Christianity be Afrocentric?* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996. An apologetic dealing with key concerns of the African American community. (I)
83. Van Voorst, Robert E. *Jesus Outside the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000. Probably the best contemporary source on this subject. (I)/(A)