

“An Orientation to Christian Apologetics”

Room For Doubt Seminar – March 1-2, 2014

Christian Church of Clarendon Hills

(This document has answers for the blanks **IN YELLOW**.)

Event webpage: www.worldvieweyes.org/clarendonhills.html

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Introduction

A. Questions and doubt in our culture

B. Questions and doubt in scripture

1. John the baptizer
 - a. John 1:19-34 “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!...” (29).
 - b. Matt 11:1-6 “... Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?...” (cf. Lk 7:18-20).
 - c. Jesus’ reply (Mt 11:4-5; Lk 7:21-22).
2. Thomas
 - a. John 20:24-25 “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”
 - b. Jesus’ response (Jn 20:26-29).
3. Jude 1:22 “Be merciful to those who doubt.”

I. Background for Apologetics [“Apologetics” comes directly from a Greek word that is typically translated “defend” or “given an answer.”]

A. General **directives** for apologetics

1. **1 Peter 3:15** _____ **DEFEND** the faith. (cf. Acts 22:1; 24:10; 26:12; Phil 1:7,16).

1 Peter 3: 14 But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened.” 15 But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer [*apologia*] to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 16 keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. [NIV]

Phil 1:7b “... whether I [Paul] am in chains or defending [*apologia*] and confirming the gospel, all of you share the affection of Christ Jesus.”

“Perhaps the main function of apologetics is to show that ... [we] have nothing whatsoever for which to apologize” (Alvin Plantinga, “Christian Life Partly Lived,” in *Philosophers Who Believe*, ed. Kelly James Clark [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993], 69).

2. **Col. 2:8** “Don’t be taken _____ **CAPTIVE** by deceptive philosophies.”
3. **2 Cor. 10:5** “We _____ **DEMOLISH** arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God” (2 Corinthians 10:5).
4. **2 Timothy 2:24-25** “The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome but be kind to all . . . with gentleness _____ **CORRECTING** those who are in opposition; if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth”
5. **Titus 1:9** “He [an elder] must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and _____ **REFUTE** those who oppose it.”

6. **Jude 3** “Contend earnestly for the faith.”

B. Practical suggestions for apologetics

1. Be _____. **PERSONAL** The same approach is not appropriate for every person.
2. Be _____. **INQUISITIVE** It may be best to use good questions rather than worry about knowing (or not knowing) the answers. (See Mark 11:27-33)
3. Be _____. **SENSITIVE** Often it’s more important how we say something than what we say.
 - a. 1 Pet. 3:15 “with gentleness and reverence”
 - b. 2 Tim. 2:24-25 “not quarrelsome but kind ... with gentleness”
 - c. Jude 22 “Have mercy on some, who are doubting”

C. Primary objectives

1. **Belief** (Matt. 16:15-17; John 20:30-31; Rom. 10:9; 1 John 4:15; Heb. 11:6ab)
2. **Trust** (James 2:19; Matt. 4:1-3; Hebrews 11:1,6c)
3. **Love**
 - a. See Mark 12:30; cf. Deut. 6:4-5.
 - b. Compare Jesus’ question and Peter’s “great confession” (Matt 16:15-16) with Jesus’ question of Peter after His resurrection (Jn. 21:15-17).

II. Types of Apologetics

A. “Negative” Apologetics: Replying to specific criticisms to show that **Christianity is NOT FALSE.**

1. E.g. The disciples of Jesus were accused of stealing Jesus’ body (Matt 28:11-15).
2. E.g. Festus accuses Paul of being insane (Acts 26:22-32).
3. E.g. The claim that Christians “all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar [the state]” (Acts 17:5-8).
4. E.g. The problem of evil. Accusation: The reality of evil is inconsistent with the reality of an existing God who is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-good.

B. “Positive” Apologetics: Attempting to show that **Christianity is TRUE.**

1. Evidences in **nature** (Ps 19:1-6; Rom 1:18-32).
2. **Miracles** (1 Kings 18; Ex 10:1-2; Jn 20:30-31; Acts 2:22-24; 1 Cor 15:1-20).
 - a. Jn 20:30-31 “... these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”
 - b. Acts 2:22-24 “... Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him”
3. **Fulfilled prophecy** (Lk 24:25-27; Acts 17:2-3; 26:22-23; Deut 18:18-22; Is 7:14; Micah 5:2; Zach 9:9; Is 53; Ps 22:1-8; 16:10).
4. **The nature and reliability of scripture.**
 - a. 2 Tim 3:14-17 “... all Scripture is inspired by God”
 - b. 2 Pet 1:20-21 “But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”
 - c. Jn 10:34-36 “... and the Scripture cannot be broken.”
5. **Personal experience.**
 - a. Jn 9:25-30 “... One thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see.”
 - b. Paul’s testimonies to the Jews (Acts 22), to Felix (Acts 24:10-23) and to Agrippa (Acts 26).
6. **Social benefits** of the Christian way (Titus 3:8; Gal 6:9-10; 1 Tim 5:8).

C. “Neutralizing” Apologetics: Attempting to show that **other worldviews are false, fundamentally inconsistent, or unlivable.**

1. Biblical background
 - a. 2 Cor 10:5 “We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God”

- b. Rom 1:21 “For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”
 - c. Titus 1:9-11 “... able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.”
2. General examples
- a. E.g. Monistic worldviews: Everything is “one”; the world is “illusion”; reason and the physical senses are deceptive.
 - (1) If everything is “ONE,” how can there be an ultimate “right” or “good”?
 - (2) If everything is “ONE,” then “evil” itself cannot be justified or explained.
 - b. E.g. Naturalistic worldviews: Everything is reducible to impersonal, non-purposeful matter.
 - (1) Yet, some naturalists claim human freedom and uniqueness.
 - (2) How can reason itself be justified in a purely random or law-determined universe?
 - (3) How can this view consistently justify moral criticism or explain acts of love or altruism?
 - (4) Consistently applied, what would Naturalism lead to?

III. Christianity and Its Worldview Competitors

A. What are the big issues?

1. Is there any kind of God?
2. The existence of the universe.
3. The physical conditions of the universe that allow for human existence.
4. The origin of life.
5. The capacities of human freedom, consciousness, and moral awareness.
6. The reality of the Bible and the impact of biblical history (e.g. ancient Israel, the church).
7. The question of miracles.
8. The identity of Jesus and his purported resurrection from the dead.

B. What are the main options?

1. NATURALISM: No God of any sort exists. Only physical matter exists.
2. DEISM: God created the universe but left it alone.
3. PANTHEISM: God and the universe are ONE.
4. MONOTHEISM: One, all-powerful God exists (e.g. Christianity, Judaism, Islam).
5. SYNCRETISM: Accept various beliefs and practices with little concern about how, or whether, they fit together.
6. APATHEISM: Apathetic or indifferent about God or religion.
7. AGNOSTICISM: We cannot know about God’s existence.

C. How can we evaluate their competing claims?

1. How much do they explain?
2. How well do they explain what needs to be explained?
3. How do they compare in their explanations?