



Apologetics: Apologetics (from Greek ἀπολογία, *apología*, 'speaking in defense') is the religious discipline of defending religious doctrines through systematic argumentation and discourse. Early Christian writers (c. 120–220) who defended their beliefs against [critics](#) and recommended their faith to outsiders were called Christian apologists. In 21st-century usage, *apologetics* is often identified with debates over religion and theology.

History of Apologetics

Beginning Apologetics

1. Why is the word 'Apologetics' confusing or off-putting to many people?

ANSWER: Apologize has a different meaning in contemporary English; and It often has a negative ring.

2. What does the word 'Apologetics' mean?

ANSWER: The study of how to defend a position.

3. What is the fundamental reason to practice apologetics?

ANSWER: Because we love other people

Apologetics in the Old Testament

1. How did the Old Testament authors defend monotheism against the polytheistic views that were common in their day?

ANSWER: By pointing to God's miracles and by providing alternative, monotheistic accounts.

2. How did they explain the presence of suffering in the world?

ANSWER: Sometimes sin leads to suffering and sometimes suffering is a mystery.

3. What attitude did they take toward ideas found in Greek philosophy?

ANSWER: They should be evaluated and either accepted or rejected on their merits.

Apologetics in the New Testament

1. **What are the two principal ways the New Testament authors argue that Jesus is the Messiah?**

ANSWER: Jesus and his followers performed miracles; Jesus fulfilled messianic prophecy

2. **What insights does the New Testament provide on the problem of evil?**

ANSWER: God sometimes allows suffering even when someone has not sinned; and God will bring good out of evil; and God will compensate us for suffering in the next life.

3. **What attitude do the New Testament authors take toward Greek thought?**

ANSWER: They should be evaluated and either accepted or rejected on their merits

4. **Can we use natural law reasoning to learn things about God?**

ANSWER: Yes, it's possible to prove some things about the Creator from his creations.

Apologetics in the Early Church

1. **Who were the most prominent apologists of the second century?**

ANSWER: Irenaeus of Lyons and Justin Martyr

2. **Besides conversion, what was one of the major goals of early Christian apologetics?**

ANSWER: Arguing for tolerance for the Christian faith; and refuting rumors about Christians.

3. **Did Gnostics believe that we are "saved through knowledge"?**

ANSWER: No, that's an inadequate description of their beliefs.

Apologetics in the Middle Ages

1. **What new challenge emerged in the Middle Ages that needed a response from Christian Apologists?**

ANSWER: Islam

2. **Who introduced the ontological argument for God's existence?**

ANSWER: St. Anselm of Canterbury

3. **Who popularized the Kalaam argument for God's existence?**

ANSWER: St. Bonaventure

4. **Who proposed the historically most popular arguments for God's existence?**

ANSWER: St. Thomas Aquinas

Apologetics After the Reformation

1. What were the two main criticisms the Protestant Reformers made of Catholic teaching?

ANSWER: The Church doesn't adhere to Scripture alone; and the Church doesn't adhere to justification by faith alone

2. What is deism?

ANSWER: The claim that God created the world but no longer interacts with it

3. What is agnosticism?

ANSWER: The claim that one does not know whether there is a God

4. What is theism?

ANSWER: The claim that God created the world and still interacts with it.

Recent Apologetics

1. Who was the most significant apologist of the twentieth century dealing with secularism?

ANSWER: C.S. Lewis

2. What caused Catholic apologetics to go into eclipse in this time frame?

ANSWER: The rise of the ecumenical movement

3. What broadened the religious marketplace of ideas?

ANSWER: The Internet

Ways of Doing Apologetics

Methods of Apologetics

1. What are the two most basic ways of doing apologetics?

ANSWER: Positive and negative apologetics

2. What are the steps commonly used in classical apologetics?

ANSWER: Offering evidence that God exists; and Offering evidence that the Catholic Church was founded by Jesus; and Offering evidence that Jesus is the Messiah

3. What is the key difference between evidential and classical apologetics?

ANSWER: Classical apologetics seeks to prove God's existence before proving the truth of the Christian faith

4. What metaphor is often used to explain cumulative case apologetics?

ANSWER: A lawyer in a courtroom

5. What is the major claim of presuppositional apologetics?

ANSWER: We need to begin our apologetics with a presupposition

6. What is a major claim of reformed epistemology?

ANSWER: The believer doesn't have the burden of proof

7. What is the major claim of toolbox apologetics?

ANSWER: We need to adapt our apologetics to the person we are working with

Evaluating the Methods

1. Is it necessary to prove God's existence before considering other apologetic arguments for the Faith?

ANSWER: No

2. Is it necessary to assume the truth of God's word to engage in apologetics?

ANSWER: No

3. What is the major limitation of reformed epistemology?

ANSWER: It doesn't distinguish between different religious beliefs

4. What is the main advantage of toolbox apologetics?

ANSWER: It takes the apologetic needs of individuals seriously

The Church on Apologetics

1. Does the Catholic Church mandate a specific way of doing apologetics?

ANSWER: No

2. Is faith a free act or is it produced necessarily by arguments?

ANSWER: It is a free act

3. What are the two main points of departure that allow us to show the existence of God?

ANSWER: The human person; and the physical world

Faith and Reason

The Reasonability of Faith

- 1. *Is the existence of God always a matter of faith?***
ANSWER: No
- 2. *Do ordinary people prove most of the things they believe?***
ANSWER: No
- 3. *Why is it impossible to prove the fundamental laws of logic?***
ANSWER: Because any proof would be circular

Faith and Science

- 1. *Does the fact we can investigate the natural world by our senses show that there are no other realms?***
ANSWER: No
- 2. *Would defining the term nature to mean “everything that exists” prevent the existence of God or angels?***
ANSWER: No
- 3. *What is wrong with the claim that we should only accept things that can be scientifically proven?***
ANSWER: This claim undermines itself

God

The Problem of Evil

- 1. *What good is God protecting by allowing moral evil?***
ANSWER: Free will
- 2. *What good does pain produce when it is playing its proper function?***
ANSWER: Both A and B
- 3. *Would God allow an evil if he didn't have a way to bring good out of it?***
ANSWER: No

The Concept of Revelation

1. What factors make it rational to accept a reported divine revelation?

ANSWER: Consistency with prior revelation; and Miracles

2. What book can you recommend to help a secularist see the rationality of accepting divine revelation?

ANSWER: Flatland: A Romand in Many Dimensions by Edwin Abbott

3. What does 'A Sphere' commission 'A Square' to do?

ANSWER: Preach the gospel of three dimensions

Jesus and the New Testament

The Case for Christ

1. How many early Roman authors speak about Jesus?

ANSWER: Four

2. Why wasn't Josephus' knowledge of Jesus dependent on Christians?

ANSWER: He grew up among with Jewish eyewitnesses

3. Why does the spread of Christianity provide evidence that Jesus existed?

ANSWER: Neither A nor B... (we thought this was incorrect)

The Resurrection of Christ

1. Which alternative explanation(s) would not explain why the Jewish authorities couldn't go to Jesus' tomb and produce the body?

ANSWER: Hallucination; Twin; Wrong Tomb

2. Which alternative explanation(s) would not explain the post-Resurrection appearances the disciples reported?

ANSWER: Wrong Tomb

3. Which alternative explanation(s) would not explain the disciples' claim to witness the Ascension?

ANSWER: Swoon; Trick; Twin; Wrong Tomb

Our added note: 1 Corinthians says:

15 Now I would remind you, brethren, in what terms I preached to you the gospel, which you received, in which you stand, ²by which you are saved, if you hold it fast—unless you believed in vain.

³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

A Case for the New Testament

1. Why was Acts likely written around A.D. 60?

ANSWER: It does not mention the outcome of Paul's trial before Nero

2. Why was John likely written around A.D. 65?

ANSWER: Both (A) It refers to Peter's death as a future event; and (B) It was probably written after the other Gospels

3. Who indicated that Mark is based on the oral preaching of Peter?

ANSWER: John the Presbyter

Apocryphal Writings

1. What is one way the apocryphal gospels betray their dependence on the canonical Gospels?

ANSWER: They rarely tell the full story of Jesus' ministry

2. How did the early Church eliminate the apocryphal gospels as authentic scriptures?

ANSWER: Both (A) They looked to see whether there was a tradition of them being read in the churches; and (B) They looked to see whether they contained teaching that contradicted those passed down by Tradition

Christ's Church

Peter the Rock

1. Name two reasons why, if petros and petra did mean "small stone" and "large rock", it wouldn't show that Peter isn't the rock.

ANSWER: (a) Biblical symbols can point to more than one thing; AND (c) The passage may involve synthetic parallelism.

2. **What feature of the text shows that “You are Peter” isn’t meant to diminish Peter in comparison to the rock?**

ANSWER: (c) Both A and B – (a – It is followed by an explanation of what the statement means; b – It is surrounded by statements of blessing on Peter).

3. **Why does John 21 indicate that Peter has a special leadership role and Jesus isn’t simply restoring Peter to being an ordinary apostle?**

ANSWER: (a) Jesus’ question “Do you love me more than these?” indicates he has a special role.

A Continuing Papacy

1. **Why would common sense indicate that Peter would have successors?**

ANSWER: (b) The Church would continue to need leaders as it grew

2. **Why does Isaiah 22 suggest that Peter would have successors?**

ANSWER: (a) It indicates that the Old Testament parallel to Peter’s office involved succession

A Case for the Church

1. **What two facts show that the Church has a “visible” membership?**

ANSWER: (a) It has a hierarchy; AND (b) It has a rite of initiation

2. **Who instituted the Church’s hierarchy?**

ANSWER: (a) Jesus

3. **What did the power of binding and loosing include?**

ANSWER: (a) Absolving and refusing to absolve; AND (c) Forbidding and permitting

Moral Corruption

1. **If sin automatically disqualified one from holding a church office, how many churches would have officers?**

ANSWER: (d) None of them

2. **Name two high priests who were great sinners yet validly held office.**

ANSWER: (b) Caiaphas; AND (c) Eli

3. **What great sin did Peter commit after he had been appointed pope?**

ANSWER: (a) Denying Christ

Sola Scriptura

1. **What is the key reason that sola scriptura is false?**

ANSWER: (a) It does not meet its own test.

2. What did the Bereans do after verifying the basics of Paul's message in Old Testament messianic prophecy?

ANSWER: (a) Accept new teachings based on oral Tradition

3. Did Paul expect Timothy to apply the principle found in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 in an age when apostolic Tradition was binding?

ANSWER: (a) Yes

Apostolic Tradition

1. Did Jesus say that Tradition "makes void the word of God"?

ANSWER: (d) No

2. Where does the New Testament envision Tradition being passed down in the post-apostolic age?

ANSWER: (d) 2 Timothy 2:2

3. Name two Traditions that are accepted by all traditional Protestants.

ANSWER: (a) There are to be no more apostles; AND (c) There is to be no more public revelation

Justification "by Faith Alone"

1. Should Catholics condemn every use of the phrase "by faith alone"?

ANSWER: (b) No

2. Is it prudent for Catholics to use "by faith alone" among themselves?

ANSWER: (b) No

3. What kind of works is Paul talking about when he says we are justified by faith and not works of the law?

ANSWER: (c) Acts undertaken to obey the Law of Moses

Purgatory

1. How long has prayer for the dead been practiced by God's people?

ANSWER: (a) Since before the time of Christ

2. What does Paul indicate the process of judgment will be like for a saved person who has built poorly in life?

ANSWER: (b) Escaping through flames

3. Purgatory may be understood as the final stage of what biblical process?

ANSWER: (d) Sanctification

4. What does Pope Benedict speculate the fire of purgatory may be?

ANSWER: (a) Christ

Intercession of Mary and the Saints

1. What is the original meaning of the English term “pray”?

ANSWER: (b) Ask

2. How do Catholics commonly think the saints learn of our prayer requests?

ANSWER: (a) Through God

3. Under what image does the book of Revelation depict the saints and angels presenting our prayers to God?

ANSWER: (b) Incense

4. Why would we also want to ask the saints to pray for us when we can ask God directly?

ANSWER: (c) Both A and B

(A-It’s good to have multiple people praying for something; B-“The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects”)

Practical Apologetics

Pascal’s Wager

1. What kind of reasoning does Pascal’s Wager involve?

ANSWER: (d) Practical

2. What options is the Wager designed to help people decide between?

ANSWER: (d) Christianity and skepticism

3. Can Pascal’s Wager be reconfigured for other religious options?

ANSWER: (a) Yes

The Burden of Proof

1. In a criminal trial, who has the burden of proof?

ANSWER: (d) The prosecutor

2. In a philosophical or religious discussion, who has the burden of proof?

ANSWER: (d) The person who wants someone to change his mind

Asking Questions

1. What are the goal(s) of the Socratic method of questioning?

ANSWER: (c) Prompting people to think more deeply; AND (d) Stripping away false elements in people's beliefs

2. What are the goal(s) of the diagnostic method of questioning?

ANSWER: (d) Understanding the other person's position

3. Is there such a thing as "the" Protestant position on core issues like sola scriptura and sola fidei?

ANSWER: (b) No

Practices to Avoid

1. What is the key reason data dumping is a bad idea?

ANSWER: (d) It will exceed the attention span of the person you are trying to help

2. Why do people often feel the need to abruptly move from one topic to a different one in a discussion?

ANSWER: (c) They sense that their position is weak

3. What are two reasons faking an answer is a bad idea?

ANSWER: (b) They are less likely to be convincing; AND (d) They are more likely to be wrong

4. If you are trying to win an argument, what role have you placed yourself in with respect to the other person?

ANSWER: (a) An adversary

Bulletproof Apologetics

1. What are two reasons it is important to identify and acknowledge common ground?

ANSWER: (a) It doesn't waste the other person's time; AND (c) It shows good will

2. Why is it important to remove weaker arguments from what you present someone?

ANSWER: (b) Because people may focus on the weaker arguments and ignore stronger ones

3. Why is it important to remove snark from what you present someone?

ANSWER: (c) Because snark will distract from the force of your arguments