***Major Apologists and Types of Apologetics - CA-003***

I want to give you some names of some well-known major apologists that you should be familiar with, so when you see a book by these people, you'll know that this is a good book to read. When you hear their names, you'll know something about where they were coming from. I also want to give you the basic types of Christian apologetics. Most Christian apologists throughout history have fit into one of these types. Then we're going to look at a couple of more biblical examples of apologetics.

**Justin Martyr**

One of the first Christian apologists after biblical times was a man who has come down in history as Justin the Martyr, or simply Justin Martyr. He lived from about 100 A.D. to 164 or 165 A.D. We can't be absolutely certain about these dates, but it was somewhere in that period. He is remembered as Justin Martyr because he was executed as a martyr for being a Christian. He wrote two books that we know of. One of them is called The Dialog with Trypho (Trypho was a Jew), in which he goes through messianic prophecy and fulfilled Scripture, and does a very good job of proving to Jewish people that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah.

Then he wrote another book simply called "Apologia," in which he tries to put down some of the slander and false ideas about Christians that people believed back then. People believed that Christians were atheists. No, Christians believed in the one true God. We reject the pagan gods of the Greeks and Romans. Christians are not cannibals. The rumor was going around that people would hear Christians talking about eating the body and drinking the blood of the Lord (about communion), and they thought they were practicing cannibalism. No, Christians are not cannibals. People noticed in the early days that Christians were fond of each other, and they practiced brotherly love. So the rumor got out that it was a homosexual cult. He said, "No, Christians are not homosexuals; quite to the contrary." So Justin Martyr is the first well-known Christian apologist after biblical times.

He also tied in a lot of Platonic philosophy with Christianity. He took some of the good ideas that Plato had and he said, "Guess where Plato got these ideas. He plagiarized them from Moses." There was probably a lot of truth in that. So, Justin Martyr was a great Christian apologist.

If you ever want to read some of these old guys, I'll tell you that it's really hard reading. They thought so differently back then from the way we think now. Unless you just have to, or out of curiosity, you would find these very boring. I had to read some of them in seminary, and it's really difficult reading.

**Origen**

Another one was Origen. Origen also was a martyr. This guy believed some of the wildest, most fantastic stuff. You would not believe some of the things he came up with. But he did a pretty good job on apologetics. He wrote a book called Contra Celsum. There was a man named Celsus who had written some books trying to show that Christianity was just a form of paganism. He said, "Sure, Jesus probably performed miracles through sorcery." And Origen did a good job of refuting these claims – to give them a biblical refutation and a biblical basis. So because we say that someone was a good apologist doesn't mean that we agree or we approve of everything he said, because, as I said, Origen came up with some really weird stuff – reincarnation and transmigration of souls. He was actually excommunicated more than once, but he kept coming back. He did a pretty good job in Christian apologetics, and also some of the earliest copies of the New Testament were saved and preserved by Origen.

**Augustine**

Then we don't hear much about apologetics until the time of Augustine. Augustine lived from 354 A.D. to 430 A.D. Sometimes he's called Augustine of Hippo because this is where he made his home in northern Africa. Augustine is one of these people that it seems like Roman Catholics; Eastern Catholics; Protestants; and, even unbelievers are fascinated by. A lot of unbelievers read Augustine because he was such an articulate philosopher. He's not nearly as hard to read as the other ancient writers. I have it on authority from one of the foremost scholars of Augustine that this is indeed the correct pronunciation of his name. There is accent on each syllable. You hear people accent the second syllable, and so on. Well, I've heard from a foremost student of Augustine that it should be the accent on each syllable equally. He is also known as St. Augustine.

Augustine was a convert of Manichaeism, so a lot of his work is polemical against Manichaeism. Manichaeism was named after a man named Mani who was from Persia. Not a lot is known about him. But basically what he believed is pretty much what new agers believe today. He taught that there were two forces in the universe, good and evil, and they were constantly battling each other – light and darkness. If you wanted to take part in the battle and be on the good side, then you had to go through all sorts of legalistic exercises. Augustine became a Christian out of the Manichaeistic cult. He is a pretty interesting guy to read.

I'll give you a story from Augustine's writing, even though it doesn't have anything to do with theology or apologetics. Up until that time, if you read something, you read it orally. Nobody ever thought of silent reading. It was like prayer. Prayer was something that you did orally. Remember in the Old Testament, when Eli found this lady praying in the temple silently, he said, "How dare you come into the tabernacle drunk," because she was moving her lips, but not saying anything. He said, "You've got to be drunk." She said, "No, I'm praying." So silent prayer was something he had never thought of.

Well, silent reading was something apparently not many people had ever thought of. Augustine and some of his buddies heard about a man named Ambrose who read silently. He would take a scroll, and look at it, and not even move his mouth, but he would go down it with his eyes. And so Augustine and some of his friends went over to visit him one day and asked him if that was true. He said, "Yes, in fact, I'm going to read something here in a little while. If you want to stay around and watch, it will be OK." So they just couldn't wait to see this guy read silently. In Augustine's writing, he said, "He did. He read. He knew what was on that scroll, but he never opened his mouth."

So Augustine is an interesting writer. He believed that faith and reason could go hand in hand. So he was one of the first really thorough Christian apologists. He used as proofs for Christianity the fact that Jesus performed miracles; that people would become Christians, even though it might mean martyrdom; and, people would rather die than deny Christ. He used all these as proofs of Christianity.

**Anselm**

And then the next one is Anselm of Canterbury. He lived in England, and he wrote a book with a Latin title called Cur Deus Homo". In English, it means, Why God Became Man. Anselm said that he wrote not for unbelievers, but he wrote for Christians, because after you were a Christian, you should delight in learning the reasonableness of Christianity, even though Anselm's books were used to convince unbelievers of the truth of Christianity. Anselm is famous for his saying that, "I don't have to understand before I believe, but I believe in order that I may understand."

**Thomas Aquinas**

Then all of us have heard of St. Thomas Aquinas, a great doctor of the Roman Catholic Church. Thomas Aquinas was another really interesting man. He was, as a student, called the Dumb Ox, because his teachers felt that he was ignorant and not capable of learning. So the other students and the teachers nicknamed him the "Dumb Ox." But he had such a brilliant mind that once he latched on to something, he could really go deep with it. And he wrote one of the first really thorough Christian systematic theologies. Again, he focused on some of the same things that Augustine did: fulfilled prophecy; miracles; martyrdom; and, the conversion of masses (even though it might mean death for them) as proofs of Christianity.

Again, if you start reading Aquinas, you're going to get into some weird stuff (some Catholic stuff), but he also made a lot of sense too. Some people that I know have really gotten into Aquinas – some Protestant theologians. Of course, they don't believe in everything he wrote, but they really think he was a great theologian. And you can find a lot of good stuff in his writings like salvation by grace. You look at it, and you say, "How did that get in here?" Nevertheless, he was a really sharp man.

He is another interesting man. He was such a big man physically that he spent the last years of his life in his study – literally in his study, without leaving. When he died, they had to tear down the wall to get him out. He wouldn't fit through the door.

**Martin Luther**

Martin Luther is not greatly known as an apologist. He was a reformer, of course. He is not known as a great apologist, but he did some apologetical work. He is known primarily for his stance that Christianity didn't always make sense, but you had to believe it anyway, even if it seemed unreasonable. In fact, one of his quotes is "sometimes unreasonable."

**John Calvin**

Calvin, on the other hand, said, "Christianity may sometimes appear unreasonable, but there's nothing contradictory in it. When you know the answer, it all makes perfect sense." Calvin also said, "There was enough proof for Christianity to convince anyone who was willing to be convinced. There was not enough proof to convince anyone who wasn't willing."

**William Paley**

Then William Paley was British, and he was really into evidences for Christianity. His books were standard textbooks for years in seminaries and Christian colleges and universities. In fact, Dallas Seminary has one of his books printed in the 1800s, and it has page after page of line illustrations from nature, about symmetry in nature, and that type of thing. One of his favorite illustrations is that you're walking with a friend out in the woods, and you come upon a watch. And it's a beautiful precision watch, and you say, "Where in the world did this watch come from? Who lost their watch?" And your friend says, "It just happened. Things like that happen all the time." And his point is that if there's a watch, there has to be a watchmaker.

**Blaise**

Then there was a Frenchman, Blaise Pascal. You might have heard of this man in another context. He was a mathematician. He was the originator of analytical geometry. He made several other mathematical discoveries. He was also one of the pioneers in computers. He developed some ideas about making computers. He was Roman Catholic. At some point in his life, he had a very deep spiritual experience, and came to know Christ personally. I am going to tell you the main divisions (the main types) of apologetics later, but I'll tell you that Pascal was a "fideist." We're going to talk about that in a little bit. He appealed not so much to the intellect as to the will. He was famous for the quote, "The heart has reasons for believing. Don't worry if everything is not logical and reasonable. Just believe, because intuitively, it makes sense."

And I need to tell you about Pascal's Wager. He said, "Go ahead and become a Christian, because if you believe in Christ, and you come to the end of your life, and you find out after you die that there's no truth in Christianity, you haven't lost anything. If Christianity is not true and you die, you're going to be out of here anyway. You're going to cease to exist. Just look at all the good things you had in this life. You had a good life because you believed in Christ. However, if you find out that Christianity is true, and you don't believe, you've lost all eternity. So be on the safe side and make the correct wager. Believe in Christ." I'm not sure that I think that's a good ground for asking people to believe the gospel, but nevertheless, that was Blaise Pascal's way of witnessing.

**Abraham Kuyper**

Now we're getting up close to modern times, and this next guy is just unbelievable. Abraham Kuyper was born in 1837 and died in 1920. He was a Dutchman. He had a long career – something like 60 years of working with the public. For something like 47 years, he was the editor of a newspaper (the same newspaper). For 42 years, he taught in a university. He was also founder of a university, the Free University of Amsterdam. He was president of that university for 20 years. He was a pastor of a local church for 10 years. He was prime minister of Holland for 4 years. For 17 years, he was an elected legislator of the nation of the Netherlands (or Holland). He wrote something like 232 books. During all this time, he was a prominent theologian, cranking out articles and books on theology.

He wrote a book on the Holy Spirit called The Work of the Holy Spirit. He was one of the few people who even studied the work of the Holy Spirit during this time, because these were the days of the beginning of the holiness and the Pentecostal movement. It seemed to be the thinking that only really strange people (only weird people) talked about the Holy Spirit. But he wrote a thick volume, a biblically based book, on the work of the Holy Spirit. For a long time, it was the only modern in-depth biblical study of the work of the Holy Spirit by a contemporary author. This guy was really a fantastic person. He was a Christian activist, as well as the president of a political party for something like four years.

**Cornelius Van Til**

Then there was another Dutchman, Cornelius Van Til (1895-1987). Van Til actually became an American at an early age, and he taught for many years at Westminster Theological Seminary, a Presbyterian school in Philadelphia. He was a brilliant theologian and Christian apologist. He influenced almost all modern Christian apologists. Right up till just a short time before his death, he was an active professor at Westminster Seminary.

**C.S. Lewis**

Then someone that we've all heard of is C.S. Lewis, Clives Staples Lewis. He was born in 1898, and he died the same day that President Kennedy died. He was an Englishman. He was a converted atheist. He had talked himself into believing that there was no God. As a young man, he was thinking one day about just how unreasonable it was to believe in God. And he had all of his atheistic proofs all laid out in his mind. Then suddenly it dawned on him, "Now, wait a minute. I have used the power of reasonable, logical thought to prove that there is no God. I used reason and logic, and I used my brain. And I used it to try to prove that no one created my brain – that something that could use reason and logic like this just happened. That doesn't sound right."

So this trend of thought, as he thought about it more and more, led him to get into the Bible, the Word of God, and to talk to people about Christianity. The result was that he became a Christian. He's really a fascinating person. If you haven't read any of his books, you are in for a treat. He was an Anglican. Someone described him as a cigarette-smoking, whiskey-drinking, baby-baptizing Anglican. There are a lot of things that we would disagree with him about, but there is so much truth that he believed and that he wrote about. He probably believed in evolution. You'll see that in some of his books. But then in some of his later books, and some of the quotes that became popular after his death, he had never heard of scientific creationism. In the atmosphere that he functioned in, he didn't know that there were people (Christians) who actually believed in creation. He was very interested in it. He wrote some stuff near the end of his life saying, "You know, I'd like to know more about this because evolution really doesn't make sense, and creation is really appealing to me."

He wrote some fiction too, and when you read his fiction, you are going to see the gospel in most of it. He was a friend of J. R. R. Tolkien. Tolkien wrote The Lord of the Rings. They're nice stories, and I like them, but I don't see the gospel in them. There's a basic Christian world view. I mean, there's good and there's evil. Kids could be going to a lot worse movies, I think, than The Lord of the Rings. But in all honesty, I hear people say all, "Oh, the gospel is there." If you see the gospel, I think you're really going to have to look for it.

The story is that C.S. Lewis led Tolkien to Christ. And he was a believer, but you can't miss the gospel in Lewis's fiction. I mean, if you just read his stories just for the story, at some point you're going to be face-to-face with the gospel. So C.S. Lewis was a really fascinating person; a great writer; and, a great Christian apologist.

He is very well-known for his trilemma of Christ. You know, you hear about dilemmas and having to make a choice between two things. His trilemma was: who was Jesus? He presented three possibilities: Number one: He was a liar who purposely deceived people, who claimed to be God in flesh, but knew that He was not. Number two: He was a lunatic. He actually thought He was God, but He was not. Or, number three: He was who and what He said He was.

**Carl Henry and Edward John Carnell**

Then I'm going to give you two people here at once because they basically functioned about the same time. They were both Americans: Carl Henry; and, Edward John Carnell. These men were born in the early 1900s. They were highly educated. They both ended up teaching at Fuller Seminary. In fact, Carnell was president of Fuller Seminary for about five years. They urged Christians to start thanking. Carl Henry wrote two books in 1946 and 1947, in which he said, "We Christians are just going to have to start thinking, and getting into the mainstream where we can talk to people intellectually on their level." They were very instrumental in encouraging Christians to go to college; go get your master's degree; go get your doctorate; get a second doctorate; and, talk to people intellectually and philosophically about Christianity on a high level. In fact, Carl Henry is the one who wrote the book, The Battle for the Bible, in which he takes the stand of inerrancy. So both of these men were really important in Christian apologetics in contemporary times.

**Francis Schaefer**

Then there was Francis August Schaefer. Some people get him confused with Lewis Sperry Chafer. They are different; their names are spelled differently; and, they very different in a lot of areas. Chafer was not known for his apologetics. He was a theologian and a very good one. Francis Schaefer claimed to be an agnostic as a young man in college. Since he was going to college to get an education, he thought, "Since the Bible is a part of the heritage of the country that I live in, I think I should read the Bible in order to be an educated man." So reading the Bible made a believer out of him, and a very conservative believer.

At that time, there was a big split in the Presbyterian Church. A group of Presbyterians who were conservative broke away from the main body of Presbyterians and formed the Bible Presbyterian Church under the leadership of a man named J. Gresham Machen who was a friend of Lewis Sperry Chafer's, and also was instrumental in founding a conservative seminary in the east. He came very close to working with Chafer at Dallas, but he formed a Presbyterian denomination called the Bible Presbyterians, and Francis Schaefer was the first minister to be ordained by the Bible Presbyterians in 1937. Then Francis Schaefer and his wife Edith went to Europe as missionaries.

At some point in the 1950s or 1960s, Schaefer became very disillusioned with what he saw of Christianity. He thought, "No wonder we're not making any converts," because he didn't see people living what they claimed to believe. So he quit his position as a missionary and he told his wife, "I'm going to think this through. If I decide I can no longer be a missionary, then we'll just go back to the United States, and I'll get a different type of job. So he would get up every morning and take his Bible and just spend the day studying the Word of God; praying; and, thinking things through. The result was that he came out stronger in his faith than ever before. This was the beginning of his writing ministry. He wrote several books.

He made a movie about more than one of the books. In fact, we have seen one of the movies, How Should We Then Live? Dr. Danish showed it to us several years ago, and it's put together very well. He traces the influence of Christianity and humanism and different types of thought. So he was an important Christian apologist of our times. He died in 1984. And there is a sad thing. His son, Frankie Schaefer, a few years ago, refuted all of the conservative fundamentalism that his family had taught him, and he joined the Eastern Orthodox Church. He is prominent in trying to attract people to the ritualistic, liturgical, and legalistic doctrine of the Eastern Orthodox or Greek Orthodox Church.

**Norman Geisler**

Then there are some people that are still living and influential Christian apologists. Norman Geisler used to teach at Dallas Theological Seminary. I was privileged to be in his class room. The last I heard, he was president of a seminary. He is a very brilliant man, and a very outstanding Christian apologist.

**Ravi Zacharias**

And then another one is Ravi Zacharias. He has a radio ministry and you might have heard him on the radio. He is originally from India, and, by way of Canada, he came to the United States, and he has a worldwide industry. He is a very intelligent speaker and persuader for the cause of Christ.

**Josh McDowell**

Then, of course, most of us have heard of Josh McDowell. He's famous for his book Evidence That Demands a Verdict, volumes 1 and 2. Actually, you can get these volumes in one volume now (at Christian Family Bookstore). It's really good. He doesn't go really deep, but he makes a really good case for the evidences for Christianity. This volume grew out of the time when he was a college student, and he had no use at all for Christianity. So one of his professors, who was a believer, said, "Why don't you write a term paper on how, you know Christianity is not true?" So somewhere in the middle of that term paper, the more he learned about Christianity, the more he became convinced that it was the truth. His term paper became a term paper on "How I Know Christianity is True," which later grew into the book Evidence Which Demands a Verdict. The last I heard, he lived out in Richardson, Texas. So he's a guy that you'll probably get the opportunity to hear speak locally. He's a good man to hear.

**R. C. Scroll**

Then R.C. Scroll is a Presbyterian, and he takes some positions on prophecy that we do not agree with here at Berean Memorial Church. But when it comes to Christian apologetics, you're not going to get much better than R. C. Sproul.

**William Lane Craig**

William Lane Craig is a very brilliant Christian apologist. He has written dozens of books, and he just keeps cranking them out.

**Henry Morris**

Henry Morris is a grand old man in his 90s today. He is actually almost single-handedly the one who started the creation movement in the United States. This guy is no dummy. He has a PhD in hydraulics, which is the study of water. One of the papers that he wrote in pursuing his PhD was, "Is There Enough Water in the Atmosphere to Flood the Whole World?" Could Noah's flood have actually happened? And he proves that it could have; that is very feasible; and, that it did happen. He's also written a book called Many Infallible Proofs. He is a great Christian apologist, mostly in the area of creation. But his book Many Infallible Proofs is in the category of Christian evidences.

**Bernard Ramm**

Then I want to give you the name of one more guy because he gets a mixed review: Bernard Ramm. He passed away in 1992. He began as a conservative Baptist, and then he got liberal, but then he renounced liberalism for the most part, but he never quite made it back to the fundamentalist camp. So he's a guy who has stood with one foot in each camp: one foot in the liberal camp; and, one foot in the conservative camp. You read some of the stuff he writes, and you think, "Oh, this guy: he's just so liberal that he stinks." But then he'll come up with something really sound and really good. Up until a few years ago, there were a lot of conservative Bible colleges and seminaries that used his books as textbooks. In fact, back in the 1980s, a class I took at Dallas Seminary used one of his books as required reading because he does have some good stuff to say. But then you need to use discernment, because he is contaminated by liberalism. So we have to give Bernard Ramm a mixed review.

**The Types of Christian Apologetics**

Now, I'm going to give you the basic types of Christian apologetics:

**Classical Apologetics**

First of all, there is classical apologetics. Most of the people that I've told you about here fall into this camp. This is classical, traditional, Christian apologetics, and it's very rationalistic. It is very reason-based. C.S. Lewis, Norman Geisler, R. C. Sproul, and most of the people we talked about are classical apologists.

**Evidential Apologetics**

Then there is evidential apologetics which is based upon historical and natural phenomena. The evidential apologist, as you might can guess, go by evidence: factual evidence; empiricism; and, what you can actually see and hear and touch. Evidential apologists love the Shroud of Turin – at least those who believe that it's authentic. They think it proves Christianity. Others say, "No, there's not enough evidence there. We'll use other things that, but not the shroud that was supposed to be Christ's shroud." Paley, the man who wrote the book with the illustrations about symmetry; about nature; and, about finding the watch out in the forest, would fall into the evidential camp.

**Reformed Apologetics**

Then there is reformed apologetics. What we can say about reformed apologetics is that it is based on authority for the most part. You need to remember that the reformers came out of the Roman Catholic Church, and they didn't get completely out of it. I mean, they had a long way to go to be where we are today. Some of them just barely got out by the skin of their teeth. Some of them just understood salvation by grace. That was all they had time to learn. So one thing about the Roman Catholic Church is that they are very authoritarian: "You believe this if you want to be a good Catholic. Why do you believe it? Because the church believes it. And we, as the church, decide what you're going to believe."

So reformed apologetics have a lot of authoritarianism in them. You believe this because the church has always believed this: "Christians have always believed this, and if you're going to be a Christian, you have to believe this, because you've got to believe something, and we're going to tell you what to believe." Cornelius Van Til comes pretty far into this camp. Others would classify him as fideist, and we're going to see what that is in a minute. John Calvin came from the reformed camp. Abraham Kuyper (the guy who wrote so many books; did so much; and, became prime minister of his country) was a reformed apologist.

**Fideism**

Then there is fideism. This comes from the word "faith." Remember that I was telling you about Blaise Pascal. He said, "The heart has its own reasons." This doesn't say that reason is worthless. It's a valuable tool. But the main thing is intuition. You believe something because it feels right. Fideism aims at the will: "believe this because it feels right. It is right."

**Integrated Apologetics**

Then there is integrated apologetics. That means a little bit from all of the camps. Maybe you reject some of fideism's beliefs, but they do make some good points. Concerning reformed apologetics, sometimes Van Til, Kuyper, and some of the others make some good points. You use those. You reject the rest. There's some great evidence out there for the truth of Christianity. You use it, but you don't buy the whole school. As we said at the beginning, we buy retail, not wholesale. We go into the apologetics store and we say, "Yes, these people have some good ideas. We're going to buy a few of those. We're not going to buy anything wholesale. We're buying everything a little here and a little there."

**Biblical Examples**

I want to show you a couple of biblical examples. You notice that I started with Justin Martyr, about 150 years after Christ. Let's look at a couple of New Testament examples. You're not going to get anybody more apologetic than Luke. Read with me in Luke 1:1-4. Luke begins by saying, "In as much as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as those who, from the beginning, were eye witnesses." I mean, he's using the historian's methods. Luke was a medical doctor, and at that time, the seeds of modern medicine were being sown. Some doctors were coming out of the superstitions that medicine had been under. Evidently, Luke was one of them, because he gives a very scientific, literal, eyewitness account. "Just as those from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the Word have handed them down to us, it seemed fitting for me, as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus, so that you might know the exact truth about the things you have been taught."

That's almost like a scientist today. If he were going to write a book on apologetics, this is the way he would start out, isn't it. It's all based on eyewitness testimony: "I've observed it all. I've investigated it carefully, and here it is."

Luke also wrote the book of Acts, and in the book of Acts, we see a lot of examples of Christian apologists. For example, we see Peter, in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost. We won't take time to read his sermon but beginning in verse 14, he talks to the man of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem. Then he goes on down and says, "Those who come from afar off." He's talking to the Jewish people. And he meets them where they are. He talks about the Old Testament Scriptures, and he points to fulfilled prophecy. He meets them with the things that they know, and he builds on it, and it worked very successfully. Verse 37: "Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?'"

Then let's go on over to Acts 14:8. The apostle Paul is at Lystra. He uses the spiritual gift of healing, and gets everybody's attention by healing a man. So the people say, "The gods have come down to us." So, of course, Paul was shocked that they would want to worship him and Barnabas, but they were talking religious talk, and that was just what he wanted them to do, because that gave him an opportunity to tell them about the true God. In verse 15, he does that. He tells them that what they're doing is wrong. Then he gives them the gospel, and tells them about the one true God. He meets them where they are, and builds on what they know.

Then in Acts 17:10, when Paul and Silas went to Berea, they went to the synagogue and they talked to the Jews, and showed them fulfilled prophecy, and so on. Then in verse 16, Paul went to Athens, and this was not a place to go in and talk about fulfilled Old Testament prophecy, because Paul's heart was broken by all the idolatry he saw in the city. So when the philosophers (the Epicureans and the Stoics) found out that he was there and he was pushing some new philosophy, they said, "Well, will you speak to us and tell us about it?" So in verse 22, Paul says, "I observed that you are very religious in all respects."

There is a story that they had all these statues (all these idols) to all the gods that they worshiped. There was a plague that had broken out 300 or 400 years earlier. They offered sacrifices to all the gods that they knew, and nothing happened. So one of their wise men said, "Well, there's another God who is more powerful than all of these gods, and you need to sacrifice to Him. I'm sorry I can't tell you much about Him, except that He is the one true God." When they made a sacrifice to the one true God, the plague stopped. So they built this monument to the unknown God. So the apostle Paul says, "Aha. I know that story. I know why you built this. So guess what I'm here to do. I want to tell you about the unknown God who doesn't dwell in temples made with hands."

Then he goes on and tells about how the one true God is the Creator of all. It's interesting in verse 29. He says, "Being then the offspring of God (we're all His creations), we shouldn't think that His nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by art and the thought of man." And the Stoics (some of the type of philosophers who invited him to come and speak) in their writings, they admit that worshiping idols is dumb, because how could God be made by human hands? But they didn't abandon it. They hadn't stopped doing it, although they admitted that it was something that didn't make sense.

So Paul, apparently, being well-read and well-educated, knew that they admitted it was wrong. So he called their attention to it. After this apologetical sermon, in verse 31, he gives them the gospel. He says, "Jesus furnished proof by all man that God raised Him from the dead." And in verse 32, there are three responses, and those are the three responses that we receive today:

First of all, some began to sneer; some scoffed; and, some said, "Well, let's talk about that again sometime." They expressed interest. Paul didn't say, "No, I'm not going to talk to you about it later. It's either now or never." He said, "OK, we'll get together again sometime." He didn't give up on them. Then some believed – not many. Verse 34 says, "Some men joined him and believed: Dionysius the Areopagite," or a member of the city council. To this day, the Greeks call their Supreme Court the Areopagite. "And a woman named Damaris." So some believed; some scorned and rejected; and, some said, "Well, I'd like to talk to you again sometime."

Now I want to make this point. Some people have said that since Paul's apologetical sermon was not fantastically successful (I mean, the whole town didn't believe), and that he gave that up. So he just preached the gospel from then on without trying to persuade people through apologetics. They use 1 Corinthians 2:2 as proof for this: "For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus and Him crucified." This doesn't say that he had given up apologetics; reasoning; or, using logic in sermons. It just says that when he came to these people, he wasn't going to let them get away from the main thrust of the message, and that was the gospel – that Jesus was crucified. We know that they didn't give up using reason and logic because he uses it all through 1 Corinthians, especially in 1 Corinthians 15. Read that sometime, and just see how he reasons right through them now: "If Christ is not raised from the dead, then we are, of all people, most miserable. But if Jesus did rise from the dead (since He did), then we have hope," and so on.

Then, of course, the book of Romans, especially the first 2 chapters, are very apologetical. He starts out the first couple of chapters, and he aims at the gentiles. You can just see the Jewish people reading that, saying, "Yeah, right on, brother, Paul. They're a bunch of idolaters." Then about halfway through chapter 2, he turns on the Jews. He says, "Now wait a minute. You Jewish people are no better." Then he tells how the Jews have become idolaters themselves in thinking that since they have the Law of Moses, then they're the only ones, and as long as they follow the law, they don't have to do anything else. So he uses very careful apologetics.

Then John uses apologetics. The gospel of John was written primarily for gentiles. John aimed his gospel at gentiles. You can tell this when you read through John. Every time he uses some Jewish term, he explains it. Everybody knows what the Passover is, but when John uses the term "Passover," he says, "This is a Jewish feast." He stops and explains everything for the benefit of the gentile readers. So when he starts out, he says, "In the beginning was the Word," the "logos." Most Greek philosophers believed that there was a principle of reason in the universe, and they called it the "logos." They believed that every human being was evidence – something like we might say, "We're created in the image of God. People can think reasonably, logically, and abstractly. Animals can't do that. That's the image of God." So great philosophers didn't have this idea of the image of God, but they had the "logos" – the reason that was in the world.

So John starts out by saying, "In the beginning was reason ("logos"). Then he says, "This was personal. This 'logos' was with God, and this' logos' was God." Then he goes on in verse 9. The Greeks believed that reason was the gift of the gods to all men. He says, "There was the true light which comes into the world and enlightens every man." And they're thinking, "Aha, 'logos.'" But he said, "*He* was in the world." So the logos is personal. "The logos became flesh," and so on. So he starts where they are, and teaches them the truth in a very logical, reasonable manner.

Then in John 20:30, he says, "And many other signs, therefore, Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book, but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." He said, "I wrote this book so that you would be convinced by the things that I write you that Jesus is the 'logos' – the personal manifestation of God, and that in believing this, you will have life."

In 1 John 1:1, he says, "What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life." He says, "What I'm telling you, I didn't make it up. This is the absolute truth. I actually saw the man who was God. I actually heard Him speak. I touched Him."

**Our Mandate for Christian Apologetics**

Then finally, in closing, let's go over to 1 Peter for our mandate for Christian apologetics. 1 Peter 3:15: "But sanctify (set apart) Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness (you don't want to be heavy-handed) and with reverence." Or actually it says, with "fobos." That's the word we get the word "phobia" from, and it actually means "fear." So are we supposed to be afraid of people when we act as Christian apologists? No, we shouldn't, because he tells us in the previous verse, "But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed, and do not fear their intimidation, and do not troubled. So don't be afraid of other people. But he does tell us to be fearful. Who are we supposed to fear?

1 Peter 1:17: "If you address as Father, the one who impartially judges according to each man's work, conduct yourselves in fear (This is the same word – "fobos.") during the time of your stay upon earth. Fear God." 1 Peter 2:17: "Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the King." Then he tells us in 1 Peter 3:16, "Keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame." Have a healthy, deep, reverential awe and fear of God, which will result in good behavior. There is no argument that can ever come against an apologetical life. That's what Peter is telling us to live. Give a defense of the Christian faith with your words and with your behavior.

Leon Adkins, 2003

[**Back to the Advanced Bible Doctrine (Philippians) index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/philippiansdanish.htm)

[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)