



INTRODUCTION

The word itself sounds like a merger between “apologizing” and “ethics”. So then one is not at fault if on first impression we consider the subject of apologetics as learning the ethics in apologizing for others or ourselves or for the offenses of Christianity over the ages. But apologetics is not apologizing, at least not about apologizing with respect to being sorry.

The bible is implicitly clear on the truth that we are not responsible for the conviction of people with regards to sin and their coming to the cross in surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. But yet we are co-laborers with Christ. Our responsibility in this labour therefore is that of accurate communication. We may not and indeed are not responsible for conviction. But we are responsible for accurate communication and explanation of the truth of the gospel backed by living lives consistent with what we proclaim. Apologetics began with the birth of the Church. Really, the moment the Church was born, the wind of the Spirit stirred the believers and they broke out in strange languages that both excited and baffled many. Peter emerges as the first apologist in giving his defense of what was being witnessed.

Each of us has met Jesus in the Scriptures, in the lives of our friends, and in our own hearts. We know Jesus and want to communicate his reality to a confused and troubled world. Therein is the responsibility and the privilege of apologetics.

That which was from the beginning, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched, this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.

WHAT IS APOLOGETICS?

The word "apologetics" comes from the Greek word "apologia," pronounced "ap-ol-og-ee'-ah" which means, "a verbal defense." It is used eight times in the New Testament as found in Acts 22:1; 25:16; 1 Cor. 9:3; 2 Cor. 10:5-6; Phil. 1:7; 2 Tim. 4:16, and 1 Pet. 3:15.

The word “apologia” is a compound word coming from two Greek words:

1. Apo: From.
2. Logikos: Reasonable.

Apologetics is the study that gives reasons for the Christian faith. It asks the question, "Why do you believe what you believe?" Apologetics is the work of convincing people to change their views. In this, it is similar to preaching because its goal is ultimately the defense and presentation of the validity and necessity of the gospel. It is an attempt to persuade the listener to change his beliefs and life to conform to biblical truth and to come to a saving relationship in Christ. We can simply call it a “style” of preaching.

]Therefore, Christian apologetics is that branch of Christianity that deals with answering any and all critics who oppose or question the revelation of God in Christ and the Bible. In the above scriptures sighted the context in which the word “apologia” is mostly that of giving a defense or readiness in responding to a charge in court.

Christian Apologetics lays before the watching world such a winsome embodiment of the Christian faith that for any and all who are willing to observe, there will be an intellectually and emotionally credible witness to its fundamental truth.

A BIBLICAL BASIS FOR APOLOGETICS

Biblical Foundation For Apologetics

The Bible is the Word of God in such a way that when the Bible speaks on any issue, God has spoken. Thus for the Christian, the Bible is the only authoritative source for both belief and conduct.

So for a topic as Apologetics which has not received much emphasis here in Ghana, and is fraught with suspicion by some familiar with it. Discovering its Biblical foundation, thus, is of importance as it will assure us of its legitimacy and inspire us of its necessity.

We will do this under two headings: i) Paul’s Precedence, ii) Peter’s admonishing

Paul’s Precedence

a. Thessalonica

Acts 17: 1-4

we discover, as Luke tells us, Paul’s ‘custom’ was to ‘reason’, ‘explain,’ ‘prove’, and as a consequence to Paul’s apologetics, ‘some of them were persuaded’

Paul reminded the Thessalonica about this when he wrote to them in I Thess 1:5 ‘*our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit with full conviction*’

To Paul, when it came to people receiving the Gospel, it was not either ‘reason’ or the ‘Holy Spirit’. It was both. Paul sought to convince in order to convert.

b. Athens

Acts 17:16-32

Paul, as a master Apologist, moved the Athenians from familiar territory to the unfamiliar. He started from where they were (plurality of deities) to where God is (the resurrected Jesus)

c. Ephesus

Acts 19:8-10

Some manuscripts add to verse 9 'from the fifth hour to the tenth hour (from 11am to 4pm).'

Paul gave a daily 5 hour apologetic lecture, 6 days a week (assuming he took a day's rest) for two years for two years; in other words Paul gave 3,120 hours of Gospel argument.

Consequently, v 10 'all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord'

We see Paul lecturing in

With Paul's apologetic approach to his missionary work, it is not surprising to see him describe his ministry to the Corinthians as 'we persuade' (2 Cor 5:11)

Paul presented a body of truth, arguing, defending, reasoning and explaining

Paul sought to convince in order to convert.

Peter's admonishing.

1 Pet. 3:15

*But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to **give an answer** to everyone who asks you to give **a reason for the hope that you have**. But do this with gentleness and respect.*

To the persecuted church who are 'exiles in the dispersion,' Peter encourages them to be 'always prepared to give an answer (apologia).'

Even in the believers distress, they were to be always ready to defend, argue, reason and explain What they believe.

They were to give the 'Whys' for the 'whats' of the Christian faith.

THE LIMITATIONS OF APOLOGEETICS

Apologetics cannot save anyone. Only Christ is able to do that. Apologetics is simply a tool to point people to Christ. This is important to know. You cannot argue anyone into the Kingdom. You might win the argument, but lose the person.



It is important for us to know and admit here and now that **intellectual agreement does not necessarily mean faith commitment**. What this means is that the fact that a person has come to terms with the truth of your argument in an apologetic presentation does not mean automatically that they have made a commitment to Jesus as Lord. I take an analogy from C. S. Lewis from what he said about himself in the time he became a theist from being an atheist but was not yet a Christian. He writes: “it was more like a man, after a long sleep, still lying motionless in bed, becomes aware he is awake”.

It is also important for us to realize that ultimately, **the evidence for the truth of the Christian faith is cumulative**. More often than not there is no predicting the course to faith that a person will eventually take or what will lead to their surrender. We should always bear in mind that it is never that one single argument is what brings a person to the point or the conclusion that Jesus is Lord and savior. This is especially so if a person has little exposure to the Christian faith and has a lot of reservations. The gospel indeed is simple and even so to the extent that a little child can understand it. Yet it is full of so many beautiful yet intricate truths that will take a lot more than a single persuasive brilliant argument to explain. We need to respect the process it takes for the Holy Spirit to bring people to conviction and be sensitive to know when, where and what apologetic is required of us.

In the end, what is required is that humility not to trust or rely in cleverness or learnedness or brilliance in presentation but rather a total dependence on God to will and to do according to his good pleasure.

