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THEO 446 Apologetics
4 January 2006

Apologetics Explained

Apologetics is commonly referred to as the rational defense of the Christian faith. Apologists refute objections and false charges against the Christian faith, but they also present positive reasons for believing in Christianity. This “intellectual discipline” serves at least two purposes: “(1) to bolster the faith of Christian believers, and (2) to aid in the task of evangelism” (Cowan 8). Faith in Christ is not a “blind faith” but an intelligent, reasonable faith that is supported by history, facts, and evidence. One does not have to block out his mind and ignore factual truths to believe in Christianity. Josh McDowell’s in-depth book, *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, is one of many books that provide a rational basis for believing in Christianity. A step of faith is still involved, and the work of God’s Holy Spirit is always essential in convincing a person of the truth of the gospel. Various apologists balance the use of faith and reason differently, and thus there are various methodologies or schools of thought about apologetics, each having their own strengths and weaknesses. Apologists answer diverse questions like: Does God exist? Is Jesus God and did He rise from the Dead? Is the Bible God’s Word and has it been accurately transmitted over the years? Are miracles possible? How can there be a God when there is suffering and evil in the world? Having answers to these and other questions stabilizes one in the faith and provides a rational basis for a sincere inquirer to come to faith in Jesus Christ.

Apologetics is defined in the dictionary as a “systematic argumentative discourse in defense (as of a doctrine)” and also as “a branch of theology devoted to the defense of the divine origin and authority of Christianity” (“Apologetics”). The root word of “apologetics” is “apology” which is derived from the Greek word *apologia*, which means “speech in defense, answer” (Brown 1: 51). In the ancient world, *apologia* was a term used in the courts of law. In the court of Athens, Socrates gave a famous “apology,” or defense (Cowan 8). The New Testament, written in Greek, uses the word *apologia* eight times within the book of Acts, Paul’s letters, and First Peter. The word often carries a legal sense or judicial idea of defense, though the court room may not be the setting (Vinyard 11: 386). Of the references, Paul made a defense in Acts 22:1, 25:16; 2 Tim. 4:16; 1 Cor. 9:3 and 2 Cor. 7:11; Paul encouraged Christians to defend the gospel in Phil. 1:7 and 1:17; and Peter encouraged Christians to always be “ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence” (NASB, 1 Pet. 3:15). According to Dulles, most of the New Testament reflects the “Church’s efforts to exhibit the credibility of its message and to answer the obvious objections that would have arisen in the minds of adversaries, prospective converts, and candid believers” (24).

Just as Peter and Paul defended the gospel against accusations from enemies, so did other church leaders who, over the next few centuries of persecution, also argued for “civil tolerance” for Christians (Dulles 28). However, after the second-century, apologists started to focus on presenting the positive grounds for the Christian faith (Menzies 20-21). Augustine was the one who permanently placed apologetics “in the new direction of positive affirmation rather than critical reply” at the beginning of the fifth century (Ramm 14). Early church Apologists such as

Justin Martyr, Tertullian and Origen raised the status of apologetics to “a distinct genre of theological literature” (Brown 1: 51). In the first few centuries, debate focused on paganism and Judaism; in the medieval period the focus was on Judaism and Islam, both of which appealed to historical revelation as did Christianity; “But after the Renaissance, apologetics had to address thinkers who rejected revelation entirely and who in some cases denied the existence or knowability of God” (Dulles 206).

There are multiple purposes for apologetics. The most basic purposes are to show the truth of Christianity to unbelievers and to confirm the faith of believers. Ramm gives three functions of Christian apologetics: to show how the Christian faith stands up to criteria of truth; to show Christianity’s power to make sense of life better than any other worldview; and to refute or defend Christianity against false attacks (15-18). The objective of apologetics, according to Pinnock, is to strive “at laying the evidence for the Christian gospel before men in an intelligent fashion, so that they can make a meaningful commitment under the convicting power of the Holy Spirit” (3). Kreeft and Tacelli recognize that most people decide to believe “with their hearts much more than with their heads. . . . But apologetics gets at the heart *through* the head” (21). Apologetics can “challenge unbelief” as well as “remove obstacles to faith itself” (Dulles 367). Sproul asserts, “Apologetics can be used to show that Christianity is true and that all non-Christian worldviews are false” (16). McGrath contrasts evangelism saying, “Apologetics stresses the reasonableness and attractiveness of the Christian faith; evangelism makes the offer of that faith” (39). Craig eloquently states, “The goal of offensive apologetics is to show that there is some good reason to think that Christianity is true, while the goal of defensive apologetics is to show that no good reason has been given to think Christianity is false” (Introduction xvi).

Apologetists agree about the definition and goals of apologetics, but they often differ on their approach to this task when engaging unbelievers (Cowan 9). Various schools of thought or apologetic methods are distinguished by criteria such as “the relationship between faith and reason,” the effects of sin on an unbeliever’s mind with regard to Christian evidence, and an “argumentative strategy” for defending the faith (Cowan 14). According to Clark, “Very generally, faith emphasizes God’s role in knowledge, while reason stresses human initiative” (4). Biblically, it is the exclusive role of the Holy Spirit to convert an unbeliever, but He can and will use reasonable arguments to assist in this task. Craig, in his book *Reasonable Faith*, makes a distinction between “knowing” Christianity is true and “showing” that it is true: “We know Christianity is true primarily by the self-authenticating witness of God’s Spirit. We show Christianity is true by demonstrating that it is systematically consistent” (48) “by appealing to common sense and widely accepted facts about the world” (46). God alone provides faith; reason does not cause faith. “Reason can prove *that* God exists, but it cannot convince an unbeliever to believe *in* God” (Geisler 332). Because of sin, “a person is free to dissent, even in the face of convincing reasons to believe” (332). These issues of faith and reason, sin and its effects on viewing evidence, along with argumentative strategies for defending the faith help differentiate the various apologetic methodologies, each having their own strengths and weaknesses.

The view of Christian Rationalism says that “reason alone can demonstrate the validity of the Christian position” (Menziez 35). The weaknesses of this view is that it overemphasizes the human intellect in its unregenerate state, and one would need to be a highly intelligent philosopher to become a Christian, whereas the New Testament clearly teaches that faith is involved as a result of the conviction of the Holy Spirit (Menziez 35).

A second view, called Christian Agnosticism, emphasizes faith alone and is “distrustful

of reason in the spiritual realm,” believing that reason is only for the natural world and not for the spiritual world (Menziez 35). Existentialist thinkers such as Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann share this view. As Menziez writes, the weakness of this view is that “faith without rational content leads to uncertainty and doubt” (36).

A third view, called Logical Christianity, emphasizes reason followed by faith and says that “while reason is the starting point and may go a long way toward truth, the last steps are made by faith” (Menziez 36). Reason is portrayed as being able to lead the unregenerate mind toward God. The strength of this view is its “confidence in the rationality of the Christian system and an awareness that there are some mysteries in Christianity which are not subject to natural understanding.” Its weakness lies in exalting reason at the expense of special revelation and failing to give faith its proper place as shown in the Bible (Menziez 36).

A fourth view, called Autonomous Christianity, emphasizes faith followed by reason and says that “faith is self-establishing and, once established, may be shown to be consistent with reason. This appears to be the most acceptable evangelical position” (Menziez 36). Augustine believed that “the truth of Christianity is established in the heart of faith alone. . . . [and afterwards] the truth of Christianity could be verified” (Menziez 36). However, there is a sense in which reasonable thought precedes any faith response, but the strength of this view is that it recognizes the conviction of the Holy Spirit in establishing faith in a new believer and it allows reason to then consider the evidences to conquer uncertainty and doubt.

Ramm gives four views on the place that Christian evidence, or factual evidence, has in apologetics: Evidentialists, Probilists, Negativists, and John Calvin’s (55-57). Evidentialists, like Christian rationalists, believe that the evidence for Christianity is overwhelming and “sufficient to convince skeptics of the divine origin of Christianity” (Menziez 55). However, sin may cause a person’s mind to not interpret the evidences properly or possibly rebel against it. Probilists see Christian evidences as creating “a favorable attitude toward the Christian faith,” called historical faith, which then serves as a “bridge from unbelief to saving faith” (Ramm 55). Ramm sees a weakness in this view as it represents a two-step evangelism process: the first is historical faith, and the second is saving faith, which may not follow from the first step (55). Negativists “see no apologetic value in Christian evidences,” but rather deal in philosophical apologetics for the existence of God (Ramm 55). John Calvin’s view is that “only the Holy Spirit can bring a man from unbelief to faith and give him assurance, certainty, and conviction that the gospel is true” (Ramm 56). Because of man’s sinfulness, man is not able to properly reason and evaluate Christian evidences, according to Calvin. Yet, Menziez sees the Holy Spirit active even when Christian evidences are presented to unbelievers in preevangelism (57). Also, in 1 Cor. 2:14, “Paul does not say that natural persons cannot *perceive* truth about God, but that they do not *receive* (Gk. *dekomai*, ‘welcome’) it” (Geisler 38-39). In spite of sin, “humans are not totally depraved in an *intensive* sense, since sin does not destroy the image of God (see Gen. 9:6; James 3:9). God’s image is effaced but not erased. So revelation can be perceived, even if it is not willingly received by depraved creatures without the work of the Spirit” (Geisler 543).

Geisler discusses several types of apologetic systems, based on different argumentative strategies: Classical, Evidential, Historical, Experiential, and Presuppositional. In Classical apologetics, arguments stress “the existence of God as well as the historical evidence supporting the truth of Christianity” (41). The first step often uses the cosmological argument, the teleological argument and the moral argument to show God exists. Once God’s existence is established and miracles are shown to be possible, the New Testament is demonstrated to be historically reliable and authoritative as the Word of God. Geisler writes, “Stress is placed on

miracles as a confirmation of the claims of Christ and the biblical prophets and apostles” (154). Although this view is strong in building a logical step-by-step case for Christianity, some see a weakness since the view builds upon theistic proofs that David Hume and Immanuel Kant have critiqued as having logical inconsistencies. While the ontological argument may be invalid, most accept the validity of some form of the cosmological, teleological and moral arguments (Geisler 41). According to Sproul, a strong reason for establishing the existence of God first is that “all other issues of apologetics become easier to defend” (18). Clark believes that although “classical apologetics can be too rationalistic, it does helpfully balance the integrity of evidence with the effect of world views on evidence” (125). Some proponents of classical apologetics include Augustine, Anselm, Thomas Aquinas, William Craig, Norman Geisler, Peter Kreeft, C. S. Lewis, and R. C. Sproul (Geisler 42).

“Evidential apologetics stresses the need for evidence in support of the Christian truth claims. The evidence can be rational, historical, archaeological, and even experiential” (Geisler 42). “Evidentialists operate as attorneys” who combine specific evidence into a persuasive case, but they do not see the need to establish God’s existence first as classical apologists insist (42). As such, this view is similar to the Cumulative Case method described by Cowan as piecing together evidence to form a case in a court of law (18). For Evidentialists, miracles serve as evidence for God without presupposing God’s existence (Cowan 16). This view stresses a greater confidence in an unbeliever reasoning correctly. Evidential apologetics “does not fully recognize the effect of world views on evidence, but it is right to insist on connecting the case for the Christian faith to objective evidence” (Clark 125). Some proponents include William Paley, Bernard Ramm, and Josh McDowell. Although Cowan (16-17) and Clark (106-07) lump Historical apologetics in the category of Evidential apologetics, Geisler differentiates the two.

“Historical apologetics stresses historical evidence as the basis for demonstrating the truth of Christianity” (Geisler 43) and “does not believe that it is necessary to first establish the existence of God” (Geisler 318). While Christianity is a historical religion, some disagree that the historical facts “speak for themselves” outside of a context of a Christian worldview (319). Some proponents of historical apologetics include Tertullian, Origen, John Warwick Montgomery, and Gary Habermas.

Experiential apologetics appeal “primarily, if not exclusively, to experience as evidence for Christian faith” (Geisler 43). Also, “they spurn rational arguments or factual evidence in favor of what they believe to be a self-verifying experience” (43). As a strength, this view stresses experience that “other apologists have not made as explicit” (Lewis 169), and in the end it is the Spirit that convinces the heart of truth. Experience is strong evidence to people who have a personal encounter with God via the new birth, received forgiveness of sins along with joy, peace, and an inner witness of God’s Spirit, and received comfort during crisis. While Christian truth should be experienced and people will be changed by faith in Christ and it does carry some argumentative weight, experience is too subjective and its source may not be interpreted correctly by others, thus it lacks conclusive apologetic value without rational objective criteria. God is a rational being and created humans as rational beings; thus, along with faith, He wants mankind to use reason in approaching Him (Isa. 1:18; Matt. 22:36-37; 1 Peter 3:15) (Geisler 246). Some proponents of experiential apologetics include Soren Kierkegaard, Rudolph Bultmann, and Karl Barth. According to Geisler, experiential apologetics characterizes Pentecostals and charismatics (236), though some scholars within those ranks may ascribe to a different methodology.

“Presuppositional apologetics affirms that one must defend Christianity from the

foundation of certain basic presuppositions” (Geisler 44). Rejecting the validity of traditional theistic proofs for God, reasoning starts by presupposing the truth of Christianity. Revelational Presuppositionalism presupposed that the Triune God has revealed himself in the Bible. This view is supported by Cornelius Van Til and John Frame. Other derivatives of this view include: Rational Presuppositionalism, supported by Gordon Clark; Systematic Consistency Presuppositionalism, supported by Edward John Carnell and Gordon Lewis; and Practical Presuppositionalism, supported by Francis Schaeffer (Geisler 607). While correctly emphasizing “the effect of a point of view on evidence,” Presuppositional apologetics overstates the lack of common ground between believers and unbelievers and overstates the effect of sin on the unbeliever’s mind which leads to fideism, where reason cannot support religion (Clark 125).

Paul Little wrote the popular book, *Know Why You Believe*, which answers twelve questions frequently asked about the Christian Faith. These questions and answers often form the topical content of apologetics and apologetic courses in universities. Little presents the following questions: “Is Christianity Rational?” “Is there a God?” “Is Christ God?” “Did Christ Rise from the Dead?” “Is the Bible God’s Word?” “Are the Bible Documents Reliable?” “Does Archaeology Verify Scripture?” “Are Miracles Possible?” “Do Science & Scripture Agree?” “Why Does God Allow Suffering & Evil?” “Does Christianity Differ from Other World Religions?” and “Is Christian Experience Valid?” (11-159). Menzies categorizes the questions into three larger groups to establish that: “God lives,” “God communicates,” and “God acts” (5).

To begin his book, Little poses the question, “Is Christianity Rational?” (11). Yes, there is objective evidence for which the mind can examine. McDowell claims, “Christianity . . . appeals to facts of history that are clearly recognizable and accessible by everyone” (xxx). Jesus says to his followers in Matt. 22:37 to love God with all their heart and mind. Pinnock aptly comments, “The heart cannot delight in what the mind rejects as false” (3), thus Jesus and the Bible contend for a rational faith. Moreover, Paul said in Phil. 1:7 that he was “defending and confirming the gospel”, which “implies a clearly understandable message that can be rationally understood and supported” (Little 15).

Second, Little poses the question, “Is there a God?” (22), and explores reasons for knowing that God lives. The scientific method cannot be used to prove the existence of God who has acted in non-repeatable history since science deals with measurable material things that are repeatable (Little 23). However, the “theistic proofs” can be divided into three divisions: *A posteriori* where there are features of the universe that must presuppose a God, *A priori* where God’s existence is derived from some characteristic within man, and *Revelational* where God reveals himself in a convincing way (Ramm 80). Thomas Aquinas is famous for expressing five ways to prove God’s existence from *a posteriori* arguments: “(1) from motion to an Unmoved Mover; (2) from effects to a First Cause; (3) from contingent being to a Necessary Being; (4) from degrees of perfection to a Most Perfect Being; and (5) from design in nature to a Designer of nature” (Geisler 725). Geisler further summarizes, “Behind these arguments is the premise that all finite, changing beings need a cause outside themselves” (725). Ramm explains eight *a priori* arguments for God’s existence including man having an innate idea of God, the existence of truth implies the existence of ultimate Truth or God, and the ontological argument that the definition or idea of God requires that He necessarily exists (86-93). Menzies adds to this the axiological arguments including the moral argument that an innate sense of right and wrong points to a great moral Lawgiver (89). While some of the individual arguments show that a being exists that has some of God’s attributes, the arguments taken together present a strong case for God’s existence. Through Christian *Revelation*, God has made Himself known in the incarnation

of Jesus, in the Bible, and “in the changed lives of those who believe His Word” (Menzie’s 91). God communicates to mankind through Jesus and the Bible.

Third, Little poses the question, “Is Christ God?” (37). It is clear that Jesus was born of a woman, had a normal development as a human, and had all the attributes of a human. The second person of the Triune God, Jesus, had to take on human flesh in order to restore man to fellowship with God (Menzie’s 104). Jesus actually claimed to be the Son of God and claimed to possess divine attributes, and his character was such that he was no liar or lunatic (Menzie’s 106-11). He further demonstrated his credentials by exhibiting “power over natural forces that could belong only to God, the Author of these forces,” and by exhibiting “power over sickness and disease.” His resurrection from the dead is the “supreme credential to authenticate his claim to deity” (Little 44-45).

Fourth, Little poses the question, “Did Christ Rise from the Dead?” (47). The historical accounts of the Gospel writers are in agreement that Jesus died physically on the cross, and no eyewitnesses ever questioned this, including the experienced centurion who oversaw the crucifixion. Early on Sunday morning, the tomb was found empty by multiple witnesses, and over the next forty days, Jesus appeared to over 500 people who then became convinced of his victorious resurrection. As a result of the resurrection and subsequent ascension to heaven, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples who were transformed into bold and fearless witnesses of the truth, the church formed and met on Sundays, and the New Testament was written.

Fifth, Little poses the question, “Is the Bible God’s Word?” (58). The Bible is a written account of God revealing Himself, His will, and His plan of redemption to mankind. In the New Testament, 2 Tim. 3:16 says, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness” (NASB). Scripture itself bears witness that it is inspired by God, with over 3808 references in the Old Testament asserting it (Menzie’s 142). Jesus accepted the Old Testament as inspired Scripture. Peter recognized that Paul’s writings were on par with Scripture in 2 Pet. 3:15-16. Prophets, who were recognized as speaking for God, and apostles, who were chosen by Jesus, and associates of apostles were all led by God to write Holy Scripture. A diverse group of about 40 authors wrote a single book that contains a remarkable unity as if it was orchestrated by one Divine Author. Fulfilled predictive prophecies in Scripture also point to an omniscient God, who knows the future, as the mastermind behind the Bible. Furthermore, mathematician Peter Stoner calculated the probability of any one man in history fulfilling eight particular prophecies concerning the Messiah as being 1 in 10^{17} , and yet Jesus fulfilled all these and many more (101-08). The original autographs of Scripture are free from error, though God used the personalities and styles of the writers.

Sixth, Little poses the question, “Are the Bible Documents Reliable?” (72). Although the original autographs no longer exist, surviving manuscript copies are determined to be remarkably accurate by experts in textual criticism. For the Old Testament, scribes or copyists were highly professional in carefully copying their Scriptures “with the highest dedication” and accuracy (Little 74). When the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in 1947, Old Testament Scriptures dating back to 100 BC were found and could be compared to the earliest complete copy of the Hebrew Old Testament from AD 900, the Masoretic text. The similarities showed the accuracy in which the Scribes performed their copying and gave credibility for the reliability of the Old Testament. For the New Testament, there are over 5,500 Greek manuscripts (Little 77), many of which date within a few centuries of the autographs. Added to that, there are thousands of ancient New Testament versions in other languages and thousands of quotes from the Apostolic Fathers; no other literature of ancient time comes close to having the quantity of

copies or as short a time span from the original to the earliest extant copy. Comparing these manuscript copies, textual critics are able to confidently produce a text that is extremely close to the original autographs of the New Testament.

Seventh, Little poses the question, “Does Archaeology Verify Scripture?” (85). Little states, archaeology “confirms specific biblical events,” people, and places that were “previously doubted.” Additionally, it confirms the “overall background of the culture and practices in general,” and it clears up “some points of apparent conflict between the biblical record and information previously available” (Little 86-87). According to Schoville, archaeology has produced evidence that the Bible is factual and “Thus far, no historical statement in the Bible has proven false on the basis of evidence retrieved through archaeological research” (156). God communicates to mankind through Jesus and through the Bible, and He also “acts in nature and human affairs” (Menziez 204).

Eighth, Little poses the question, “Are Miracles Possible?” (85). According to the dictionary, a miracle is “an extraordinary event manifesting divine intervention in human affairs” (“Miracle”). From this definition, for one to be open to acknowledging a miracle, one must acknowledge the existence of God and that the universe normally operates in an orderly, predictable way according to natural law (Menziez 206). Miracles have been reliably recorded in the Bible using reliable testimony, and in the case of Jesus, “*not even His opponents* disputed or denied the facts of the miracles He performed” (Menziez 216). Geisler documents about 250 miracles described as a “sign,” “wonder,” or “power” throughout the Scriptures (482-85), showing that God has been interacting in history and confirming His message through select vessels. Today miracles still occur, in that God still intervenes in spiritual rebirth and to answer prayer and to act in other ways as recorded in Biblical days.

Ninth, Little poses the question, “Do Science & Scripture Agree?” (112). When both are properly understood, there is harmony. The problem occurs when theologians are too rigid in their interpretations of Scripture that they deny clear scientific evidence. Similarly, a problem occurs when scientists overreach their sphere of describing “how things occur” and start making statements about the origin and destiny of the universe, which belongs in the realm of philosophy and religion (Menziez 224). The Bible does not give an age for the universe or the earth or man, thus scientific dating of these things can be in harmony with Scripture, yet tomorrow’s scientific findings often change today’s hypothesis. Evolution, as it is commonly defined, is in contradiction with Scripture because it says that God did not create man directly and instantaneously. Christians can agree with microevolution, a change within species, but most oppose the theory of macroevolution, “which requires the transfer of genetic information to a higher, more complex classification . . . by mutation and natural selection” (Little 121). Things that are irreducible complexity cannot be accounted for by small incremental changes called for by evolution. Without gradualness, there must have been a miracle. Behe provides numerous examples of irreducible complexity that cannot evolve in small steps (Geisler). Paul Enns aptly observes, “The implications are serious: if God created man, then man is a morally responsible being; if man is the product of evolution, then he is only biological and is not morally responsible to any god” (185). For the Christian, it is nonnegotiable that “God supernaturally and deliberately created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1). . . . and the first man and the first woman [in God’s image] (Genesis 1:27)” (Little 124-25).

Tenth, Little poses the question, “Why Does God Allow Suffering & Evil?” (132). In other words, how can God be all-powerful, having the ability to rid evil, and be all-good, having the desire to rid evil, and yet there still be suffering and evil in the world? Ramm presents some

possible views to resolve this apparent conflict between the character of God and the existence of evil: “Evil as Metaphysical Lack,” “Evil as Instrumental [for Good],” “The Reality of Freedom and Evil,” “Evil as a Given,” “Evil as Christologically Alleviated,” “Evil and the Doxological Verdict,” and “The Eschatological Verdict” (121-35). Jesus taught his disciples in Luke 13:1-5 that tragedies, pain, and suffering are not necessarily the result of specific sinful acts. “Tragic things in general happen to people in general because people are sinners” (Ramm 143). Bad things do happen to good people. The Apostle Paul declares a powerful truth that indicates evil can be instrumental, “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (NASB Rom. 8:28). The Eschatological Verdict is future oriented, with no attempts made to resolve the dilemmas of this present life. The solution to injustice is reserved for a future time beyond this life, when God’s goodness, wisdom, and power will be fully evident (Menzies 252-53). Additionally, Little believes “The ultimate answer to the problem of evil, at the personal level, is found in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ” (134).

Eleventh, Little poses the question, “Does Christianity Differ from Other World Religions?” (144). Only in Christianity did its leader claim deity and rise from the dead. In other religions, the emphasis is on doing good works to attain a goal; “For the Christian, doing good deeds is the result of gratitude for the Savior who became our life preserver” (Little 151). It is impossible for Christianity to be “theologically inclusive” (Little 145), for it is only in trusting God’s provision of Jesus Christ’s sacrificial death that we are put in a right relationship with God and “there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved” (NASB Acts 4:12).

Twelfth, Little poses the question, “Is Christian Experience Valid?” (159). Menzies answers affirmatively with four positive reasons: “1. The composition of man points to it. 2. The experience meets man’s deepest needs. 3. The causal agency is Jesus Christ. 4. The pentecostal renewal confirms it” (272). Little says:

In Christianity a personal subjective experience is tied to the objective historical fact of the resurrection of Christ. If Christ had not risen from the dead, we would not experience him. It’s because he rose from the dead and is living today that we can actually know him. (164-65)

Just as Jesus reached out with compassion to people while on earth, so He reaches out with compassion to people today since He is alive forevermore and his desire has not changed.

Apologetics is the “presentation of intellectual, scientific and philosophical arguments” in defense of the Christian faith (Brown 1: 51). Some people refuse to believe without having some evidence. Despite the absence of complete verification of all facts, God’s Holy Spirit can give certitude of the Christian faith, for “Faith is built on fact but it does not require that *all* the facts be known” (Menzies 74). Little aptly says, “Christian faith goes beyond reason, but not against it” (15). Dulles writes, “The arguments can never prove the truth of Christianity beyond all possibility of doubt, but they can show that it is reasonable to believe and that the arguments against Christianity are not decisive” (367). According to Geisler, “God has used evidence and reason in some way to reach virtually all adults who come to Christ,” including intellectual giants C. S. Lewis, Frank Morrison, Augustine, and Harvard Law School Professor Simon Greenleaf (41). To end with, McDowell says that apologetics can provide a basis for faith and when “used with a caring attitude, can motivate a person to consider Jesus Christ honestly, and direct him or her back to the central and primary issue—the gospel” (xiv).

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