

# Redeemer Bible Fellowship

## “How to Defend the Faith”

Summer Series 2026

### I. What is apologetics?

#### **1. What does apologetics consist of?**

The term, “apologetics,” is derived from a key Greek word, *apologia* (ἀπολογία), which appears in the third chapter of Peter’s first epistle, as Peter instructs the persecuted Christians to maintain a hopeful disposition and godly approach towards those who oppose them—1 Pet 3:13-16

- MV in v.15 is to *sanctify/set apart Christ as Lord in your heart*. The next part of the verse provides the occasion in which to do that and the final part is the manner of carrying it out.
- V.15b—*make/give a defense, give an answer/explanation* (Acts 22:1; 2 Cor 7:11 (vindication); Php 1:7)

John Frame:

Apologetics is simply obedience to the command of Peter—no more, no less. When we define apologetics in terms of obedience, Scripture maintains its unique status as the final court of apologetic appeal. But apologetics is also application of Scripture to unbelief. The unregenerate heart desires a god that it can handle with a revelation that it finds palatable... Since we believe him more certainly than we believe anything else, he (and hence his Word) is the very criterion, the ultimate standard of truth. What higher standard could there possibly be? What standard is more authoritative? What standard is more clearly known to us (see Rom. 1:19–21)? What authority ultimately validates all other authorities?<sup>1</sup>

Greg Bahnsen:

A truly Christian defense of the faith must never fail to exalt Christ as Lord over all, including argumentation and reasoning. An apologetic that builds on any other rock than Christ does not honor the greatness of divine wisdom; it is foolishly and audaciously erected on the ruinous sands of human authority.<sup>2</sup>

Lance Quinn:

The defense of the faith of Christianity is at its very heart not only a commitment to faith in the lordship of Jesus Christ in the individual believer's subjective response of faith, but also a heart-commitment to defend the faith 'once for all delivered to the saints' (Jude 3).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John M. Frame, *Apologetics: A Justification of Christian Belief*, ed. Joseph E. Torres (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2015), Kindle Edition: Location 782, page 6.

<sup>2</sup> Greg L. Bahnsen, *Presuppositional Apologetics: Stated and Defended*, ed. Joel McDurmon (Powder Springs, GA; Nacogdoches, TX: American Vision; Covenant Media Press, 2008), 3.

<sup>3</sup> Lance Quinn, *God the Preacher & Apologist* (Conway, AR: Free Grace Press, 2022), 66.

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There are several important implications from 1 Pet 3:15, as it relates to the church’s understanding of apologetics:

- The passage is written to Christians; not a highly educated segment of Christians who specialize in philosophy, historical research and/or rational argumentation;
- One’s defense of the faith is governed by the main idea of setting apart Christ as Lord in one’s heart. In other words, apologetics is an outworking of the Lordship of Christ in one’s heart;
- One’s defense or answer pertains to the basis of one’s ultimate hope, namely in Christ’s accomplishments and promises;
- This defense must be conducted in a godly way (*with gentleness and reverence*) in order to maintain a good conscience. John Frame wrote:

Our communication with unbelievers consists not only of what we say, but also of how we live before them. If our life contradicts our doctrine, then our apologetics is hypocritical and loses credibility. But if our life and doctrine are consistent, then those who try to make us look bad will themselves lose credibility. . . . And don’t be an apologist unless your first loyalty is to God—not to intellectual respectability, not to truth in the abstract, not to the unbeliever as such, not to some philosophic tradition.<sup>4</sup>

The following passages also have tremendous relevance for developing the proper biblical mindsets about apologetics—Jude 3; 2 Cor 10:5; 2 Tim 1:13-14; 1 Cor 1:18-25

Although apologetics was not recognized as a “specific Christian discipline...until 1834,”<sup>5</sup> the following definitions of apologetics are helpful in keeping the scope as broad as the abovementioned passages portray. Apologetics is...

- "the philosophy of methodology pertaining to all forms of Christian communication;"<sup>6</sup>
- "(1) The application of Scripture to unbelief (including the unbelief remaining in the Christian). (2) The study of how to give to inquirers a reason for the hope that is in us (1 Peter 3:15). Van Til saw it as involving proof, defense, and offense."<sup>7</sup>
- "the biblical mandate for every Christian to advance and defend the gospel of Jesus Christ as they live the Christian life, in the power of the Holy Spirit, by exposing and subjecting all contrary beliefs to Christ’s revelation as found in Scripture."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Frame, *Apologetics*, 27.

<sup>5</sup> George J. Zemek, *Tethered to the Text: An Exegetical Approach to Apologetics* (Jupiter, FL: Expositors Press, 2024), 6.

<sup>6</sup> Zemek, 7.

<sup>7</sup> Frame, *Apologetics*, 289–90.

<sup>8</sup> Clifford B. McManis, *Biblical Apologetics: Advancing and Defending the Gospel of Christ* (XLIBRIS, 2012), 29.

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### **2. What are the deficiencies of the common apologetic approaches?**

- **Evidentialist/Verificationist**—employs empirical measures to try to prove the existence of God and/or the truthfulness of the Bible. This approach commonly uses historical records and statistics to verify or prove God as the Creator of the Universe and that the Bible is a truthful or reliable source of knowledge.
- **Classical/Rationalist**—uses logical, deductive arguments to try to prove the existence of God due to believing that man possesses the natural reasoning capabilities to obtain a true and saving knowledge of God. Examples include the cosmological, teleological, ontological and/or moral arguments.

### **What is the presuppositional approach?**

Greg Bahnsen:

Presuppositional apologetics is the method of defending the faith that argues *for* the truth of Christianity by showing that it is the necessary precondition for the very possibility of knowledge, logic, science, and morality—and that every alternative worldview, when pressed to its own foundations, reduces to irrationality and cannot account for the intelligibility of human experience...

Indeed, it is the case, as many will be quick to point out, that this presuppositional method of apologetics assumes the truth of Scripture in order to argue for the truth of Scripture. Such is unavoidable when ultimate truths are being debated. However, such is not damaging, for it is not a flat circle in which one reasons (i.e., “the Bible is true because the Bible is true”). Rather, the Christian apologist simply recognizes that the ultimate truth—that which is more pervasive, fundamental, and necessary—is such that it cannot be argued independently of the preconditions inherent in it. One must presuppose the truth of God’s revelation in order to reason at all—even when reasoning about God’s revelation. The fact that the apologist presupposes the word of God in order to carry on a discussion or debate about the veracity of that word does not nullify his argument, but rather illustrates it.<sup>9</sup>

John Frame:

If we adopt the Word of God as our ultimate commitment, our ultimate standard, our ultimate criterion of truth and falsity, God’s Word then becomes our “presupposition.” That is to say, since we use it to evaluate all other beliefs, we must regard it as more certain than any other beliefs.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Greg L. Bahnsen, *Always Ready: Directions for Defending the Faith*, ed. Robert R. Booth (Nacogdoches, TX, 1996; Covenant Media Press), 76, 121–22.

<sup>10</sup> Frame, *Apologetics*, 3.

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Since God is the source of all truth, knowledge, morality and reason, our starting spot for discussing those things is what God has revealed in his word. Ultimately, the transcendental argument does not start with a concept, such as logic or design, and then seek to prove God existence from the presupposition of that concept. Rather, the transcendental argument presupposes that there can be no concepts at all, including knowledge and intelligibility, without the existence and revelation of God. Joseph Torres maintains that this approach “argues that it is the God of the Bible who makes cause, purpose, design, morality, science, and even logic intelligible in the first place. Without this God, nothing is intelligible, meaningful, or valuable.”<sup>11</sup>

To illustrate and reinforce the differences between these approaches and the presuppositional approach, note the following contrasts (TA=Traditional (Evidential/Rational) apologetics; BA=Biblical (Presuppositional) apologetics):<sup>12</sup>

TA = the Bible is God's Word because it can be proven by evidences;  
VS.

BA - there are evidences because the Bible is God's Word.

TA = the Bible is God's Word because it is logical;  
VS.

BA- the Bible is logical because it is God's Word.

TA= the Bible is God's Word because of the impossibility to the contrary;  
VS.

BA = all contrarian views are impossible because the Bible is God's Word.

TA = the cosmological argument makes sense therefore God probably exists;  
VS.

BA= God absolutely exists, therefore the cosmological argument makes sense.

TA = there is universal morality, therefore God exists;  
VS.

BA = the God of the Bible certainly exists, therefore there is universal morality.

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<sup>11</sup> Frame, 241.

<sup>12</sup> McManis, *Biblical Apologetics*, 452–53.