



**ATLANTA CENTER  
for APOLOGETICS**

# The Contender

Earnestly Contending For The Christian Faith

“... earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”

## The Early Apologists and their Defense of the Truth-Claims of the Christian Faith

by Eddie Bhawanie, Ph.D.

Apologetics may be defined as the defense of the Christian faith. The simplicity of this definition cannot define the complexity of the meaning, scope, purpose, and problem of apologetics.

The word “apologetics” comes from the Greek word *apologia*, which was originally used as a speech of defense. In ancient Greece *apologia* was a defense made in a courtroom as part of a judicial process. After the accusation was made, the defendant was allowed to refute the charges with a defense (*apologia*).

Perhaps the most classic example of an *apologia* was Socrates’ (469?-399 B.C.), defense against the charges of corrupting the youths of Athens, and of preaching strange gods. Socrates’ defense was retold by his most famous student, Plato (427-347 B.C.) in a dialogue called *The Apology*.

The word *apologia* appears several times in the New Testament, and can be translated “a defense” or “vindication” in every case. Both apostles, Paul and Peter, offered a reasoned defense of the Christian faith as appeared in Philippians 1:7, 16, and especially in I Peter 3:15. It is the birthright of every believer to give a defense of the Christian faith, though no specific theory of apologetics is outlined in the New Testament.

During the second century the early Church Fathers who took up the defense of the truth-claims of the Christian faith are, for that reason, called Apologists. The Fathers addressed their defense of the Christian faith partly to the pagan rulers and partly to the intelligent, thinking public.

Their immediate object-task was to bridge the gap between the Christian worldview and the pagan worldview. They presented the Christian worldview as the highest and surest way of life and philosophy; and this worldview was antithetical to the non-Christian philosophy/worldview.

When the Christian system was presented, it gave special emphasis to the truths of natural religion: An infinite-personal living God, truth, final reality, virtue, love, fixed points of right and wrong, absolutes, the value and worth of man, man’s problem with sin, immortality, and God’s revelation of Himself through His Son—Jesus Christ. They spoke of these truths as

the fulfillment of all truth found in both Judaism and Hellenism.

Louis Berkhof suggested the following about the early church Fathers: “Their task assumed a threefold character: *defensive, offensive, and constructive*. They defended Christianity by showing that there was no evidence for the charges brought against its adherents; the offensive conduct ascribed to them was altogether inconsistent with the spirit and precepts of the Gospel, and that the character and lives of those who professed the Christian faith were marked by moral purity.”

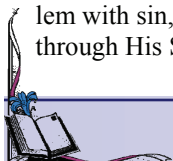
The Church Fathers charged the Jewish people with hierocracy, and legalism; their legalistic love for the Law gave them a permanent blindness that prevented them from seeing that Jesus was the promised Messiah, who was the One who fulfilled many of the Old Testament prophecies.

The Fathers leveled an assault on paganism, and they exposed the unworthy abuse and immoral character encouraged by the heathen religions; and particularly their doctrine of the pantheon of gods, as compared with the doctrine of the God of the Bible, His universal providence, His moral government, and the future life. They saw no value and no worth in man (according to Greek thought and philosophy).

Finally, the Church Fathers were compelled to establish with finality, the authority and character of Christianity, and the Self-Revelation and the infinite *love* of the infinite-personal, living God.

In demonstrating the reality of this revelation the early church Fathers relied mainly on the facts: there is One Living God, who created the world and revealed Himself through Christ – His Son.

The Fathers laid out the arguments from prophecy, His virgin birth, evidence from His life, His moral and ethical teachings, the value and worth He placed on human beings, His miracles, His substitutionary death, and finally, His resurrection. They pointed to the spread of the Christian faith in spite of all opposition and resistance, and the transformed character and lives of Christians.



## The Early Apologists ...

Continued by Eddie Bhawanie, Ph.D.

(Universal revelation is that which is seen in Creation, and special revelation is divinely-revealed revelation—the Bible).

They conceived “. . .of Christianity too much as a philosophy, albeit the only true philosophy, superior to all other philosophies in that it was based on revelation. . . . Christianity is *philosophy* and *revelation*.”

They regarded philosophy as a worldview of thought that contained a rational element and satisfactorily answered the questions that have engaged all true philosophers, and as the direct antithesis of non-Christian philosophy.

The church Fathers presented the Christian philosophy as representing the One, true, infinite-personal, living God as the Self-existent, Unchangeable, Immanent, and Eternal God. They contended that this Self-existent, living God is the primal cause of the universe, in His absolute existence.

They jumped upon and seized the Biblical conception of the *Logos* to bridge the gap between the Christian worldview and the Pagan worldview. They presented the *Logos* to the Greeks and Romans as He existed externally in God, the *Immanuel*, which means, “God with us,” He who is Self-Existent in His Being; the One who is the ‘beginning’ the *Arche*, the Greek word for *Logos* (John 1:1-3; Col. 1:18).

The early Apologists were not writing doctrinal treatises, but were writing on, and stressing *absolute truth*, which constitutes an essential part of the doctrines of the Christian faith. Their writings also contained elements of the Christian faith which revealed the fundamental truths of unity and reason. Unity and reason were two things which Plato and Aristotle, along with the Romans sought for the meaning human existence, but had no answers, because they had no *fixed integration point, or reference point on which to pin their thinking and their living*. (By integration point, I mean, they had no infinite God, and no infinite-point of reference that the early Christians had).

Therefore, they, and the Greek thinking people, were without any answers for life and meaning. They wondered why they were alive, and they wondered if life was meaningless. Hence, the nature of Apologetics is always determined, more or less, by the opposition.

The early church Fathers presented the substance of Christianity in the context of its rational content. They outlined and gave their defense of Christianity through the *Logos* doctrine - as being truth, and reason in human form, and as having an intellectual character. They valued the objective facts of revelation, such as the incarnation (the act whereby God became Man in the virgin birth of Christ), and the resurrection, as the truth, immutable truth as final reality. Final reality is what is *so* as declared in sacred Scripture.

### Summary

The early church Fathers sought to present the *substance* and *intellectual content* of the truth of Christianity through a ra-

tional interpretation of the truth-claims of Christianity which is a reasonable, moral, and ethical religion. They presented the *proof* of the historical and philosophical arguments of the Christian worldview in a logical way, and contrasted its claims with alternative worldviews.

They *defended* the Christian worldview as an intellectual one. They clarified the Christian position and *refuted* the plethora of savage attacks, misunderstandings, scurrilous lies, and misrepresentations, by answering objections, criticisms, and questions raised by both believers and unbelieving pagans.

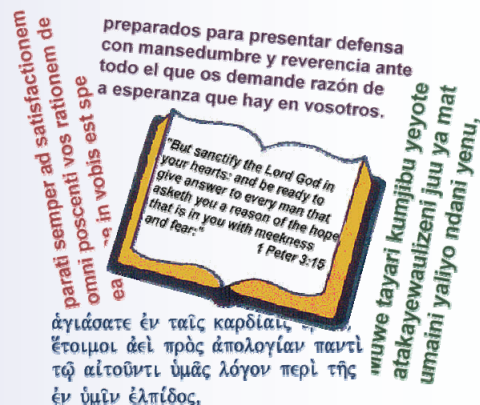
They *persuaded* people that Christianity is true, and that it holds to immutable truth; and that that truth can be applied to life. The early Church Fathers presented evidence not simply to win an intellectual argument, but to persuade people to place their lives and eternal futures into the complete, and full merits of the work of Christ on the Cross—alone!

Christian truth is rooted in the character of the infinite-personal, living God, and Christian truth-claims give the individual “an absolute, universal standard by which to judge not only personal morals but the state,” and the political actions of the state in which a person lives.

## Word of Thanks

**The ACA board and staff thank you for your support, encouragement, and continual prayers. Please accept our heart felt gratitude and appreciation for helping us through 2008. Your continual help will be vital for 2009.**

**Again, our many thanks.**



## Is Christianity Just Psychological? Part II

By Bennie Castle

Of late, psychological principles have gained a lot of ground in the church. These principles are being amalgamated with the precious doctrines of the Gospel and used in all areas that pertain to the kingdom of God. This is most recognizable in the seeker friendly movement which employs marketing methods and advertising techniques which are derived from psychological studies. The influx of psychology can be traced to the decline in understanding the right use of the Law of God as the standard of right (or normal) human behavior.

It is on this front that the influence of psychology needs to be resisted; namely on the delineation of man's guilt, corruption, and source of misery. This can only be found in the Law. Only by reasoning with sinners in light of their responsibility to God as violators of God's Law will Christ be glorified. Further, if we would be joined by the Holy Spirit in our efforts then we must recognize that He operates in the realm of sin, righteousness, and judgment - concepts which are only understood from the Law. When the Law of God is rightly preached from our pulpits then I believe we will see

revival and reformation in America, which are so desperately needed in our day.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, we have seen from Scripture that Christian conversion is a monergistic work of God whereby He changes the psyche of man. This is in opposition to the teaching of psychology which manipulates the psyche through false justifications into a torpid state acceptable by society - Which then allows the individual to contribute to society as long as his aching conscience is kept in check through the lies of man or, as is the case today, the use of legal dope. Antidepressants, sleeping pills, and attention deficit disorder medications, all of which are the modern opiates of the masses.

This of course is the natural result of psychology's methods, for they do not deal rightly with man's problem. Therefore when their methods fail and men are still "unhealthy" they just throw sedatives at people like so much cattle to be kept in and herded. Finally, we have

looked at psychology and why it's presuppositions about man and sin must be resisted in our churches; they rob the cross of it's great power to save. Through the preaching of the whole counsel of God, both the Law and the Gospel, will we be able, by His gracious power, to stem the tide of psychology in the church.

O how we need more preachers of this heart: "And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." (1st Cor. 2:1-5).



### THE 'ISMS'

- Humanism
- Atheism
- Agnosticism
- Materialism
- Pluralism
- Rationalism
- Mysticism
- Deism
- Pantheism
- Marxism-  
-Stalinism
- Existentialism
- Nihilism
- Catholic -  
Scholasticism
- Fideism
- Paganism
- Theism

### Deism

Deism holds with theism that God created the world but denies his supernatural intervention in it on the grounds that the world operates by natural and self-sustaining laws of the Creator. In short, God is *beyond* the world, but he is not active in the world in a supernatural way. Antisupernaturalism is a distinguishing characteristic of deism. Deism is not presently a major worldview but its significance is both historic and lasting. The deistic movement arose during the seventeenth century and flourished in the eighteenth but largely died out by the nineteenth century. It represents, however, one of the major metaphysical positions about reality that conflicts with theism. A deist will be defined as one who believes there is a God beyond the world who created the world but that the world runs by natural law without supernatural interference. Deists will differ as to why they reject miracles. Some will say God *cannot* perform them because it would be contrary either to his own nature or to the nature of natural law.

1. The first premise of a deistic worldview is that there is a God who created the universe. In contrast to dualism, which holds that matter is eternal, the deists believe that

the material universe was created by God. God alone is eternal.

2. The second major premise of deism is antisupernaturalism. Miracles do not occur. Some argue that a perfect God could not make an imperfect universe which would demand miraculous interruption and repair.
3. The third major tenet of deism is a unitarian concept of God that involves a denial of the orthodox doctrines of the Trinity and the deity of Christ. For this reason alone, the deistic position is decidedly inadequate.

Despite some similarities to Biblical theism, once the miracle of creation is admitted, the possibility of other miracles follows. Indeed, the very concept of a deistic God is one that is not reducible to a purely mechanistic model that would allow for no personal intervention in the world. A personal God shows His perfection by His miraculous personal commerce with His creatures. To hold otherwise is inconsistent. And if God was concerned enough about man to create him, it would seem to follow that he would be concerned enough to intervene on his behalf. Indeed, there is ample evidence to believe that God has miraculously interposed himself in the world! Deism is defunct both historically and philosophically!

By Pennon Lockhart, Ph.D.

## Our Vision Statement

**To defend the ultimate truth-claims of Biblical Christianity as eternally binding on all mankind and to present these claims to our contemporary culture with intellectual excellence through our life and work.**

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*"Understanding the Christian Worldview and Thought-forms—as Rooted in the Flow of Biblical History"* Location: The Tabernacle [off I-285E, Exit 43], 1580 Agape Way, Decatur, GA 30035; Phone 404.284.5683, 770.833.2696; Time: 7:30 P.M., **Wednesdays** (Classes taught by Dr. Eddie Bhawanie— [bhawanie@atlantacenterforapologetics.org](mailto:bhawanie@atlantacenterforapologetics.org) — call 770-833-2696)

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