

▸ 3. “Apologetics: Its Purpose and Method”

from John Warwick Montgomery, “Sensible Christianity” [an audio series]

Outline by Scott L. Keith (Concordia University Irvine, Fall 1996)

I. ▸ **What Apologetics is: A Species of Evangelism**

- A. ▸ Apologetics is the “intellectual side” of evangelism.
 - 1. ▸ the intellectual argument for Christianity
- B. ▸ The intellectual argument for missiology
 - 1. ▸ The fundamental principle of mission work is “. . . to become all things to all men that by all means some might be saved.”
 - 2. ▸ The only difference between “foreign” missions and the “domestic” missions is geography.
- C. ▸ The fundamental thrust of apologetics is to push the unbeliever in the direction of the cross.
 - 1. ▸ The “offense (or ‘scandal’) of the cross”:
 - a. ▸ At the cross, a person must face choice:
 - i. ▸ attempting to save himself [or]
 - ii. ▸ accepting Christ as the One whom saves him.
 - b. ▸ The “offense” is that man cannot save himself.
 - i. ▸ idea is to get the unbeliever to understand that there is *nothing* that he can do to win his salvation

II. ▸ **What Apologetics is *Not*: It is *Not* the Cause of Conversion**

- A. ▸ Apologetics works to tear down intellectual barriers to faith. It is *by no means* a creator of faith.
 - 1. ▸ The Holy Spirit alone, through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, is the power that leads to salvation. (Rom. 1:16,17)

III. ▸ **The Place of the Holy Spirit in Apologetics**

- A. ▸ The Holy Spirit “. . . convicts the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment.” (Jn. #:#)
- B. ▸ The work of the Holy Spirit is continuous and is ever present in apologetics.
 - 1. ▸ *Any* success in bringing a person to Christ can be attributed *only* to the work of the Holy Spirit.
 - 2. ▸ *Soli Deo Gloria!*

IV. ▸ **The House of Salvation**

- A. ▸ It is “larger on the inside than it is on the outside.” (C.S. Lewis, *The Last Battle*)
- B. ▸ The roadway leading up to the house is filled with potholes and obstacles.
 - 1. ▸ Apologetics is the attempt to clear away those obstacles.

- C. ▶ When the unbeliever reaches the home, he sees a sign hanging above the door which says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ!”
 - 1. ▶ It is his belief in Christ (through the power of the Holy Spirit) that opens the door and allows him to enter into the house.
 - D. ▶ Once the new believer is in the house, he is immediately reminded that it is solely by God’s grace that he is in the house and not by any kind of worldly works that he has done. (Eph. 2:8,9)
- V. ▶ **Our Fundamental Technique in Apologetics**
- A. ▶ The goal is for the unbeliever to understand this: If he employs his secular reasoning, and applies that reasoning to the Christian claim, Christianity will vindicate itself.
 - B. ▶ example: Hume’s “Refutation of Christianity”
 - 1. ▶ One cannot rely on the Gospel reports as evidence for Jesus’ life, because His friends loved Him and His enemies hated Him.
 - 2. ▶ Hume’s charge is that one cannot rely on that sort of evidence because it is based on prejudicial fact
 - C. ▶ The Refutation of Hume’s Argument by Richard Whatley
 - 1. ▶ *Historical Doubts Relative to Napoleon Bonaparte*
 - 2. ▶ Whatley proved that Hume’s argument was fallacious by relating it to the historical documents concerning Napoleon Bonaparte.
 - a. ▶ The French people *loved* Napoleon.
 - b. ▶ The English people *hated* Napoleon.
 - c. ▶ Napoleon, therefore, did not exist?!
 - d. ▶ The irony is that at the time that this argument was written by Whatley, Napoleon was living in exile on Elba!
 - D. ▶ Is it possible for the non-Christian to still reject the Gospel?
 - 1. ▶ Yes, he can.
 - 2. ▶ But when he does so, you can point out that he is rejecting the Gospel for non-rational reasons.
 - 3. ▶ His problem is not an intellectual one; He simply does not want to face the truth about the Gospel.