

Ever since the Lord saved me in 1985, I began to notice a pattern with Christians and churches, including leadership, with what I call an "aversion to apologetics." I might also add the aversion includes the related field of polemics, i.e., the critique of others' doctrine. Apologetics involves the defense of the faith, while polemics goes on the offense with critiquing false belief systems with Scripture. I have heard many sermons on the Beatitudes even from the Gospel of Luke. However, none of the preachers ever mentioned Luke 6:26: "Woe to you when all men speak well of you." Is that a coincidence? I don't believe so. The first question or thought I would like to pose to you, the reader, is: do you see the same thing as well?

I believe this problem stems from many factors such as pietism (a PERPETUAL AND CONSTANT emphasis on behavior and obedience to the point of neglecting doctrine), the feminization of Christianity, and perhaps a conflation of the terms "arguing" with "quarrelling." And one other thought I would add to this is that, unfortunately, perhaps Christians have run into people who engage in apologetics in a manner unworthy of the cause of Christ. This category, however, is somewhat subjective, as Scripture is full of irony and strong debate. No apologist is perfect in terms of his or her defense of the faith. However, as Dr. Walter Martin used to say regarding the aversion to apologetics, "I would rather tone down a fanatic (i.e., brother, you're a little too strong) than resurrect a corpse" (a person who focuses SOLELY on the RELATIONAL).

Here are a few observations and thoughts that I have accumulated over the years to further elaborate.

First, I think there is this fear that apologetics will replace faith and that somehow apologists believe we can argue someone into the kingdom. That is a false and unfortunate strawman setup, probably either ignorant or willful, due to avoiding conflict.

As for clergy and leadership, I think (and this is just my guess) pastors have limited time. They may conclude that teaching Scripture, prayer, evangelism, and pastoral care are more important than engaging philosophy or skeptical objections.

Their concern isn't necessarily that apologetics is wrong but that it can become disproportionate in church life. That COULD happen, but since apologetics in the pulpit IN LOCAL CHURCHES is rare, that is hardly possible. I once asked a group of men at my monthly Theology on Tap men's study that had two pastors in attendance, "Gentlemen, what role should apologetics play in pastoral ministry?" All I heard were crickets.

The biblical case for apologetics

The New Testament repeatedly portrays defending the faith as part of Christian ministry: 1 Peter 3:15 — "Always be prepared to make a defense..." Jude 3 — "Contend for the faith..." Philippians 1:7, 16 — Paul speaks of "the defense of the gospel." Acts 17 — Paul reasons in synagogues and the marketplace. 2 Corinthians 10:4–5 — Christians destroy arguments and take every thought captive to obey Christ.

These passages suggest that apologetics is not merely an academic exercise but a biblical ministry when practiced with humility and dependence on God.

One professor I had said, "Apologetics fills the potholes on the road to faith." He's correct. If you think about if all you do is evangelism, you can leave SINCERE questions unanswered. However, a warning to the apologists: if you present arguments without the Gospel, that is not Biblical either.

I believe the bottom line is summed eloquently by Dr. Greg Bahnsen who said, "At base every apologetical encounter, regardless of the specifics being discussed, involves implicit conflict between two irreconcilable worldviews which involve fundamental convictions about reality, knowledge and human conduct." Evangelism is not about bridge building. Evangelism is about entering into someone's worldview and politely breaking up their worldview furniture.

Anyways, let me know your thoughts. In Christ, John