



On Christian Apologetics

By

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Teaching Notes are Bible studies we taught before GraceLife Ministries began publishing articles online in 1995. Some were presented as sermons, others as group studies.

Our hope is that these older studies will be a blessing to you in your life and ministry. Please use them in any way God leads you.

These teaching notes are from a series of studies about **Christian Apologetics**.

[These notes are from a study presented 45 years ago.]

Christian Apologetics

In addition to the Bible, we will use two books in our study about Christian Apologetics. The title of the first book is *An Introduction To Christian Apologetics* by Dr. Edward John Carnell. Dr. Carnell was a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary. A sub-title for the book is *A Philosophical Defense of the Trinitarian-Theistic Faith*.

Dr. Carnell defines apologetics as “the branch of Christian theology which answers the question, Is Christianity rationally defensible?” He went on to write that the purpose of apologetics is “to bring glory to God and to remove from critics any excuse for not repenting before God.” Dr. Carnell also wrote that apologetics is defending Christian truth against the charges of unbelievers, gently refuting error, and working with the Holy Spirit in the conviction of men.

Introduction to Christian Apologetics is broken down into three parts:

1. The Need for a Christian World-View
2. The Rise of the Christian World-View
3. Implications of the Christian World-View

The book contains an excellent glossary of terms and a very helpful index of Scriptural passages and subjects.

In the Conclusion, Dr. Carnell summarized all that he had previously dealt with plus shared the futility of atheism through the famous argument of Pascal called the *Wager*. Having been a dogmatic atheist prior to my conversion to Christianity, I find this fascinating.

The title of the second book is *Protestant Christian Evidences* written by Dr. Bernard Ramm, a professor of Systematic Theology at California Baptist Theological Seminary. A sub-title for the book is *A Textbook of The Evidences of the Truthfulness of the Christian Faith for Conservative Protestants*.

Dr. Ramm mentioned that he wrote the book for Christians whose faith needs stabilization or whose critical spirit has been aroused and needs evidences adequate to the issues involved. He also wrote it for those who were yet willing to hear the evidence.

Dr. Ramm mentioned that he titled the book *Protestant Christian Evidences* to differentiate from Catholic works on apologetics and evidences because of the treatment on the divine origin and authority of the Roman Catholic Church.

The book is comprised of ten chapters:

1. General Introduction to Christian Evidences
2. Antisupernaturalism
3. Supernatural Verification Through Fulfilled Prophecy
4. Supernatural Verification Through Miracles
5. Rebuttal to Those Who Deny Miracles
6. The Verification of Christianity by the Supernatural Character of Its Founder
7. Supernatural Verification Through the Resurrection of Christ
8. The Verification of Christianity Through Experience
9. The Verification of Christianity Through the Supernatural Character of the Bible
10. Decision

Soul Sorrow

Since Dr. Carnell has already outlined his book *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, I will use it as a basis for the *skeleton*, but will add my own *meat* and summary.

The practical predicament facing every human being is that fine line between the “ideal and the real.” We must face the pleasures and the pain of physical reality. We must also face the sadness and sorrow of the soul (mind, emotions, intelligence, will). Dr. Carnell stated the truth well when he wrote, “Peace of mind is the highest form of human happiness.”

I. The Sources of Soul-Sorrow

Man is both limited and unlimited. He is a physical creature of time and space and a spiritual creature of eternity.

A. The Problem of the Body

The problem of our body is that we one! If I had no body, I would know no pain or sorrow. However, such is not the case and I must live on. Not only must I live in this body, but I must also die in this body. The body is a major source of sorrow.

B. The Problem of the Universe

The universe seems bent on making man miserable.

1. The discovery of the telescope demonstrated the smallness and puniness of man.
2. The philosophy of universal mechanicalism places man in a purposeless existence. We are a small cog in a large machine that is nowhere, is going nowhere, has been nowhere.
3. The advent of the theory of evolution took man from the plateau of possibilities to the pit of pity. We could have been, but we aren't. We are not the crown of creation, but the slime of the sea.
4. The Second Law of Thermodynamics says that energy is diminishing throughout the universe. The time is coming when nothing will exist. Why then do anything? Someday it will just all stop. Life is nothing — all is vanity.

II. The Nature of Soul-Sorrow

A. The Union of the Real and the Ideal

Can these be united? Can we live in idealistic realism or realistic idealism? Can we have what we want without wanting for having? All of our hopes will one day heap into decay. The failure to unite the one with the other brings the futility to understand.

B. The Fear of Death

In the midst of death is born the desire of life — the Fountain of Youth, the happily ever after, the never ending soap-operatic scripting were the characters never age or wither. Etched deep in my soul re the initials TLF — *To Live Forever*. Written in my body is STST — *Sorry, Three Score and Ten*. The constant fear of encroaching death steal the fibers of life leaving body and soul to anxiety and despair.

III. The Cure for Soul-Sorrow

A. The Four Alternatives

1. I could commit suicide
2. I could ignore the problem and pretend meaning
3. I could make the best of a bad situation
4. I could question and make investigation of the whole matter

B. The Ingredients of the Cure for Soul-Sorrow

1. Hope lies at the base and center of cure. We can live forever — reality can unite with the ideal! The foundation of this hope is found in John 3:16. The gift of eternal life (Romans 6:23) brings purpose, which brings peace of mind, which brings joy.
2. This peace and purpose must of course be borne up through universal reality and intelligent logic.
3. This purpose, peace and joy must be structured upon truth.

IV. Recapitulation

A. The Problem

Death is real and lonely.

B. The Solution

Christ is real and forever!

Comparing Books

In the first chapter of Dr. Carnell's book, he deals with the predicament of man. Dr. Ramm in his book *Protestant Christian Evidences* seems to deal more on the predicament of science and philosophy. Dr. Carnell spend that first chapter seemingly for the lost man, while Dr. Ramm spends his first and other chapters for the saved man.

Where points overlapped there was agreement. However, each man seems to take a different approach at the outset.

Other Available Materials

Truths That Transform, Dr. James Kennedy, Fleming Revell Co, 1974 (Chapter on the depravity and hopelessness of man without Christ, the salvation of God and the promise of everlasting life)

Man's Total Depravity, A.W. Pink, Moody Press, 1969 (Pink deals with the whole question of man's helplessness in life and hope through Christ)

The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Alfred Edersheim, Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971 (He deals with all the teachings of Christ on earth including those of the human predicament)

Historiography: Secular & Religious, Gordon Clark, Craig Press, 1971 (He writes about the way man views man through many secular and religious philosophies)

Three Types of Religious Philosophy, Gordon Clark, Craig Press, 1973 (He deals with the philosophies of Rationalism, Empiricism, Irrationalism, and Dogmatism)

Scientific Creationism, Henry Morris, Creation-Life Publishers, 1974 (He writes about evolution, the fall and curse of man, and the laws of Thermodynamics)

Lectures in Systematic Theology, Henry Thiessen, Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949 (He deals with non-Christian worldview of life, the fall of man into a hopeless state and the solution to this predicament in Christ)

Balancing the Christian Life, Charles Ryrie, Moody Press, 1969 (He writes on the predicament of man and the only solution is Christ)

Abstract of Systematic Theology, J.P. Boyce, American Baptist Publications Society, 1887 (He deals with the predicament of man and the solution in Christ. He also wrote about death and the soul's immortality)

A Handbook of Christian Truth, Harold Lindsell and Charles Woodbridge, Fleming Revell Co., 1953 (They wrote about the human predicament and its solution in Christ)

Christianity Rightly So Called, S.G. Craig, The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1946 (He deals in some chapters with the human predicament and its solution through Christ)

Old Paths, John Ryle, Clarke & Co. Ltd., 1972 (He wrote on the human predicament and its solution through Christ)

Bible Truth, Oliver Greene, The Gospel Hour, Inc., 1968 (Several chapters deal with the predicament of man and the solution through Christ)

Christ Our Sufficiency, Oliver Greene, The Gospel Hour, Inc., 1965 (Deals with Christ as the sufficient solution to the human predicament)

Law or Grace, M.R. DeHaan, Zondervan Publishing, 1965 (He wrote about the human predicament and its solution in Christ)

Genesis and Evolution, M.R. DeHaan, Zondervan Publishing, 1962 (He deals with the question of man's origin)

The Atonement, Archibald Hodge, Baker Book House, 1907 (He wrote about the human predicament and its solution in Christ)

The Twilight of Evolution, Henry Morris, Baker Book House, 1963
(He deals with the whole subject of evolution)

Right With God, John Blanchard, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1971
(He wrote about the human predicament and its solution in Christ)

The Plague of Plagues, Ralph Venning, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1669
(He deals with the human predicament and its solution in Christ)

I also have scores of booklets, pamphlets and tracts which deal with the problem of fallen humanity and the solution in a risen Christ. All of my Christian commentaries also deal with the subject.

Practical Application

The treatment of a study about the human predicament and all its ramifications is constantly brought up in counseling sessions with saved and unsaved alike.

I believe that the term *soul-sorrow* is a good one to use in this area of life's predicament. I use these truths and principles in my preaching, teaching and counseling. Everyone experiences soul-sorrow to some degree. Even when I am at peace with God and mind, I never seem to be at peace with my body.

The study about the problem of the universe is a good reminder for all of us. The four alternatives to and three ingredients for the cure for soul-sorrow are a powerful visual for discussion about escaping the human predicament. Praise God there is hope!

I. The Problem of Immortality

A. The Meaning of Immortality

There are five types of immortality:

1. Personal
2. Impersonal
3. Biological
4. Sociological
5. Metaphysical

Man seeks after personal immortality, that state of being in which individual centers of consciousness are preserved in endless existence after the shock of physical death.

B. The Verification of Immortality

Men seek after personal immortality, but how can it be proven? Hope in immortality and rational coherence must go together.

II. The Argument for Immortality

A. Inductive Science

Science is the savior of the world? No! Science is limited to that which can be observed with the five senses.

B. Arguments of the Mystics

Shall we hear and believe the testimony of the mystic's *inward vision*? Dr. Carnell believes that it is ineffable "while the *sine qua non* for all evidence in any philosophic argument is the rational proposition to which the law of contradiction may be applied."

C. Man is Conscious of the Eternal

In other words, the soul is related to eternity. This fails however in its logic. One need not be a fish to know a fish. One is not eternal because he can know the eternal.

D. Man is Endowed to Enjoy Eternity

Man has the capability of enjoying eternity, but it does not mean he will enjoy eternity.

E. The Pragmatic Argument

This is a naive view. A rose by any other name would be a mushroom?

F. Argument from Evolution

Man is nature's highest "cross" and therefore he will remain forever.

Wrong!

How do we know though that man is the highest form of the present evolution? How do we know that man is the true goal of evolution? How do we even know that evolution is true?

G. Argument from the Rationality of the Universe

Since the universe is rational, man must live forever, since he is so valuable.

Nonsense!

It is the rationality of the universe under God's control that exterminates men at the end of their 70 years.

H. The Justice and Goodness of God.

God is too good to destroy His highest work of creation.

Wrong!

Jesus disagrees with this thinking and says emphatically that because God is righteous He will cast men into an eternal lake of fire. Justice and righteousness are a true demonstration of goodness on God's part.

I. The Argument from Grace

Man deserves death. He is wretched, wicked and vile. He will experience immortality only through the grace of God.

II. Objections

A. Heaven would be boring.

Who wants to play harps all day?

Wrong! Heaven is a “perfect” place and anything done there will be the best thing to do.

B. Resurrection based on a Faulty Induction

The resurrection of Christ does not prove immortality, but His uniqueness.

This is not true!

The God-Man came to destroy death and He did that through the resurrection. There will be a multitude to follow.

C. Christianity is Nicer, not Truer

This is of course false!

Christianity and Christ's resurrection is the truth as well as being nice.

D. Hell is Irrational

Hell may be irrational to the modern man, but it is most certainly rational to the old fashioned Bible – the eternal Word of God.

I. The Importance of the Resurrection

The greatest miracle of the New Testament was the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It was the supernatural seal of the New Covenant.

A. It was the personal miracle of the Messiah. This was God's declaration that Jesus was the Son of God.

B. It is a major go in the plan of redemption. Death, burial and resurrection are at the center of the Gospel of Christ and the redemption of man.

C. It is the seal of our resurrection. We will be raised from the dead, the Bible says, because Jesus was raised from the dead.

D. It possesses great evidential value. The fact that He died, was buried, rose and came forth with an incorruptible body. This is evidence of our resurrection and new body.

II. Classification of the Evidence

A. Philosophical evidence

If we follow the rigorous methodology developed by philosophical investigations, a Christian theism can be constructed.

B. Theological evidence

Evidence for the resurrection fits into a religious system of profound metaphysical and religious significance. The resurrection is a great historical fact that is a great theological tenet.

C. Biblical evidence

The resurrection is conceivable, necessary, and actual. It can be proven from history and Biblical documents.

1. Old Testament evidence – the Old Testament teaches the resurrection long before the fact.
2. The evidence of Christ – Jesus plainly declared that He would die and be raised from the grave.

3. The evidence from the Gospels and Acts – The writers of the four Gospel accounts and the Book of Acts overwhelmingly present the truth of the resurrection.
4. The evidence of the remainder of the New Testament – All of the remaining Books give strong proof to the resurrection.

D. The evidence of Church history

The great historians of the Christian Church have always attested to the resurrection of Christ.

E. Inferential evidence

1. The Early Church grew phenomenally because of the resurrection.
2. Only the resurrection can adequately explain the power lives of the apostles.
3. Only the resurrection could account for the conversion of Paul.
4. Only the resurrection explains completely the empty tomb.

III. The impossibility of the Position of Unbelief

The New Testament very plainly teaches that the resurrection of Christ was physical.

A. Unbelief must present the Gospel account of the resurrection of Christ as completely unreliable, but this is contradictory to all historical inquiry.

B. Unbelief must completely destroy the witness of the Book of Acts,, but this is contradictory to all historical inquiry.

C. Unbelief must totally destroy the evidence of Pul's writings, but this is contradictory to all historical inquiry.

D. Unbelief is caught between the natural and the supernatural elements in the Gospels. Unbelief cannot prove that Jesus did not live. Unbelief cannot prove that the Gospels are not historical and must stretch to try to prove parts as non-historical.

E. Unbelief must controvert the testimony in Hebrews, Peter's epistles, John's epistles, and the Revelation. Unbelief must also try to repudiate the person of James and his letter.

F. Unbelief must deny all of the Church Father's testimony.

The burden of unbelief is too great to carry.

It is not surprising that the natural man cannot perceive the things of the Spirit. However, all proof lies in the hands of the unbeliever for history proves the reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Other Available Materials

Evidence That Demands a Verdict, Josh McDowell, Campus Crusade for Christ, 1972 (Chapter 10)

The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Alfred Edersheim, Eerdmans Publishing, 1971 (Second Volume, Chapters 16 & 17)

Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology, Henry Thiessen, Eerdmans Publishing, 1949 (Chapter 27)

A Calvin Treasury, Ed. William Keesecker, Harper & Bros. Publishers, 1961 (Pgs 110-111)

A Handbook of Christian Truth, Harold Lindsell & Charles Woodbridge, Fleming Revell Company, 1953 (Ch. 154)

Bible Truth, Oliver Greene, The Gospel House, Inc., 1968
(Chapter 4)

The Living God, Richard DeHaan, Zondervan Publishing, 1967
(Chapter 17)

Rightly Dividing the Word, Clarence Larkin, Clarence Larkin
Estate, 1920 (Chapter 11)