



***“Knock, knock.
“Who’s there?”***

Introduction

I graduated the University of California (Riverside) with bachelor’s degrees in Psychology and Philosophy. That was in 1977.

In 1979 I gave my life to the Lord! I found Calvary Chapel and got going on verse-by-verse teaching.

In 1983 I went on staff at Calvary Chapel of San Bernardino. I was an assistant. That meant I did a great deal of the counseling. Wanting to further my understanding of how to be a good Christian counselor, I started looking at printed resources.

I was excited to find books by Christians who were also psychologists! They were on the cutting edge of integrating psychology with the Bible. I thought it would give me the chance to apply what I’d learned in college with what I was learning about the Bible.

One of the big names in the field of Christian psychology was Larry Crabb. I remember one of his illustrations about integrating psychology with the Bible. He compared it to the children of Israel when they left Egypt in the Exodus. Although they were being delivered from Egypt, they took spoil from the Egyptians to sustain them in the journey. Crabb suggested that secular psychology was the spoil we could take from the world on our journey to help us along.

Gary Collins was an integrationist. He has authored more than forty books. He taught pastoral counseling for twenty years at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (Deerfield, Illinois; affiliated with The Evangelical Free Church of America, and since renamed Trinity International University), for much of the time as department chairman, before leaving to head up the psychological counseling program at Jerry Falwell's correspondence school, The Liberty Institute for Lay Counseling (LILC, established in 1989). Falwell advertised that LILC was established in order to train, by correspondence courses, laymen interested in helping "victims" of such "psychologically damaging afflictions" as child abuse, stress, family crisis, AIDS, depression, addictions, drug abuse, aging, etc.

Collins subsequently left LILC to head up the American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC) in 1991, a psychologically oriented counseling organization that grew to about 5,000 members in 1993, but now boasts over 50,000 members.¹

I thought this was great back in the early 1980's. Then I started to hear some criticism of integration. I heard, for example, that Don McClure, at that time pastor of Calvary Chapel of Redlands, would not sell any of Collins' books in their store. My friend Dennis Davenport told me outright that psychology was bogus!

But it wasn't until I read Dave Hunt's book, *The Seduction of Christianity*, that I understood that secular psychology was a dangerous Trojan Horse threatening to destroy Christianity from within.

Dave Hunt carefully compared the teachings of secular psychology with the truth of the Bible. It exposed psychology as a philosophy of man. It reminded me of things I already knew:

- There were many competing psychological theories.
- None of them boasted any real success in helping people change.
- The men behind these philosophies were godless at best, God-hating at worst.

¹ <http://www.aacc.net/> August 7, 2007

I came to understand that psychology was and is one of the worst dangers to the modern Church.

And that, my friends, is the value of apologetics. The word "apologetics" comes from the Greek word *apologia* (pronounced ap-ol-og-ee'-ah). It means, *a verbal defense*. It is used eight times in the New Testament: Acts 22:1 & 25:16; First Corinthians 9:3; Second Corinthians 7:11; Philippians 1:7; and Second Timothy 4:16.

But it is First Peter 3:15 that is most commonly associated with Christian apologetics:

"...but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence" (First Peter 3:15, NASB).

Apologetics is the work of convincing people to change their views. Christian apologetics is that branch of Christianity that deals with answering any and all critics who oppose or question the revelation of God in Christ and the Bible. It can include studying such subjects as biblical manuscript transmission, philosophy, biology, mathematics, evolution, and logic.

But it can also consist of simply giving an answer to a question about Jesus or a Bible passage. The latter case is by far the most common and you don't have to read a ton of books to do that.

Apologetics can be defensive and offensive. Philippians 1:7 gives us instruction on the defensive side:

Philippians 1:7 just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.

Second Corinthians 10:5-6 gives us instruction on the offensive side:

2 Corinthians 10:5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

2 Corinthians 10:6 and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

The apologist *can* and *should* defend his reasons for believing. But he can also go on the attack. He can seek out those who oppose Christianity.

All apologetics is to be done with gentleness. Dave Hunt is a good example. He seems hard or harsh. But I recall a time when, after he said something that evoked laughter from the crowd, he began to weep. He told us that what he said wasn't meant to be humorous. It was some comical, crazy teaching. But the result of following it was that people were being lulled into a Christless eternity.

The Lord has called every Christian to be ready to make a defense of his or her faith. That means you are called to give reasonable answers to questions regarding Christianity.

Now, this does not mean that you must have a Ph.D. or that you have to go to seminary. But it does mean that you should be willing to at least give an answer for your beliefs. If you find you cannot, then prayerfully take it to God and start studying.

You could pray and ask the Lord to teach you what He wants you to know. Ask Him to give you a burden for something to learn. It doesn't matter what it is. Just ask. Whatever you become interested in is what you should learn about because it is probably something God wants you to know for later use. It is like having tools in a tool shed. The more you have, the more you can accomplish.

Another way to find out what God wants you to study is through circumstances. Let's say that a Jehovah's Witness comes to your door and debates the deity of Christ with you and you find you don't know how to defend it biblically. In that case, you know you need to study biblical verses that teach Jesus is God in flesh. Or maybe a coworker asks you how you know the Bible is true? If you don't have an answer, pray, and start researching.

Sometimes God will make a verse or subject in the Bible "come alive" to you and it might strike you as odd or interesting. You could get a commentary and read up on it. You could ask others about it. In so doing, you are preparing yourself through learning to be ready to answer questions and point people to the truth. You'd be surprised

how many details God can use to help you in your witness, even through those apparently odd times when verses suddenly "come alive."

One reason we need apologetics is because of the many false teachings out there:

- Mormonism teaches that God used to be a man on another world, that he brought one of his goddess wives with him to this world, that they produce spirit offspring that are born into human babies, and that you have the potential of becoming a god of your own world.
- The Jehovah's Witnesses teach that there is no Trinity, that Jesus is Michael the Archangel, that there is no hell, and that only 144,000 people will go to heaven.
- Atheism denies God's existence, openly attacks Christianity and is gaining ground in public life and schools.
- Islam teaches that Jesus was not God in flesh, that Jesus did not rise from the dead, and that He did not atone for our sins. It teaches that salvation is partly based on one's works and partly based on Allah's grace. It teaches that the Holy Spirit is the angel Gabriel (Surah 2:97; 16:102); that Jinn are unseen beings, created (51:56) from fire (15:27; 55:15); and that Muhammed was greater than Jesus.

- being changed to bring change -

We can see that from both within the Christian church and from outside of it, false teachings are bombarding believers (and nonbelievers) all over the world.

Our textbook has a great opening chapter overviewing apologetics. I like the history it presents, going from Israel in the Old Testament to Jesus and the apostles in the New Testament, then looking at some early Church fathers and up to our own time. It's important we realize that apologetics is not something new. We don't do it to be territorial, or to try to say to others that our particular Church is better than theirs.

Apologetics is a natural outgrowth of the fact that we believe the Bible to be inspired, inerrant, and infallible. As we read it, then study it, then teach it to others, we want to be correct in our interpretation. In

many areas of Scripture we can agree to disagree agreeably. But there are some things so fundamental, so basic, that we must believe them if we are Christians. And we must tell others that they must believe them, too!

It's sad that in today's Christian culture that a Christian apologist needs to first defend his or her necessity to defend the faith!

People don't like to be told they are wrong or in error. But the stakes are far too high to keep silent.

We defend our right and the responsibility to defend the faith once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 1:3).

