

## Interplay of Christian Apologetics and Christian Philosophy

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**Abstract:** Over the years, have there been severe misconceptions about the nature of philosophy; most often when people hear about it, without minding its scope, what comes to mind is that philosophy is against God. The reason has been that philosophy is believed to be a movement, or academic course that opposes the existence of God or negates the principles of biblical dispositions. Whereas, philosophy as thought of by many is not fiction, or a teaching against God as perceived, neither is it trickery, but truth telling, enacting facts and making complicated issues clear enough to be understandable. Naturally, one may not be able to comprehend the fact that Christian living has elements of philosophy as its theoretical framework which is generally referred to as Christian Philosophy and many may not have find it very easy to associate it (Christian philosophy) with the need to defend one's faith which the thrust of this work is primarily situated upon. This is to say, that the thrust of this paper is to present a possible areas of connectedness of Christian Philosophy and Christian Apologetics. This would be done through brief definitions of philosophy, Christian philosophy, apologetics, Christian apologetics and its importance and then highlights the possible areas of their relationship. The work also concludes with emphasis on the importance of not downplaying one for the other; and that both Christian apologetics and Christian philosophy are interrelated and capable of influencing one another for an active faith development and sound doctrinal belief.

**Keywords:** Interplay, Christian Apologetics, Christian Philosophy, Gospel

### 1. Introduction

Over the years, have there been severe misconceptions about the nature of philosophy; most often when people hear about it, without minding its scope, what comes to mind is that philosophy is against God. The reason has been that philosophy is believed to be a movement, or academic course that opposes the existence of God or negates the principles of biblical dispositions. Whereas, philosophy as thought of by many is not fiction, or a teaching against God as perceived, neither is it trickery, but truth

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## 2. Conceptual Meaning of Apologetics

There is a clear difference between what one confesses and what one professes. The aesthetic value of both lies in the evidence of their interplay. One may tend to confess particular belief in an object and do the contrary in its. Meanwhile, the ability of such to live out (profess) what he believes and confesses is the beauty of such an individual's religious sanity. This is the case with apologetics. Apologetics is said to be "the rational defence of the faith." The word *apologetics* comes from the Greek word *apologia*, translated to mean "defence" or "vindication." New Testament projects an *apologia* to be a formal courtroom defence of something (2 Timothy 4:16). The word, in either the noun form *apologia* or the verb form *apologeomai*, appears eight times in the New Testament (Acts 22:1; 25:16; 1 Corinthians 9:3; 2 Corinthians 7:11; Philippians 1:7, 16; 2 Timothy 4:16; 1 Peter 3:15) The term is used specifically for a rational defence of the gospel in three texts: Philippians 1:7, 16, and most famously in 1 Peter 3:15-16.

Apologetics is the study and practice of preserving and commending one's religion without needlessly offending individuals of other religion or neighbours and exacerbating the tensions of the global village. It is of no

doubt that there is the rapidly increasing awareness of religious differences that capsule individuals' belief, faith and practices around the world; there is the need to consider carefully how members of one faith can properly offer what they take to be the blessings of the faith they profess to people of other faith. The word *apologetics* could be adoptable for use in any field of study, among group of scholars, people of similar ideologies and people of the same faith so as for them to logically present their worldview to others and as well intimate their members on important teachings they must know and be able to defend. The word *apologetics* is often used today in a disparaging way to mean a biased and belligerent advocacy of an indefensible position, yet an idea of presenting a credible "apology" for a legitimate position or viewpoint has its root in worldviews.

## 3. Christian Apologetics

Apologetics is based on personal worldview and the ability to justify the rationale for such and the defence of it in logical ways. What makes apologetics Christian is viewing, approaching and addressing issues or the world from a biblical perspective; just like the statement of Francis Schaeffer who states that "I try to approach every problem as though I were not a Christian and see what the answer would be." In view of this, every Christian apologist is expected to be biblically rooted and spiritually sound. *Christian Apologetics* begins by laying out the biblical case for apologetics and the apologetic method necessary for defending the faith. Such faith (for instance, the Christian worldview) is then explained and defended against various false charges. This initial ground clearing is followed by a defence of the concept of objective truth and the need to seek truth passionately, especially given the high stakes of the Christian message.

Christian Apologetics is the rational defence of the Christian worldview as objectively true, rationally compelling and existentially or subjectively engaging. While apologists may resort to propaganda or even coercion in order to win approval for their positions, is not necessary in Christian apologetics. The Christian, following Christ's example, must not become offensive at the point of the defence of faith. Christian Apologetics defends the defining Christian truth claims against various challenges from unbelievers. This invokes both rational legitimacy (objective truth) and emotional appeal (subjective attractiveness).

### **3.1. Importance of Apologetics**

While Christian philosophers differ over the importance and methods of apologetics; some hold that it is a duty of every Christian to be able to give positive arguments in favour of his or her beliefs. Others hold that the only duty is to refute arguments against Christianity. A medium position is held by those that claim that the Christian can and ought to provide logical arguments against non-Christian worldviews even if he or she cannot buttress his or her own views with positive arguments. One could also shift the apologetic duty from the individual to the broader Christian community such that individual Christians need not have the resources to defend Christianity so long as there are some individuals within the community that are so able.

The focus of the different positions is basically on non-Christians. Rather, Christian apologetics is to be offered not only in response to the doubts and denials of non-Christians. It should also fortify believers in their faith, whether they are wrestling with doubts and questions or simply seeking a deeper grounding for their biblical beliefs. One of the reasons Christianity has failed to exert much influence on the major intellectual

institutions of the world (especially in Africa) is that, too many Christians hold their beliefs in an uninformed and precarious fashion instead of pursuing answers to the toughest questions an unbelieving world continually projects or asks, they attempt to preserve certainty through ignorance and isolation, relying on platitudes rather than logical arguments.

Francis Schaeffer in one of his apologetics book *'The God who is There'* reprimands and challenge Christians that;

When we understand our calling, it is not only true, but beautiful and it should be exciting. It is hard to understand how an orthodox, evangelical, Bible-believing Christian can fail to be excited. The answers in the realm of the intellect should make us overwhelmingly excited. But more than this, we are returned to a personal relationship with the God who is there. If we are unexcited Christians; we should go back and see what is wrong.

The excitement there is the ability of an individual to be intellectually capable of meeting the inquiry of the opposing bodies in such a manner that sanity is assured. This excitement at the prospect of knowing and advocating Christian truth cannot exclude rational intellectual rigor. The apologists, in fact, cannot substitute bare emotional fervour for intellectual acumen and hard study. Rather, they need to work together. The task of a Christian Apologetics is to defend Christianity's core claims rationally in order to show that Christianity is indeed objectively true. Other than this, apologetics needs to demonstrate that Christian truth is winsome because it explains who we are and how we can flourish as creatures in this life and beyond, if we are reconciled to our Creator.

#### 4. Concept of Philosophy and Christian Philosophy

Philosophy means “the love or pursuit of wisdom.” J.A. Lauwerys and F. Bereday defined Philosophy as “the attempt to answer ultimate questions critically, after investigating all that makes such questions puzzling and after realizing the vagueness and confusion that underline ordinary ideas.” Philosophy does not only provide answers to persisting questions of life but it penetrates to the root of matters, probing issues and seeking for ways to providing solutions to problems, as well as possible ways of sustaining and utilizing acquired wisdom through a logical application. Sharma in similar vein opines that Philosophy is an attempt to provide answers to some pertinent issues concerning human life and existence. It seeks to establish a system of principles that can be used in directing human thought into a rational reasoning.

#### 5. Christian Philosophy

Many issues have been raised against different philosophical thoughts and viewed as serious opposition to the person of God as well as Christianity. Many Christians had positioned against the inclusion of philosophy to Christian endeavours. In a similar vein, the word philosophy has put off many Christians with the conception that philosophy is evil, demonic and devastating to Christian living. Some are fond of quoting Paul’s statement of warning against human philosophy in Colossians 2: 8, and then would not want to have anything doing with it. Philosophy in itself is a process that engages primarily in the act of thinking as well as asking questions about the world, man’s place in the world and all aspects of human activity and experience. Philosophy of all kinds provides necessary boundaries for every preferred practice in different areas of human activities so that each area understands its uniqueness, philosophical assumptions and

culture as distinct from other alternatives. Philosophy within the confine of Christianity is of no exception.

Philosophy cut across all facets and spheres of human existence with the consciousness of human intellectual capacity, will and freedom. Any kind of philosophy outside the authority of Christ, according to Paul (Colossians 2: 8), is dangerous to human freedom and life. The alternative to secular or humanistic philosophy is philosophy under Christ which involves a distinctive kind of wisdom. If philosophy etymologically is the love and pursuit of wisdom, *Christian philosophy* is the love and pursuit of wisdom under the authority of Christ, which calls for an ongoing union with Christ, including one’s belonging to God in Christ. Christian philosophy joins Gethsemane union with a religious epistemology oriented toward the Spirit of God and Christ. Christian philosophy, must find knowledge of God like human redemption, in divine grace rather than human earning.

Therefore, in the opinion of the researcher, and based on earlier definitions by Sharma and Samuel, Christian Philosophy can be defined as the attempt to answer critically ultimate questions inquired about the existence of God, the doctrine of Christ, the validity of the Word of God, the person of the Holy Spirit and the nature of man with respect to creation and the creator, after investigating all that makes such questions mystifying and after realizing the imprecision and confusion that feature ordinary ideas. Christian Philosophy seeks to establish a system of biblical and Christ-like principles that can be used in directing human thought into a rational reasoning.

#### 6. Interplay of Christian Apologetics and Christian Philosophy

The question to ask about the existence of Apologetics and philosophy is that, do they

relate? Apologetics over time has been seen as an aspect of the philosophy of religion which is the rational investigation of religious truth claims. Certainly, one may engage in the philosophy of religion as a critic of Christianity or as an advocate of the Buddhist or Islamic worldviews. However, the Christian apologist employs the tools of the philosophy of religion in the service of the Christian worldview. In the past few decades Christian philosophers have been mounting an impressive case for Christian truth at the highest levels of philosophy.

However, apologist John Warwick Montgomery makes a claim that apologetics is not philosophy and that they have no relationship. He seems to be saying that there is more to defending Christianity than giving abstract logical arguments. He also affirms that life is bigger than logic and insinuates that philosophy can close down inquiry by insisting on logical consistency; and that this must be disputed in apologetics because logical consistency is a necessary, negative test for truth in all realms, given the law of non-contradiction. Basically, the researcher of this work opines that there is no disputing that every kind of apologetic defense requires rigorous philosophical reasoning, whether it concerns anthropology, Christology, cosmology, historiography or psychology.

Apologetics does not only have philosophical link; it has link to theology, psychology, evangelism and several other fields of life and study. The conceptual content of apologetics depends on theology, the goal of which is to systematically and coherently articulate the truth claims of the Bible according to various topics, such as the doctrine of God, salvation and Christ. The apologist who has a strong commitment to the truth of the Scripture endeavors to defend what Scripture teaches. Therefore, the discipline of apologetics requires skill in reading the Bible aright, which is the ultimate

authority when properly interpreted by the principles of logic and hermeneutics.

The connectedness of apologetics to philosophy projects a logical definition for philosophy to mean “the investigation of significant truth claims through rational analysis.” In this light, the necessary and sufficient conditions for doing philosophy at any level of discipline are a strong and lived-out inclination to pursue truth about philosophical matters through the rigorous use of human reasoning alongside some intellectual facility. It is reasonable for any apologetics to be involved in philosophical adventure so as to build such up to be rational in reasoning and logical in presentation. As a logical and persuasive discipline, the connection of apologetics to Christian philosophical worldview (Christian philosophy) is vital.

Christian philosophy can be used to remove or diminish intellectual obstacles that hinder people from embracing Christ as Lord; thus it serves as Apologetics. The defense of Christianity as objectively true, rationally compelling and subjectively engaging also plays a leading role in both Christian philosophy and Christian apologetics. What is required of Christian philosophy is not an impossible state of absolute neutrality, but rather fairness and a resolute attempt to evaluate all perspectives and beliefs, including one’s own, for their internal coherence and their correspondence with the evidence available. In particular, one must seriously try the very best to understand the beliefs of those who disagree with Christian’s view, rather than caricature and distort those beliefs. Evaluation of all beliefs, of others as well as Christians’, must be carried out fairly; not claiming for personal favored perspective privileges deniable to others.

The following points highlighted below are some of the areas where there are traceable relationship between Christian

Apologetics and Christian Philosophy as inferred from readings:

- i. Christian Apologetics and Christian Philosophy have a starting point which expands to a probably wider overview in idea conception, worldview and delivery within a guided periscope and framework-the Bible. Apologetics and philosophy that is Christian must operate within Biblical and Christological framework; anything outside would be disregarded
- ii. Christian apologetics and Christian philosophy must start with God and ends with deeper recognition and validation of the existence of God. None is to present ideas to reason out in the existence of man that God is not involved or that He does not exist.
- iii. Both are faith-based and have strong influence on theology, life and practical ministry
- iv. Both Christian Apologetics and Christian Philosophy are based on epistemological dispositions with reference to appreciation for original source
- v. Reasoning and Prove is peculiar to both. Apologetical reasoning is usually rational just as philosophical arguments within the Christian worldview
- vi. Both are capable of influencing Christian Spirituality (which is greatly concerned with wisdom, truth and goodness) through deeper exposition to biblical truth and sound biblical interpretation
- vii. Both are viable and sufficient for effective evangelism and intellectual presentations through Spiritual sensibility, clarity of ideas, cogency

and profound thinking methodology.

## 7. Conclusion

It may be difficult to categorically state that Christian apologetics and Christian philosophy do not have links. The fact is, they are not the same, but are dependent on one another to actualize the aim and purpose of one another other. Philosophy needs apologetics to project its beliefs and ideologies, either through logical presentation or rational argument into a convincing acceptance. Likewise, apologetics needs philosophy to be grounded in logical reasoning, argument and convincing presentation of ideas. It is expedient to emphasis the importance of not downplaying one for the other or placing unnecessary supremacy of one over the other. They are both interdependent in Christian faith development, reasoning, Gospel promotion and defense of faith and belief.

Therefore, in as much as the church and Christendom is required to be a solution provider to the problem of the world, Christians are responsible for balancing and updating their knowledge philosophical and presenting their worldviews apologetically to responding or handling the precocious questions and arguments against Christianity and Christian faith. The combination of exposure to both Christian apologetics and Christian philosophy is capable of building individual Christian, skills in biblical understanding and interpretation; spirituality; morality; relationship and courage to live and demonstrate ones' faith even in sight of chronic and devastating criticism and confrontations.

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