



Thinking About Christian Apologetics: What It Is and Why We Do It

Available

November 2011

\$17, 214 pages, paper,
978-0-8308-3945-2

“Jim Beilby’s volume is distinctive—it’s not your normal apologetics textbook. As such, it is an excellent addition to the growing study in this field. . . . I recommend it highly.”

—Gary R. Habermas,
Distinguished Research
Professor, Liberty
University & Theological
Seminary

Defining and Practicing Apologetics

In Thinking About Christian Apologetics, author James Beilby focuses on that which normally is not explained in apologetics texts and courses: the nature, history and practice of Christian apologetics, as well as the approaches and objections to it. Specifically, this text examines:

What does it mean to do Christian apologetics?

“Apologetics is, in the simplest possible terms, the attempt to defend a particular belief or system of beliefs against objections. . . . Christian apologetics involves an action (defending), a focus of the action (the Christian faith itself), a goal (upholding Christianity as true) and a context (the circumstances in which apologetics occurs).”

What is required to “do apologetics well”?

“Doing apologetics well requires three things. First, one’s arguments must be effective. They must be logically valid and persuasive, and they must directly address the objections offered by skeptics. Second, one must have a proper conceptualization of the nature of both Christian belief and unbelief. In other words, an apologist must properly understand both the reasons why people do not believe in the Christian God and what mature belief in God should look like. Third, and most important, one’s attitude and approach to apologetic conversations must be appropriate.”

What is problematic about overlooking the goals and background of apologetics?

“When Christian apologists bypass these questions and immediately jump into the *important* work of giving answers and making arguments, all too often the result is negative. I don’t mean to suggest that their arguments are automatically bad because they haven’t reflected on the nature of apologetics. Rather, their approach often suffers when they fail to carefully consider (among other things) what the goals of Christian apologetics should be. I believe that the apologetic arguments for Christian belief can be powerful. But if they are not aimed with care and handled with an appropriate attitude, they can be dangerous. Done well, apologetics can draw people closer to the kingdom of God. Done poorly, apologetics can reinforce negative stereotypes and drive people away.”