

Apologetics (Terry)

EVERY system of belief and practice ought to be able to give a reason for its existence. When a new doctrine is propounded it naturally invites the criticism and opposition of those who think it false. It was to be expected, therefore, that when Christianity began to be proclaimed as a new religion it would meet with various kinds of opposition, first from the Jew, and later from the Gentile. Its adherents were called upon to produce reasons for the new departure. Under the pressure of opposition, and often of bitter persecution, they sought to convince their enemies that Christianity not only had a right to exist, but was the highest form of religion and worthy of the acceptance of all men.

Such a defense, or self vindication, of the Christian faith was called by the early Greek fathers an apology... The word has, therefore, in theological literature a meaning quite different from that which it bears in common usage, as when one is said to apologize for some wrong which he has committed. The Christian apology, so far from being an acknowledgment of error or of wrongs, is, on the contrary, a vigorous defense against the attacks of enemies. Such defenses, from the nature of their contents, are also often spoken of as “evidences of Christianity.”

The defenses of the Christian faith have naturally varied much, both in form and contents, according to the nature of the different attacks. A single apology, written by this or that defender of the faith, was called forth by some practical demand of the time. But after many such works had been written, and had come to form a distinct class of theological literature, the study of Christian evidences assumed the character of a science, and is now known by the technical name of apologetics...

(The New Apologetic: Five Lectures on True and False Methods of Meeting Modern Philosophical and Critical Attacks Upon the Christian Religion by Milton S. Terry, New York: Eaton & Mains, e-book, 1897, 9-10; Text and paragraph structure modified)