

# THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE: (RE)FRAMING APOLOGETICS THROUGH THE LENSE OF SERVICE

Practical Theology Interest Group

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## A Journey into Apologetics

I was one of those people who, right out of high school, went to Bible College for four years and then decided to continue on three more years to complete a Master of Divinity. All I knew was that I wanted to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and to serve Him and the Church. Little did I know that the first church to hire me would be my home church in Canby, Oregon (Canby Foursquare Church). Originally hired as the College Age pastor, I started teaching at a little Bible Institute (called the Leadership Training Institute) soon after. Early in my pastorate I recognized my profound need to refine some of my weaknesses. Seminary was immensely helpful, but it cannot prepare someone for all the eventualities that “real life” and pastoral ministry encompass.

I began reading more books on leadership, pastoral theology and ministry, and apologetics. Introduced to the ministry of Ravi Zacharias, I found myself listening to his podcasts daily. His book *Deliver Us from Evil*<sup>1</sup> reminded me a great deal of Francis Schaeffer's *A Christian Manifesto*.<sup>2</sup> Zacharias challenged me to recognize that American culture was shifting in some notable and distinct ways. I began to appreciate the dangers of *secularism* and *pluralism* and how these two realities stand antithetical to the flourishing of the Kingdom of God. I found

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<sup>1</sup> Ravi Zacharias, *Deliver Us from Evil* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1997).

<sup>2</sup> Francis Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1981).

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myself to be in deep need of better understanding the Christian worldview and, certainly to a greater degree than before, to grapple with various methodological approaches to both evangelism and apologetics. What seemed to work before did not seem to work anymore. I felt as if I had to go back and re-read and re-tool for the task of sharing and defending the faith. That was over twenty years ago.

In 2005 I was asked to be the director of the Leadership Training Institute, which eventually grew into a two-year church-based Bible college (Canby Bible College) offering an Associate of Ministry degree. Over the 17 years that I served there, 12 as the Dean, the pressing need I sensed to be trained and to train in the area of apologetics never subsided. The work of preparing emerging ministers for ministry necessitated a strong component on apologetics. Perhaps that has always been the case, but I became acutely aware of it the more I served in a Bible College context.

Four years ago, I moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma from Canby, Oregon and have the distinct privilege of adjuncting at Oral Roberts University, The King’s University & Seminary, and Life Pacific University. I pastor a small home church and I am the executive director of a nonprofit ministry called Kerygma21. I admit at the outset that a strong motivation for this paper comes out of a heart to see God’s people better equipped to understand, articulate, and defend the Gospel. I come at this as a pastor and as a practitioner, not merely as a theorist or academic. I am not here to win you over with eloquent words or lofty ideas, but to exhort those of you who may be pastors, students, and/or academicians to not only appreciate and value the content (ie. theory) of apologetic arguments, but to equally value the very act of Christian defense-making. I suppose my exhortation is for us to see apologetics not only as theory, but as practice, as practical theology, as ministry, as service. How can we equip the Saints for the work of the ministry of

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defending the Christian faith? In what ways can we help them to think through theistic arguments as they have been presented through the centuries, as well as prayerfully and thoughtfully developing their own *personal* apologetic? This is what I will now seek to turn my attention to in the remainder of this paper.

### **Defining Apologetics**

So where to begin? Let us begin by asking the simple question What is apologetics? That is, what is its nature and task? One simple way for us to explore this question is to examine several definitions provided by reputable scholars in the field. One of the first Protestants to provide a taxonomy apologetics was Bernard Ramm. In his book, *Varieties of Christian Apologetics*, Ramm defined it in the following way: “Christian apologetics is the strategy of setting forth the truthfulness of the Christian faith and its right to the claim of the knowledge of God.”<sup>3</sup> One should observe two things about his intriguing definition. First, according to Ramm apologetics entails strategy. In other words, the content of apologetics pertains to what is true about the Christian faith, but what is more is that a person must be strategic, according to Ramm, in terms of the presentation of Christian truth claims. Secondly, notice that Ramm takes Christian apologetics to be, at least in some sense, a vindication of the claim that Christians can know (and know *about*) God. Before proceeding, I would do well to point out that Ramm’s basic schematization of various systems of apologetics boils down to three main approaches: (1) Existential (Pascal, Kierkegaard, Brunner), (2) Philosophical (Aquinas, Butler, Tennant), and (3) Revelational (Augustine, Calvin, Kuyper). A clear matter of “authority” is at stake here. Namely, what authority will be invoked in a person’s *apologia*? Ramm suggests that appeals will be made either to reason, experience, or revelation.

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<sup>3</sup> Bernard Ramm, *Varieties of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1952), 13.

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Ramm’s work was seminal and laid the foundation for a kind of revitalization in taxonomizing Christian apologetics. Some decades later, Gordon Lewis evaluated various epistemologies utilized in apologetic systems in his influential work, *Testing Christian Truth Claims*. In this important work, Lewis defined apologetics as “the science and art of defending Christianity’s basic truth claims.”<sup>4</sup> I find this to be a helpful definition for apologetics in that it incorporates both the theoretical aspect (science) and the human element (art) at work in the procedure. Continuing further, two decades later Kenneth Boa and Robert Bowman, Jr. compiled an apologetics handbook entitled *Faith Has Its Reasons*. In this august work, they define apologetics simply as “The defense of the Christian faith.”<sup>5</sup> They admit, however, that such a simple definition “masks the complexity of the problem of defining apologetics.”<sup>6</sup> Their candor in admitting the difficulty in defining apologetics is refreshing. Steven Cowan, in his well-received book *Five Views of Christian Apologetics* says that “Apologetics is concerned with the defense of the Christian faith against charges of falsehood, inconsistency, or credulity.”<sup>7</sup> Cowen highlights some of the nature of the conflict between a Christian view of things and the nature of objections which are made against the Christian worldview: namely, that Christian truth claims are false, demonstrate rational inconsistency, or are downright superstitious and ridiculous. The thrust of what is being addressed is epistemological in nature.

When one examines definitions provided by individuals who have popularized the discipline, more diversity becomes apparent. For instance, William Lane Craig, who might be the most familiar evangelical face representing apologetics, is well known for his public debates

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<sup>4</sup> Gordon R. Lewis, *Testing Christianity’s Truth Claims: Approaches to Christian Apologetics* (Chicago: Moody press, 1976) 21.

<sup>5</sup> Kenneth D. Boa and Robert M. Bowman, Jr, *Faith Has its Reasons: Integrative Approaches to Defending the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2005) 2nd Ed., 1.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Steven B. Cowan, gen. ed., *Five Views on Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 8.

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and is taken by many to be the gold standard of Christian apologetics today. Craig has defined apologetics as “that branch of Christian theology which seeks to provide a rational justification for the truth claims of the Christian faith.”<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, apologetics is rooted in the discipline of theology, according to Craig. Apologetics, then, may be understood as the statement of what Christians believe about the nature and person of God. But his definitions of apologetics demonstrate variance. Elsewhere, he has defined apologetics in the following way: “Christian apologetics involves making a case for the truth of the Christian faith.”<sup>9</sup> What appears to be a subtle, yet significant nuance to understanding the field in his former work, takes on a more normative definition in his later work. One of Craig’s professors, Norman Geisler, was himself well-known as a promulgator of all things related to apologetics. In his *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, he states that “Apologetics is the discipline that deals with a rational defense of Christian faith.”<sup>10</sup> Here his qualifier “discipline” is instructive. “Discipline” denotes a “field of study,” a “body of knowledge,” or “domain of inquiry.” It does not take much to see what is being said here. The nature of apologetics is, one might presume, predominantly “theoretical” or “rational.” Whereas Craig and others may anchor apologetics in the field of theology, yet others have advocated that apologetics is inherently a matter of Christian philosophy. Ronald Nash, the long-time professor of philosophy at Western Kentucky University (and then RTS) maintained that “Apologetics [is] the philosophical defense of the Christian faith.”<sup>11</sup> Nash represented more of the Reformed tradition, as did his former professor, the famed Gordon H. Clark, a presuppositional apologist. Others from the Reformed tradition have

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<sup>8</sup> William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 15.

<sup>9</sup> William lane Craig, on guard: defending your faith with reason and precision (Colorado Springs call Lynn David cook, 2010 ), 13.

<sup>10</sup> Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 37.

<sup>11</sup> Ronald Nash, *Faith and Reason: Searching for a Rational Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 14.

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classified apologetics as philosophical as well. The controversial Cornelius Van Til, the so-called “father of presuppositional apologetics” and interlocutor with Clark, maintained that “Apologetics is the vindication of the Christian philosophy of life against the various forms of the non-Christian philosophy of life.”<sup>12</sup> K. Scott Oliphint, who sits in Van Til’s “seat” (position) in apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary offers a unique alternative in the offerings of diverse definitions: “Christian apologetics,” he says, “is the application of biblical truth to unbelief.”<sup>13</sup> If what Oliphint maintains is correct, what then should we take to be the “application of biblical truth” to belief, or believers, for that matter?

As we stop to reflect upon these divergent definitions of apologetics, it appears that a clear majority of the definitions take it to be a discipline focusing on the veridicality of the Christian worldview over against the fallacious contentions of unbelieving thought. Make no mistake; this certainly is an essential component of the discipline. However, as important as Christian truth-claims are to the field of apologetics are, we must not divorce apologetics from the personal and relational dimension of defense-making. The *art* of defense-making is just as much apologetics as the arguments utilized in the act of providing an *apologia*. This is one reason I much prefer to define apologetics as the “art and science of defending one’s faith,”<sup>14</sup> much in the vein of Gordon Lewis’s definition. If apologetics entails not only theory but practice, we would do well to explore its relation not only to philosophy and theology (proper or systematics), but also to practical theology.

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<sup>12</sup> Cornelius Van Til, *Christian Apologetics* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing), 1.

<sup>13</sup> K. Scott Oliphint, *Covenantal Apologetics: Principles & Practice in Defense of Our Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 14.

<sup>14</sup> It is an “art” in that it entails skill, ingenuity, and personal creativity; it is a “science” in the more traditional meaning of the Latin word *scientia*, i.e., dealing with a claim to “knowledge.”

## **Apologetics as Practical Theology**

It is well known that pastors are concerned with many things, not the least of which is the high task of making disciples of Jesus Christ. “Gospel communication” is at the center of the Great Commission and therefore pastoral ministry. When I reflect upon the nature of “Gospel communication” at depth, I observe that it comes in one of at least five different modes: articulation,<sup>15</sup> explication,<sup>16</sup> proclamation,<sup>17</sup> demonstration,<sup>18</sup> and vindication.<sup>19</sup> Pastoral theology in particular values each of these modes of gospel communication, for we are helping (or at least attempting to help) our congregants to understand the Good News, to accept the Good News, to embody the Good News, to in turn share the Good News with others, and when necessary to defend the Good News. When I speak of Gospel Communication as *vindication* I am here talking about apologetics. Certainly, as practitioners we need to not only think through these five dimensions of Gospel Communication, but we also need to engage in them through hands-on training, equipping of the Saints to share the Good News, to live the Good News, and to defend the Good News.

Through the lens of practical theology, I do not see apologetics as a mere discipline or study but rather as an expected practice of Christian discipleship. Acts 1:8 clearly states that the followers of Christ are to be his 'witnesses.' Certainly, there is much to be unpacked in this

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<sup>15</sup> What I have in mind here is something akin to evangelism in its more literal sense; namely, someone sharing, by means of articulation, the Good News of Jesus (ie., who He is, what he did, and why it matters).

<sup>16</sup> By “explication” I mean the act of teaching and expounding upon the Good News, whether it is in a classroom, a living room Bible study, or at Sunday school.

<sup>17</sup> What I have in mind for “proclamation” is something along the lines of what occurs through the act of preaching, whether it is via pulpit ministry, a revivalistic meeting, or at a modern crusade. It is *declarative* in nature.

<sup>18</sup> Here I mean the act of encountering God’s people embodying fruits of the Gospel in daily life. Such activities may include beholding sacrificial giving, a genuine community of *agape* love, acts of altruistic kindness, etc. Such a dynamic calls to mind the well-known saying attributed to Francis of Assisi: “*Preach the gospel at all times; use words when necessary.*”

<sup>19</sup> “Vindication” would be the act of defending, “proving,” or providing rational justification of Christian truth claims. This clearly aligns with what is usually entailed in giving an *apologia*.

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passage—more than I can address here—but at the very least we should be in agreement that Jesus himself expected of his followers to "testify to" and "bear witness of" his Lordship not only in their lives but over all of creation. Now would be an appropriate time to consider exactly what is included in the magna carta of apologetics texts. Perhaps in review we can gain a fuller appreciation of what the apostle Peter had in mind when he speaks of apologetics. I have claimed here and elsewhere that in this passage we are able to get at the "heart of apologetics."

Without question 1 Peter 3:15-16 is the charter verse for Christian apologetics.<sup>20</sup> It is considered by most to be the *locus classicus* for Christian defense-making. This is not disputed.

So what does Peter say?

Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.<sup>21</sup>

First of all, notice Peter's admonition to the dispersed churches regards perseverance amidst being persecuted for righteousness' sake. The immediate context in which believers are to give "an answer back" appears, at least in this passage, to be one that is hostile. The apostle Peter recognizes that although we bear the message of hope, many will despise the very one we represent. Peter's counsel to be prepared at any moment to give witness to the Lordship of Christ flows from a heart upon which Christ rightly sits enthroned. Furthermore, one should notice that the apostle Peter expects a negative reaction to the very reasons set forth for one's hope in Christ, for he states, "*when* you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ" (emphasis

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. Greg Bahnsen, *Presuppositional Apologetics: Stated & Defended* (Nacogdoches, TX: Covenant Media Press, 2008), 4.

<sup>21</sup> 1 Peter 3:13-16 ESV

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mine). Peter assumes, in a sense, that many, if not most, will reject the Lordship of Christ. In this brief text I observe at least four key features which follow from Peter's admonition.

*Motive.* That a person is offering "reasons for the hope within" should flow from a desire to honor Christ *as Lord* and *as holy*. This, one could say, is one's "reasonable act of worship."<sup>22</sup> The defense-making is part and parcel with what it means to be a disciple of Christ. To be a disciple is to worship the Lord with one's life, and this life includes "reasons" which ground one's personal faith in Him. One may give an *apologia*, but if his/her motives are askew in the process, such "worship response" is tainted.

*Manner.* Not only is there a motive behind our "reply," there is also an overall tone, or *way* in which we ought to give an answer back. In Peter's words we are to "do so with gentleness and respect." Such a qualification is insightful, for it demonstrates that the very manner in which we make a defense nonverbally communicates something about our message and the One about whom the message revolves. One could make the argument that *how* we say what we say is almost as important as the *reasons* we believe, or *why* we are contending for the faith once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

*Material.* Our apologetic certainly posits truth content; that is, there are propositional truth claims we make regarding the Good News of Christ. Any (and every) worldview does the same. Indeed, we may have many reasons for the hope we bear in Christ, but apologetics cannot—*should not*—be reduced to "reasons" per se. Defense-making is much, much more than that. Please do not mistake what I am saying. Certainly, we should *affirm* only that which is in keeping with Scripture and sound doctrine, but we should also stress the apologetic power of a

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<sup>22</sup> This phrase harkens back to Romans 12:1. The apostle Paul concludes this verse with *τὴν λογικὴν λατρείαν ὑμῶν* (lit. "the reasonable service of you" or "your rational worship/service.")

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personal testimony. Our “reasons” should be personal and *personalized*. Theistic arguments *are* helpful at times. Historical evidence concerning the historicity of the resurrection is significantly important. Upholding the intelligibility of human experience as possible only through the Triune God of Scripture is, in my view, immensely invaluable. And though these may in fact be some of the reasons which help to anchor our hope in Christ, the most important “answer back” to be shared *in the moment* is what the Holy Spirit, through us, intends for us to share, no matter how sophisticated or erudite it may seem. Indeed, the Spirit empowers that which He inspires.

As Christian leaders, pastors, and academicians, we must be careful not to give the impression to our “peers in the pews” that to be effective in Christian defense-making we must be experts in the philosophy of religion, philosophical theology, or biblical studies (though praise God some of us may be). Inasmuch as we ought to be vigilant to share and defend the Gospel, we must also, in turn, be careful not to reduce Christianity down to a set of principles, facts, or abstractions. Christianity is relational at its core, and so should be our defense-making. This, I reckon, is perhaps, in part, what folks are looking for from us in our *apologia*. This may be in fact what Peter is driving at: not “give reasons for faith” but “give *your* reasons for *your* faith.” This individualized, personalized *apologia* carries tremendous value, as is what the Spirit may empower most in the act of defense-making.

*Method.* Finally, Peter does not offer directions for how the “reasons” ought to be conveyed by believers; rather, he simply gives a directive for believers to be ready to give reasons in a moment’s notice.<sup>23</sup> Peter gives no instruction as to what apologetical method should be utilized, but this may be implied, when he states that we are to “be ready.” Part of “being ready” may assume an approach or method of defense-making. We all would do well to be self-

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<sup>23</sup> Recall that these “reasons” are to be given to *anyone* who inquires. This qualifier is instructive, for it negates the option of “personal selectivity” on the part of the believer.

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reflective in searching our own hearts with respect to the various reasons for the Hope in *us*. Few things could be more practical than that.

In light of what we see in 1 Peter 3:13-16, let us return to the consideration of apologetics as practical theology. At the risk of not assuming everyone knows what I have in mind by the term "practical theology," allow me to provide a few definitions. James H. Railey, Jr. and Benny Aker define practical theology in the following way:

Practical theology is the division of theology that puts the truths of theological investigation into practice in the life of the community. Included in this division are preaching, evangelism, missions, pastoral care and counseling, pastoral administration, church education, and Christian ethics.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, Stephen Pattison and James Woodward explain that:

Practical theology is a term that emerged in the German protestant tradition as part of the academic theological curriculum in the late 18th century. Although pastoral care was seen as one important area of concern in practical theology, its concerns extended beyond this to specialist interest in worship, preaching, Christian education, and church government. The purpose of practical theology was to apply theological principles to these activities.<sup>25</sup>

In full disclosure, I differentiate pastoral theology from practical theology. Namely, pastoral theology is one of many expressions of practical theology. Admittedly so, "pastoral theology and practical theology are sometimes talked about as if they're completely different things; at other times as if they were exactly the same."<sup>26</sup> Pattison and Woodward proceed to point out that "nowadays, there's a lot of common ground between pastoral theology and practical theology. Ultimately, both are concerned with *how theological activity can inform and*

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<sup>24</sup> Stanley Horton, ed., *Systematic Theology*, rev. ed., (Springfield, MO: Logion Press), 48.

<sup>25</sup> James Woodward and Stephen Pattison, *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 2.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

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*be informed by practical action in the interests of making an appropriate, effective Christian response in the modern world.”<sup>27</sup>*

Ray Anderson, offering a helpful definition, describes practical theology as

a dynamic process of reflective, critical inquiry into the praxis of the church in the world and God's purposes for humanity, carried out in the light of Christian Scripture and tradition, and in critical dialogue with other sources of knowledge. As a theological discipline its primary purpose is to ensure that the church’s public proclamations and praxis in the world faithfully reflect the nature and purpose of God's continuing mission to the world and in so doing authentically addresses the contemporary context into which the church seeks to minister.<sup>28</sup>

These definitions, though limited in scope and number, at the very least help us to see three things: (1) Practical theology seeks to bridge (if not unite) theory and practice; (2) Practical theology utilizes and pulls from multiple fields of study; (3) Practical theology critically evaluates and critiques the methodologies employed in a wide range of ministries of the church in/to the Church as well as in/to the world.

In light of Anderson’s comments, how might we think about contemporary Christian apologetics through the lens of practical theology? How might a practical theology assist in bridging the theory of apologetics with the efforts of the layman in the act of defense-making? How might practical theology’s utilizing multiple fields of study broaden the discussion of apologetics?<sup>29</sup> Such questions, in my view, are both relevant and important, and they present us with clear potential for further exploration and research.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 2. Emphasis mine.

<sup>28</sup> Ray Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2001), 22.

<sup>29</sup> I recall a stimulating conversation with Dr. John H. Coe, director of the Institute for Spiritual Formation and faculty member at the Rosemead School of Psychology, wherein he mused at the potential for “*therapeutic apologetics*.” His point (via experience) was clear: many, if not most, people have spiritual/psychological roadblocks behind much of their resistance to Christ and Christianity.

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### **Apologetics through the Lens of “Service”**

Among the many standardized definitions of apologetics stands an unusual one; one set forth by John Frame. In his classic, *Apologetics to the Glory of God*, he offers up a wholly unique definition: “Christian apologetics seeks to serve God and the church *by helping believers* to carry out the mandate of 1 Peter 3:15-16. We may define it as the discipline that *teaches Christians how to give a reason for their hope.*”<sup>30</sup> I believe that professor Frame is on to something here. He acknowledges the importance of 1 Peter 3:15-16 as it relates to all believers. But notice what else Frame contends in this definition. Apologetics first and foremost seeks to serve God. Second, it seeks to serve the church. How exactly might Christian apologetics be understood in these two ways? Presumably, for Frame apologetics is to be understood in the context of worship. Everything is to be done to the glory of God. Furthermore, the task of “helping believers to carry out the mandate of one Peter 3: 15- 16,” ought to be seen as a task of ministry. Instead of couching apologetics under the rubric of a discipline, such as a mere field of study, Frame calls it a discipline that *teaches* Christians *how* to give reasons for their hope. This is an eminently practical task. It certainly has theoretical content, but the emphasis here is on preparing Christians such that they are capable of identifying and articulating their particular reasons which ground their hope in Jesus. This may or may not be highly intricate, complex, analytical, philosophical, or even overtly theological in appearance. Frame's suggestion here is worth serious consideration. How so? Consider how apologetics is presented to us in the scriptures. Much of what we see in various biblical passages is apologetics in action, or imperatives commending and defending the faith. One example comes to mind, as the apostle Paul standing before Felix, Festus, and others, answering the accusations set before him. Yet, as

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<sup>30</sup> John Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1994), 1. Emphasis here is mine.

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he is doing so, he is testifying to the lordship of Jesus while walking in the ministry of the proclamation of the gospel. It is this very ministry of evangelism which should cause us to consider apologetics equally as a ministry. If evangelism is sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ and apologetics is defending the Good News of Jesus Christ, are not both of these two separate sides of the same coin? If they are, then may I contend that both should be considered a viable service.

So in what way is apologetics service? At this point it may be helpful to consider some of the ways “service” appears in the New Testament.<sup>31</sup> Several Greek words address service of some kind. For instance, service akin to slavery (*douleuo*) appears throughout the New Testament. A much less common occurrence is service for wages (*latreuo*). Two types of service are especially relevant to our current study. Religious service for and on behalf of people (*leiturgeo*) is replete within the Septuagint, and sparingly within the New Testament. By far, the most common form of service mentioned in the New Testament has been characterized by Verner Foerster as “a service of love”<sup>32</sup> (*diakonia*). In fact, this kind of love is so central to the Christian way of life that the word “deacon” still looms large in various Christian traditions to this day. A *diakonos* as a leader, but etymologically it is a kind of “servant-leader.”

When apologetics is viewed through the lens suggested by John Frame, through the lens of service, if you will, this opens up some intriguing prospects for discussion. Consider how apologetics might relate to *leiturgeo* and *diakoneo*. If apologetics is the act of communicating the truth as it has been revealed to the world, this incorporates both an internal and an external function. Internally, the content (“material”) of apologetics, namely the philosophical,

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. Jeremy Wallace, *Serving God and Man: An Introduction to Christian Ministry* (Canby, OR: Canby Bible College, 2005), 18-19.

<sup>32</sup> Verner Foerster, *diakoneo*, vol. 2, *TDNT*, 81.

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theological, and biblical data which arises from Scripture, can arguably take on a liturgical function. Broadly speaking, understanding, articulating, and exegeting the truth of God's Word can be viewed as an act of worship. Of course, within the broader understanding of worship, what can't be considered worship? Within the context of church practice, especially biblical and Christian education, apologetics may entail not only the tactics utilized in commending and defending the faith, but the very personal and practical side of assisting the regenerate with skills to identify their own personal reasons which ground their faith in Christ. Externally, any form of truth-telling may be understood as a form of service. For instance, telling people the truth they need to hear is morally appropriate, and when this is done out of a motive of love and genuine concern, it is arguably a form of service. If evangelism is viewed to be a ministry of the church, certainly apologetics is a ministry as well. And if it is a ministry, it is undoubtedly a service.

In conclusion, defining the nature of apologetics presents a challenge for many scholars, but for the most part, it has been defined as something roughly equating to "providing the rational justification for belief in Christianity." While this is certainly true, after examining the *locus classicus* of apologetics we see observed that apologetics is more than simply a matter of answers or facts. It entails material, motives, methods, in a particular manner in which the answers/facts may be offered. In fact, a biblically consistent understanding of apologetics appears to entail less about providing *answers* as it does the *providing of* answers. In the words of Toby Mac and DC Talk from the early 90s, "love is a verb." True enough. Perhaps despite our penchant for thinking of apologetics in terms of a field, a discipline (a mere noun), by viewing apologetics through the lens of ministry/service, we can conclude that apologetics is a verb. As an action word, apologetics is not just philosophical or biblical theology, but practical theology.

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