

Power Apologetics

The Aggressive Vindication of the Faith

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Scripture Distorted

Unnatural Gentleness, Unfounded Respect

Apologetics, in our context, refers to the intellectual defense of the Christian faith. I say that it is intellectual to distinguish it from military conquest and retaliation, political manipulation and legislation, or other such methods of securing agreement or surrender from those who oppose us. Our method is intellectual, in that our defense consists of verbal assertions, explanations, and arguments. We use words to talk about the Christian faith, and to show that it is true.

As for saying that it is a "defense," later we will discuss the possible problems with this characterization. Before we do that, we should first confront a subtle but crippling error that pervades almost all teachings on the subject of apologetics. The error is subtle not because it is difficult to detect, but it manages to hide in plain sight because it has become so popular that it is now accepted as truth, and it is even upheld as a nonnegotiable ethical standard for believers.

I am referring to the idea that when we defend the faith, we must do so with "gentleness and respect" toward the non-Christians. Since these words are taken from the apostle Peter, of course I agree with his teaching, but only when his meaning is correctly understood. The problem is that most instructors on apologetics fail to perceive or acknowledge Peter's meaning, so that they fail to pass on his teaching to believers. And the harder they teach it, the more they steer God's people away from the biblical approach to the defense of the faith.

The phrase appears in Peter's first letter, written to encourage and instruct believers who are suffering severe persecution for their faith. Thus the phrase does not stand in a vacuum. It serves the purpose of the letter, so that its meaning is determined by the context in which it appears. By observing the overall intention of the letter as well as the surrounding passages, we are able to infer Peter's intended meaning.

When we return to the letter with this in mind, we see that the "gentleness and respect" indeed fit into a broader teaching that Peter conveys to his readers. His main concern is to instruct believers in what to think and how to behave when they face persecution from authority figures. He refers to the king and to governors, and then to masters, and after that to husbands. He nowhere refers to the defense of the faith when it comes to discussion between peers, or in scholarly debates, or in the general publications of the Christian faith, such as in books and sermons.

Therefore, 1 Peter 3:15 refers to an interrogation of Christians about their faith by authority figures that hold formally superior positions in society. Christians are to be "always be prepared to give an answer" when questioned by government officials,

masters or employers, or husbands and parents, and so on. This does not mean that the verse is irrelevant to the defense of the faith before other kinds of people. But it does mean that if we are to release the verse from its original context in order to make a broader application, then we cannot do this to one part of the verse and not the other.

In other words, once we apply "always be prepared" to other situations, we also need to consider whether we still need to behave with "gentleness and respect," or a better way to say this is whether we need to behave with gentleness and respect in the same sense. This consideration is legitimate. To illustrate, Jesus did not speak to the Pharisees and to his disciples in the same way. And Paul did not defend the faith in the same way when he spoke to Agrippa as when he wrote to the Galatians. Likewise, it would be strange and unbiblical for a person to defend the faith in the same way when he speaks to a judge as when he speaks to his colleague or his infant son. The content of the faith remains the same, but the proper way to address people varies.

Peter indicates that he has different relationships and different categories of persons in mind when he writes, "Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king" (1 Peter 2:17). This does not mean that the way we behave in these relationships are mutually exclusive. The point is that in this letter, Peter makes these distinctions and provides specific instructions for specific situations. Love toward God is legitimate, and fear toward the king is also legitimate, although even here both words are used in different senses already, so that even to acknowledge this is to make the point once again.

When interrogated by a government official, the Christian is to exhibit a gentleness and respect in honor of the office held by the one who questions him. There are exceptions to this, as when Elijah said to Ahab, "You are the problem!" or when Jesus publicly referred to Herod as, "That fox." Paul later cursed the high priest to his face, although when he did this, he did not know that he was speaking to the high priest. When he found out, he indicated that he did not know, implying that he might not have said the same thing if he had known. But remarkably, there is no record that he retracted his curse. That there are exceptions even to this rule for addressing authority figures reinforces my contention that the universal application of the "gentleness and respect" admonition is erroneous. And it is often taught in a way that would have us soften our tones and our words at all times and to all persons in such a manner that reduces apologetics to a rather effeminate and repulsive demonstration.

Nevertheless, Peter teaches believers to exercise wisdom and discretion when confronted by authority figures about their faith. To apply this in the broadest manner possible without first noting the specific context is defective exegesis, and an insult to divine inspiration. This does not mean that the Christian is to be a respecter of person, fearing the wealthy and powerful but scorning the ordinary inquirers. The reason for this attitude toward authority figures is because, as Paul teaches, all authorities are from God. No one who wields authority obtains his position except by divine providence. God is the source of the very ideas of authority and submission.

When the Christian answers authority with gentleness and respect, he does so because he is aware that the source of all authority is God. You respect the position given to the person by providence, while despising his ignorance and wickedness as a non-Christian. This is the apostle's teaching. But even this teaching gives the Christian boldness before authorities. When Pilate said to Jesus, "Don't you know who I am? Don't you know that I have the power to judge you, or to set you free?" Jesus replied that Pilate could have no power except what was given him from above. So the usual attitude taught is based on a misinterpretation of 1 Peter 3:15 and related verses, and a shallow understanding of what Scripture teaches about faith, humility, and respect. Because the popular understanding is false and shallow, it is useless and even harmful. We should throw it out.

If we consider the verse in a broader context, that is, from the perspective of the New Testament or even the whole Bible, then the error of the popular interpretation becomes even more glaring. We begin with the assumption that if the verse is understood in a way that would condemn the prophets and the apostles, and even the Lord Jesus himself, then it cannot be the correct interpretation. Anyone who reads the Bible can see that the prophets, the apostles, and the Lord Jesus often spoke and behaved in ways that contradicted the popular understanding of 1 Peter 3:15. The Lord Jesus called people snakes, dogs, hypocrites, sons of hell and sons of the devil, and even performed physically violent acts such as turning over tables and using a whip to chase merchants out of the temple.

Those who affirm the popular version of Christian ethics would give no place for the Lord's behavior, but would readily condemn him. And in condemning the Lord, they condemn themselves. As a Christian, I fully endorse the Lord's action. I wish not and dare not disagree with him. But all those who affirm the popular interpretation of 1 Peter 3:15 have no right to endorse the Lord at the same time. They must consider him a hypocrite, in which case they blaspheme the Lord and reject the Scripture's testimony concerning him, so that they renounce Christianity and show themselves as unbelievers and reprobates.

Or, if they do not do this, they must regard him as an exception to 1 Peter 3:15. They must say that the verse is not derived from the example of Jesus, but that it applies only to Christians. Even this is insufficient, since the prophets and the apostles also contradicted the popular understanding of 1 Peter 3:15, so that they must also be considered exceptions. Some people indeed teach this. Greg Bahnsen excuses the prophets, the apostles, and the Lord Jesus from 1 Peter 3:15 in precisely this manner in one of his lectures, saying that they were exceptions. At least he realized that they did not adhere to his interpretation of the verse.

However, this attempt to make their false interpretation of 1 Peter 3:15 consistent with the rest of the Bible betrays the fact that they have not understood or acknowledged even the surrounding passages. Peter repeatedly refers to the Lord's example throughout the letter, and it is on this basis that he gives the instruction to give an answer for the faith with gentleness and respect. So the Lord cannot be an exception because 1 Peter 3:15 is based on his example in the first place. And since this is the case, then the prophets and

the apostles cannot be considered exceptions, since all of God's people must follow the supreme example of Christ, as all of them are called to conform the image of God's Son. The popular interpretation of 1 Peter 3:15 is inconsistent with the immediate context of the verse, and it contradicts the rest of Scripture. Therefore, it must be false.

Since the prophets, the apostles, and the Lord Jesus could not be exceptions, this interpretation encourages both Christians and non-Christians to condemn them as hypocrites, since there is no way that anyone can twist the facts to make them fit the popular interpretation of 1 Peter 3:15. They violated the false interpretation with regularity and with no remorse. In fact, they appeared completely unaware of any moral regulation requiring them to show gentleness and respect in the sense meant by the popular interpretation. So, who are the true guardians of the faith? The prophets, the apostles, and the Lord Jesus, or those who tell you to be soft and polite when talking with unbelievers, and not to follow the numerous examples of the inspired preachers that demonstrated the exact opposite?

On the other hand, if we understand the verse to say that we must show respect when under interrogation by authority figures, then the problem disappears. And given the context in which the verse appears, this is the obvious and only possible meaning. As mentioned, even then, there are indeed apparent exceptions to even this principle, so that at times the prophets, the apostles, and the Lord Jesus appeared to show no respect at all to the authority figures. Unlike the false interpretation of 1 Peter 3:15, the legitimacy of these exceptions is not invented to preserve a semblance of consistency, but it is explicitly granted in Scripture, as when Peter indicated under interrogation that he ought to obey God rather than men. So these exceptions are not arbitrary, but clearly defined and explained. Moreover, these exceptions do not help the opposing view, that is, the popular interpretation, since the consideration of these exceptions occur after it has been established that 1 Peter 3:15 refers to showing respect to those in authority. The legitimate exceptions appear within a narrow context with clearly defined principles that explain when they should be done.

The truth is obvious. Those who insist on the basis of 1 Peter 3:15 that we must always perform apologetics with "gentleness and respect" – that is, with what *they* mean by gentleness and respect, which does not always conform to the biblical meaning – assert nothing more than their own opinion about the appropriate manner in which religious dialogues should be conducted. They are not really concerned about what Peter says and what he means. They just want to find words in the Bible that would support their own attitude on the matter, which amounts to, 1. You should do apologetics, and 2. You should be nice while doing it. This cheap distortion of Peter's teaching subverts the apostle's intention in encouraging and instructing believers who live under severe persecution. Those who promote this deception should be held accountable.

Christ Betrayed

Faithless Honesty, Counterfeit Humility

We have been talking about the kind of false humility that pertains to our attitude in defending the faith. It is a product of the misinterpretations of 1 Peter 3:15 and other verses, of unbiblical religious traditions, and of adopting non-Christian standards for social intercourse and surrendering to non-Christian demands as to how they ought to be treated.

Although this false humility has inflicted far-reaching damage, there is another kind that poses an even greater danger. This is the false humility that discourages complete certainty regarding the truth of the gospel, or the actual content of our faith. There are those who promote this view about the faith even as they claim to defend it. And some of them would suggest that it is dishonest and arrogant to affirm and to present the gospel as if we possess total certainty that it is true. They claim that honesty and humility require us to acknowledge that our faith in the Lord Jesus could be entirely misguided, in the sense that the Christian faith itself could be wrong.

This false humility that affects the certainty with which one affirms and presents the content of the Christian faith could be based on a belief about the appropriate attitude that one should assume, or it could be the result of a person's philosophical judgment. Since I wish to focus on this problem of equating the admission of uncertainty to honesty and humility instead of why one would come to make such an admission, the reason for the admission of uncertainty is irrelevant to this discussion. However, since it is important to the defense of the faith in general, I will make a brief statement about it.

If one makes an admission to uncertainty because he thinks that a humble attitude necessarily produces this behavior, then I have already refuted this. But if a person makes this admission because it is the result of his philosophical judgment, then this becomes a matter of rational argument, and the answer is that no one can produce an argument that casts any doubt upon any aspect of the Christian faith. We are able to refute any such attempt without any difficulty or hesitation. Further, the biblical defense of the faith that I have outlined in various places preempt such an attempt.

On the final page of his book, *Humble Apologetics*, John G. Stackhouse, Jr. writes, "We Christians do believe that God has given us the privilege of hearing and embracing the good news, of receiving adoption into his family, and of joining the Church. We do believe that we know some things that other people don't, and those things are good for them to hear. Above all, we believe that we have met Jesus Christ." This is fine, but then he continues, "For all we know, we might be wrong about any or all of this. And we will

honestly own up to that possibility. Thus whatever we do or say, we must do or say it humbly."¹

He has stated some of the central claims of the Christian faith, and he claims to affirm these claims as true. So when he says that "we might be wrong about any or all of this," he necessarily implies that Scripture itself might be wrong about any or all of this, that the entire Christian faith could be wrong. However, since the Bible itself does not admit that it "might be wrong about any or all of this," when Stackhouse says that he "might be wrong about any or all of this," he is no longer defending the Bible.

He might place the emphasis on his own fallibility, that he himself might be wrong about the belief that the Bible is God's revelation, but this makes little difference, since it still returns to the point that if this is what he means, then he is no longer defending the Bible. He says that he might be wrong when he says that the Bible is right, which is the same as if he says that the Bible might be wrong. Because he says that he might be wrong when he says the Bible is true, so that the Bible might be false after all, he is no longer doing biblical apologetics.

The Bible says that when we affirm the things that it teaches, we can know with certainty that the things that we believe are true (Luke 1:3-4; John 17:6-8; Hebrews 11:1, 6). Christian apologetics is supposed to defend what the Christian faith teaches, and since the Christian faith does not say concerning itself that it might be wrong, when Stackhouse says that it might be wrong, he is no longer defending the Christian faith, but more than that, he is attacking it.

If the Bible itself claims to be God's revelation and therefore completely true, then by what standard of humility does Stackhouse call his approach "humble"? Since the Bible is the ultimate standard of ethics, it also defines humility; therefore, when Stackhouse implies that the Bible itself might be wrong, he is not being humble, but arrogant – so arrogant that he says he might be wrong if he affirms what God reveals. According to biblical standard, it is not humble to say that you might be wrong when you affirm what the Bible affirms; instead, you are arrogant if you say that the Bible might be wrong.

For Stackhouse to claim to be a Christian and then say that his religion might be wrong is to say that Christianity might be wrong; therefore, instead of doing apologetics – humble or not – he is in fact attacking Christianity. If the Bible is the word of God, then to say that we might be wrong about it being the word of God is not humility, but blasphemy. If Stackhouse admits that he himself *does not* have certainty, then we may perhaps still accept him as a weaker brother, but when he says that we *should not* ever claim certainty, and even suggests that anyone who does is dishonest and arrogant, then he has made himself an enemy of Christ.

Rather than saying that we must "own up to that possibility" that we might be wrong, we must insist on the impossibility that we are wrong when we are affirming what the Bible

¹ John G. Stackhouse, Jr., *Humble Apologetics: Defending the Faith Today*; Oxford University Press, 2002; p. 232.

teaches. When we affirm what the Bible affirms, it is impossible that we are wrong. If Stackhouse is so "humble," he must also confess that he might be wrong when he says that he might be wrong about Christianity, for how can he be so sure there is "that possibility" that Christians can be wrong who affirm the Bible? Is he fallible when he affirms the Bible, but infallible when it comes to "that possibility"?

Man's arrogance is revealed in his modest theology. The arrogant man's confidence in his faith is in direct proportion to his confidence in himself, in his own estimation regarding his own intelligence and competence. Since this self-confidence, even if unrealistically large, is not absolute and infinite, then his "faith" must also be accordingly limited. His plea for humility is in fact a plea for removing God's infallible revelation as the basis for faith, and to replace it with man's arrogance as the only foundation for confidence in his religion. The basis for his apologetics is self-worship. Stackhouse's approach to apologetics does not display the power and wisdom of God, but his inferior intellect and personal crisis of faith.

His position is unbiblical, irrational, and blasphemous; therefore, we must reject this false humility and scholarship in exchange for an approach to apologetics that is biblical, which is one that says, "We are right, and we are sure that we are right. You are wrong, and we are sure that you are wrong." If this biblical position brings the world's reproach, then so be it – let the unbelievers try to defeat us in argumentation.

He says, "For all we know, we might be wrong about any or all of this." For all *we* know? Who gives him the right to speak for us? He should speak for himself. Unless he can defeat me in argumentation, proving that it is possible that the Christian faith is wrong, he cannot speak for me. For all I know, it is impossible that I might be wrong about any or all of this. And Stackhouse should honestly own up to that possibility that I am right, and that it is impossible that the Christian faith is wrong.

Then, notice that he makes the possibility of error the basis for humility: "We might be wrong... Thus whatever we do or say, we must do or say it humbly." This makes us wonder why Jesus was so humble. In any case, this is not the biblical basis for humility. The Bible does not say that we must be humble because the Bible itself might be wrong. In fact, if the Bible itself might be wrong, then it cannot be an infallible authority by which humility is commanded, since such a command might itself be wrong, so that perhaps arrogance instead of humility is the virtue to pursue.

Since Stackhouse makes human fallibility instead of divine command the basis of humility, this humility is independent of his alleged belief in the Christian faith. In other words, he can be humble in the sense intended whether or not he is a Christian. Therefore, he is referring to a non-Christian humility. But if this humility is not based on divine command, then what difference does it make whether I am humble or arrogant, even by this non-Christian definition? Would Christ judge me for not showing a *non-Christian* humility? Would Christ rebuke me, and say, "Do not be so sure when you exalt my name before the heathens"? What, are you insane? And if Christ is false, then no one

could judge me for not showing any kind or any degree of humility. Either way, Stackhouse's version of humility is complete rubbish.

God does not send us out to proclaim a mere possibility for people to consider or investigate, but he commands all men everywhere to repent. This call to repentance carries authority and significance because the whole Christian faith is true. God does not send us out to tell people that we might be wrong, but rather, that we are right, that we are certain that we are right, and that we are certain that we are the only ones who are right. If you want to preach your own unbiblical opinion, then feel free to be "humble" about it, and feel free to say that you might be wrong. But when you claim to proclaim and defend the message of Christ, then it is not up to you to be modest about it.

An ambassador who represents his king when he addresses another nation operates with the full authority of the king within the boundaries defined for him by the king. That is, he speaks for the king within certain contexts and situations. It is not up to him to doubt the king, or to criticize or incite opposition against the king. For him to do so would amount to treason, and depending on the policy of his home country, the ambassador could be removed from office, imprisoned, or even executed. The monarch would be within his rights to parade this traitor through the streets while his people curse him and spit on him, and then to behead him in the city square.

The kingdom of God is no less a kingdom than any earthly kingdom, and Jesus Christ is no less a king than any earthly king. For Stackhouse to advocate a policy of apologetics that introduces uncertainty and fallibility to the Christian faith is treason against the kingdom, the king, and all his people. And the fact that he announces this policy as a Christian professor and a public figure makes the matter much worse. For this reason, Stackhouse should be removed from all positions in any Christian seminary, church, or organization, and he should stand under official church discipline, which should implement anything from a rebuke, and if he exhibits no repentance and issues no public retraction, he should be excommunicated.

Lest it appears that Stackhouse is used as a special target here, I mean that any Christian who advocates such an approach to apologetics should be treated in the same manner. In fact, all believers and organizations who do not affirm and implement such a firm policy against spiritual traitors share in their guilt. They care more about the comfort and friendship of men than the honor of Christ. If you are one of these people, repent! Flee to Christ for mercy, for he said that it would be better for you to tie a boulder around your neck and throw yourself into the sea, than to cause one of his little ones to stumble. You should rather kill yourself than to undermine a believer's confidence in the Christian faith. Jesus said it, and I am happy to repeat it. In the name of the Lord Jesus, I condemn Stackhouse's "humble apologetics," as well as all its variations, no matter who advocates it, as long as it suggests that we should admit that we might be in error when we confess the truth of the Christian faith. I demand that you do the same.

If you confess that you have doubts about the Christian faith, then that is your problem. It is a problem of ignorance, of irrationality, of deficiency in your righteousness and

intelligence. What you need is prayer, study, counseling, and divine grace for your soul. It takes a special brand of hypocrite to translate this defective faith into an approach to apologetics, and then to enshrine it and call it humility. You introduce doubt to the people of God, and insinuate rebellion into their hearts. You are a wolf in sheep's clothing, undermining the confidence of the faithful, while excusing the sons of hell. Shame on you. May your humility burn in hell, because it proceeds from the limitation and the arrogance of man, and not the revelation of God.

People who called themselves Christians have criticized me for stating that I am invincible in the defense of the faith. Although I always explain that this is because I derive my arguments from divine revelation, and revelation is invincible, just as God is invincible. And I always insist that any believer who would likewise stand on revelation is also invincible in argumentation, because even the foolishness of God is greater than the wisdom of men. This explanation is ignored by my critics, because they always stand upon their own merits, and their confidence is only as extensive as their estimation of their own abilities. For them, the self is the ultimate reference of what is true, of what is possible, of what is great and what is not.

When I say that I am invincible, I am saying something about God, not something about me. Although this should be every believer's attitude, it is inconceivable to some people that anyone would think this way, probably because they themselves think in a thoroughly self-centered and self-righteous manner. This is the basis of their confidence, and since they are limited, they think that to acknowledge this limitation is the essence of humility. They measure everything by their own merits and abilities. So when someone says that he is invincible, even though he clearly credits this to Christ, they cannot help but think that he claims to be invincible in himself and because of himself. Because they do not think as Christians should, they deny that anyone does. The Bible teaches that he who boasts should boast in the Lord, but these people think that if a man boasts, let him boast about himself or not at all.

True humility recognizes that without Christ we are not just limited, but that we are nothing and can do nothing, so that we should have no confidence in ourselves at all. Rather, we look to him to grant us wisdom and power, so that our measure of faith in his abilities and our estimation of his greatness become the measure of our confidence. This is the basis of my claim that I cannot be defeated by non-Christians, and that I am invincible in the vindication of the Christian faith. We have to own up to the reality that, when we affirm the Christian faith, we are affirming something that is true, that is certain, that is beautiful and glorious, and that is invincible in argumentation.

The Ready Answer Defend, Attack, and Reaffirm

The word "apologetics" is derived from the Greek *apologia*, which is often translated as "answer" or "defense." It refers to an intellectual answer or defense, so that the one presenting it does so by using words, by submitting evidences, and by providing arguments. The classic illustration for this is the court trial, in which the accused, or the defendant, is expected to issue an "answer" in response to the charges made against him. The Bible commands us to answer the world, and this suggests that there is an intellectual dimension to the Christian faith. Christianity involves learning, thinking, believing, knowing, speaking, and writing. There are facts, claims, and propositions that we must grasp and apply. This is a defining characteristic of biblical apologetics.

This is accurate as far as it goes; however, the idea that apologetics is an answer or defense could be misunderstood. To be more precise, those who are careless about what an answer or defense means might misunderstand what it is that the Bible commands Christians to do. This misunderstanding has turned the practice of apologetics into a passive and defensive discipline that is propelled by reactions to attacks from the unbelievers.

Some Christians seem to think that we are to put ourselves at the disposal of unbelievers, always ready to react whenever they express their curiosity or animosity, and to do this in a way that yields to the particular manner in which each inquiry takes shape. For the Christians who think this way, the result is that the unbelievers have exercised excessive control over their agendas and activities, and even the form and content of their apologetics.

This false view regards apologetics as mainly a defensive discipline, always reacting to non-Christian intellectual aggression. To "answer" the unbelievers would mean neutralizing objections and correcting misunderstandings, but it would not include a merciless and relentless assault against non-Christian beliefs. That is, this view of apologetics understands an "answer" as mainly defensive, not offensive, and mainly as a response, not as something that we initiate. Their false interpretation of Peter's instruction to answer with gentleness and respect reinforces this position for them.

Of course, there are those who hold to this idea of apologetics for reasons other than a false interpretation of 1 Peter 3:15, but the misinterpretation of this verse has indeed been a contributing factor to the false humility that has so crippled the church's apologetic endeavor. Moreover, even for those who have arrived at this passive and defensive view of apologetics because of other reasons, a true understanding of 1 Peter 3:15, and of what it means to provide an "answer" to unbelievers, will still be sufficient to offer a biblical corrective.

There is nothing in the idea of an "answer" that requires us to be only defensive, or even mainly defensive. The nature of the answer depends on the content of what we are answering for and what we believe to be the reasons that constitute the answer. When a non-Christian demands to know the reason I am justified in affirming the Christian faith, and why it is reasonable for me to be a believer, part of my answer is that there is something wrong with him, that is, with the unbeliever who asks me this. Part of my answer is that any person who is a non-Christian is immoral and irrational. Since I do not wish to be like him, and since I perceive that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Christ, I am justified in affirming the Christian faith. Part of my answer is that God will throw the unbeliever into a lake of fire. Since I do not wish to suffer a fate like his, and since I perceive that Christ was made sin, although he did no sin, so that in him I might be made the righteousness of God, I look to him for salvation – for deliverance from divine wrath, and for the hope of eternal life and glory.

This is an integral and necessary aspect of my answer, my defense. This is what I believe, so this is what I tell him. As it is written, "I have believed, and therefore have I spoken." We also believe, and therefore speak. Thus even a defense does not need to be only defensive. The fact that Peter calls on us to provide an answer or a defense is the biblical basis for incorporating an offensive and aggressive element in our apologetics. We are to attack the people that we answer. We might also call the practice of apologetics the *vindication* of the Christian faith. The word makes room for both the defensive and offensive aspects of our engagement with non-Christians. Nevertheless, the words "answer" and "defense" are accurate if all their implications are understood.

Consider again the illustration of a court trial. It is common for the defense to attack the prosecution in the process of arguing for the innocence of the accused. This is done not necessarily as a diversion, since the strength of the prosecution's case is indeed relevant to the burden placed on the defense and the success of the defense. So the defense would attempt to dismantle the prosecution's case by discrediting the witnesses, by offering alternate explanations for the evidences, by refuting the reasoning and the inferences of the prosecution, by exposing the inconsistency of their arguments and testimonies, and even by drawing attention to some broader issues such as the reliability of memory and of sensation.

All these aggressive tactics legitimately belong to the arsenal of legal defense, or any rational defense of a position. In fact, the defense would be foolish and even unethical for failing to attack the vulnerabilities in the prosecution's case. And if the prosecution's case is mostly based on conjectures, false inferences, inconsistent testimonies, and arbitrary accusations, then it is conceivable that much of the defense's arguments would be of the aggressive kind.

The illustration shows that to be on the defense does not necessarily mean to be always on the defensive. But later I will show that the place of a defendant does not fully reflect the situation of the Christian, and that there is an even greater justification, even an obligation, for assuming an aggressive posture when it comes to apologetics. Remember

that 1 Peter 3:15 mainly deals with how a Christian should behave under official interrogation, and it is not the only verse in the Bible that has to do with apologetics.

There are numerous biblical examples to reinforce the point. Once I point out a few of them, you should be able to notice many others.

The first example comes from Luke 11, from the ministry of Jesus. He was a walking tsunami of divine power, an avalanche of signs and wonders. The Gospels record only a very small percentage of the miracles he performed. John wrote that if all his works (including miracles) were recorded in writing, perhaps the world would not be enough to contain the books that would be produced. Even if we take this as a hyperbole, and even if we take into account the much larger and more cumbersome scrolls and parchments that were used at that time, it would not stretch the imagination to suppose that Jesus performed thousands of miracles, even tens of thousands, if not more. This is more than plausible. He would at times heal entire crowds with a word of command, and sometimes he would spend all night laying hands on the sick. So his healing miracles alone would number in the thousands. It would be impossible for the number to be smaller.

His adversaries were envious because he was attracting many followers, and he was liberating these people from false traditions and authorities. But the sheer number and magnitude of his miracles made his power undeniable. Therefore, as religious reprobates often do, they resorted to slander, and said that Jesus cast out demons by the power of Satan, the devil. No one could accuse him of error in his doctrine or behavior, so the charge that he wielded demonic power was groundless. Nevertheless, this is the nature of slander, that it is irrational and without justification.

Demonology is not the main issue here. We are interested in Jesus' answer, his defense, to this accusation.

First, he exposed the fallacy in the accusation, showing that it was irrational. He said that Satan's kingdom cannot be divided against itself and remain standing (v. 17-18). This in itself was an indirect attack against his critics, since objections do not appear out of nowhere – they are formulated by people. Irrational people make irrational statements. Unintelligent people make unintelligent criticisms. So the way he neutralized the accusation made his critics appear ignorant and foolish. In this case, they were either ignorant of the operation of Satan's kingdom, or they failed to make valid inferences from what they knew. If he had pressed this point, this maneuver that neutralized the objection would have also become a direct attack.

Next, he indeed made a direct attack against his critics. He said that if he drove out demons by the power of the devil, then, "By whom do your followers drive them out? So then, they will be your judges" (v. 19). Although the theology is important, that is not our main interest at this time, so we shall focus on the rational and rhetorical tactic that Jesus used. After he neutralized their accusation with a proper application of biblical demonology, he returned the burden of the argument to his critics, and challenged their own practices. He even set fire to their own camp, by exposing the conflict that would

arise among themselves if the accusation were allowed to stand. He went on the offensive.

Finally, he offered a positive answer, and said, "But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you" (v. 20). He affirmed that he could drive out demons, but he did not do this by the power of the devil. Rather, he did it by the finger of God, or the Spirit of God. And then he used this last point to drive across his message, that "the kingdom of God has come to you." He used the opportunity to reaffirm his mission and to preach the gospel. "Now if I cast out demons by the power of God," he said in effect, "then the kingdom of God is here. God's rule has come. God's time has come. God's Son has come! What are you going to do about it? Will you continue to invent irrational criticisms and unjustified accusations, or will you repent of your sins, and rejoice that the kingdom has come to you, and enter in through faith and thanksgiving?"

His answer, therefore, consisted of an analysis of the accusation, neutralizing it in the process, a destructive attack against his opponents, forcing the burden back on to them through it, and a constructive statement of the truth about himself and his message, by which he reaffirms his mission and furthers his own agenda. The vindication of the faith would be far more faithful and effective if we would follow this approach. We must do more than to make a constructive statement. We must do more than to neutralize the objection. We must also pursue the heretics, and attack the unbelievers.

In Acts 2, the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, and as the Spirit enabled them, they spoke in languages that they had never learned, declaring the wonders of God. The Jews were bewildered, and some of them said that these Christians were drunk with wine. At this, Peter rose to speak.

He first weakened the accusation by noting that it was implausible (v. 15). Then he offered a constructive statement (v. 16-36). This included an alternate explanation of the occurrence, that it was a fulfillment of prophecy (v. 16-21). This then turned into a proclamation of the gospel, the person and work of Christ, which was supported by arguments from prophecy, history, and testimony.

Embedded within this constructive statement was an attack against the critics, the Jews. Peter said that they murdered Jesus with the help of the Romans. So they called the disciples drunks, but he called them murderers. They did not ask him this, but Peter brought it up. But unlike their accusation against the Christians, Peter's accusation against them was based on truth and not slander, not misunderstanding or misrepresentation. And those Jews who repented acknowledged this, and were cut to the heart.

So the same three elements that were present in Jesus' defense were also present in Peter's answer.

Then, in Acts 7, Stephen was brought before the Sanhedrin on charges that he spoke against the temple and the law. The high priest asked him if the charges were true, and so

Stephen gave his answer, his defense. Read it. You will notice the same three elements in his reply.

We might call his answer a redemptive-historical analysis. He began with God's calling of Abraham, and then Isaac, then Jacob, after that, Joseph. But he gave the greatest attention to Moses. And it is in this section on Moses that he neutralized the accusation brought against him. Then he also mentioned Joshua, David, and Solomon.

The conclusion included a constructive statement about "the Righteous One" predicted by the prophets. This final section also included an attack against his accusers. Although his entire account illustrated the Jewish people's rebellion and hardness of heart, he made the theme explicit at the end: "You always resisted the Holy Spirit!" They claimed to honor the prophets, but they were the ones who persecuted them. They claimed to honor the law, but they disobeyed it. And he said that now they had even murdered Jesus Christ, their own Messiah. He was the accused, but he ended up making a stronger attack against his accusers than the one made they made against him. They accused him of sacrilege, but he charged them with generations of sacrilege and murder.

Paul's speech before the Areopagus in Acts 17 is often misrepresented. Some commentators claim that he flattered the Greeks and appealed to common beliefs to introduce the Christian faith to them. I have written an extensive exposition showing that Paul did the very opposite,² so I will not investigate the details with you here, but we will focus on the three elements of a Christian answer.

The whole speech, of course, was a constructive statement. It is similar in structure and content to a course in systematic theology, in which we begin from Scripture, to God, creation, providence, to man and sin, and then to Christ, redemption, and judgment. The popular assertion that Paul was not a systematic theologian is contradicted by explicit biblical accounts. Paul was not only a systematic theologian, but the content that he treated and the order in which he treated them were almost identical to many of our textbooks in systematic theology.

Although most systematic theologians did not derive their outlines from Paul, they ended up following approximately the same order, treating the same subjects. This is because systematic theology follows the logical order and observes the logical relationships of the doctrines that it considers, and therefore those who can think logically will arrive at approximately the same result. As with us, at times Paul presented his theology in a different arrangement, but the subjects treated remained the same, only that his purpose required him to arrange his material in another manner.³

Although the speech was a kind of answer about the Christian faith, the situation was different, in that Paul was not confronted with the same kind of hostile accusations that we found in our other examples, and that the Greeks were curious about what he had to

² Vincent Cheung, *Presuppositional Confrontations*.

³ For example, Paul summarizes his system of theology with christology as the motif in his letter to the Colossians. See Vincent Cheung, *Commentary on Colossians*.

say. Nevertheless, we could still find the element of neutralizing an objection. That is, the Greeks suspected Paul of introducing "bad philosophy" to them, and his answer showed that his philosophy was a broad, coherent, and superior worldview, thus neutralizing their initial accusation.

And he attacked the Greeks even at the beginning of his speech. He took their altar to "An Unknown God" as an admission of their ignorance. So he undermined them from the start and claimed to speak from a superior position. Later into the speech he attacked their idolatry by noting that the divine being could not be represented by gold or silver or stone. They were the ones who practiced bad philosophy. He called them ignorant, and said that God now commands all people everywhere to repent.

Thus the Christian answer to the unbelievers includes three elements. First, we are to neutralize the objections. Second, we are to provide a constructive statement that explains our beliefs and that provides rational support for them. This is to reaffirm and reassert the Christian faith, and to further our own agenda, so that the objections would not remove our focus on our mission. Third, we are to fiercely attack the non-Christians – their beliefs, their intelligence, and their character. We are to expose everything that is wrong about them.

The prophets, the apostles, and the Lord Jesus all employed this method. A method of apologetics that does not attack the unbelievers is not only incomplete, but because it is incomplete, also irresponsible, and because it is irresponsible, it is also sinful. It is a sin to not attack the unbelievers with all our powers and resources. Some Christians would rather attack believers who follow this method than to attack the non-Christians. This is treason against the kingdom of heaven.

The Spirit Sword

Reason, Rhetoric, and Power

The Bible tells us that we have the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. This metaphor is relevant because it applies to spiritual conflict, which is what happens when a battle of ideas rages between Christians and non-Christians. If our approach to apologetics invokes the word of God, then when unbelievers challenge us, our answer will involve plunging this weapon straight into their hearts. This is a war, and your duty is clear. When you face a non-Christian opponent, you must hurt him. You must attack his pride. You must damage his confidence. You must destroy that which he believes and trusts in. Then you must declare his defeat, and show the world that you have put him under your feet in the name of Christ.

If we will adopt this biblical approach to apologetics when confronting unbelievers or when confronted by them, then they will never be the same. The gospel spells their defeat, their death, their eternal doom. If they refuse to repent, then their darkness will get darker, their hearts will grow harder. They will lose that much more of their sanity and their humanity. They will become even more stupid, and even more evil. They will die in their deaths. As for those whom God has chosen and enabled to believe, he will raise them from the dead and awaken them to righteousness. Either way, once the word of God penetrates, they will never be the same.

A sword implies blood, violence, offense, and conquest. We condemn ourselves if we confess that the word of God is the sword of the Spirit, but at the same time fail to give proper place to the offensive nature of our work. We say that we believe the Great Commission, but insofar as the preaching of the gospel propagates ideas that contradict what the non-Christians believe, the offensive aspect of our work in fact precedes any defensive measure. If we are silent about what we believe, or if we hold our sword in its sheath, though its lively nature protests all suppression, then there would be nothing for the unbelievers to challenge. The fact that they demand an answer or defense from us presupposes that we, or more faithful soldiers than we, have already taken the offensive.

The sword of the Spirit is sheathed in truth, which the Bible likens to a belt that holds other items in place. This weapon of attack is drawn from the truth, out of the truth. In more concrete terms, it is derived or deduced from the Bible. Since this relation obtains, if the sword signifies particular and agile applications, then the belt could refer to the whole biblical system of doctrine. The constant pursuit and growth in the disciplines of systematic theology, of biblical theology, of general biblical knowledge, and of particular biblical passages, strengthen our belt and sharpen our sword.

How grateful I am to the Lord when I look over at my opponents, and also a little amused. They are unkempt, undressed, and unarmed. Some tremble, as they ought. But

some are confident – those are the delusional ones, for they have no sense to perceive that a greater one stands before them in the name of Christ. He has not left me unprepared, but has ensured that I am well-trained and well-equipped. He has given me the assurance that I shall win every time, if I will only fight, and slay his enemies with decisive strokes of the sword.

It is agreed among Christians that truth is our foundation, our center, and the source of our thinking. It is doubtful that anyone who does not agree with this is a Christian at all. Thus we draw our presuppositions, doctrines, and arguments from the truth, that is, from the Scripture. However, it is not agreed as to how truth is to be applied and defended. The approach to apologetics that I denounce here has resulted from a false understanding of what it means to provide an answer or defense to those who inquire, and what it means and in what context to do this with "gentleness and respect."

This false understanding is in turn a result of a disinterest in what Peter really has to say, and a pursuit of a private agenda, namely, to assert an approach to social discourse and interaction that pleases the sentimentalities and cultural standards of non-Christians. Of course, the distortion of Peter's words is not the only factor contributing to this pagan approach, but the verse is a good and prominent example among others that have been similarly abused. This has resulted in an unbiblical restraint in two main areas of apologetics.

First, the unbiblical approach to apologetics places a restraint on reason. Christians sometimes exhibit an aversion to "reason," in part because they are confused and disobedient, but in part because the word is often loaded with assumptions that believers should not accept. Whether consciously or instinctively, sometimes Christians detect these assumptions, and rather than challenge them, they become hostile to reason itself. And thus the unbelievers call the Christians unreasonable or irrational. However, it is not reason itself that we need to be wary of, but these assumptions.

For example, rationalism is the way of thinking that claims to utilize reason to discover and to deduce an entire system of truth, with a conscious rejection of revelation from the start. Of course Christians cannot accept this, and no thinking person should. Or, empiricism is often identified with reason. Since the scientific method involves a deliberate application of empirical methods and assumptions, science is often identified with reason as well. But again, it is not necessary to identify empiricism and science with reason.

Instead, reason can refer to the bare laws of logic, the principles that describe the necessary rules of thought. For example, two propositions must not contradict each other. Or, when one item is equal to another, and the second is equal to the third, then the first is also equal to the third. Basic principles like these also form the basis for delineating the forms that valid arguments must take. These are necessary rules of thought that one must follow whether or not we spell them out. And men instinctively and necessarily use them as they speak and debate with one another.

From the Christian perspective, reason is a description of the way God thinks. It is the way he structures creation, and the way he structures his revelation. Thus a rock cannot be a rock and not a rock at the same time and in the same sense. And the Bible assumes the necessity of logic in its teachings and arguments. For example, Jesus assumes that the Bible cannot contradict itself when he contested with Satan, and there is no record that the devil himself argued with him about it. Then, he also used the same principle to confound the Pharisees, as when he noted that the Messiah was to be both the son and the lord of David. The writings of the prophets and the apostles are also full of arguments that assume the laws of logic.

There is nothing wrong with reason itself, if we will remove the unnecessary assumptions from it. And when we do so, we find that reason is an unstoppable weapon in the hands of a Christian. For example, we find that all of science crumbles within several seconds when tested by reason. Of course, if we identify science with reason, then we might not say this, since science would be reason. But if we take reason to mean logic without the baggage of unnecessary assumptions, then the claim that science is rational is annihilated. This is because of its reliance on induction, sensation, and the formal fallacy of asserting the consequent in its thinking and procedures. Any one of these three items would destroy the claim that science is even a little bit rational. Science is only a sophisticated and systematized version of irrationalism.

If we will press this point in apologetics, then all scientific objections against the Christian faith would be destroyed even before they are examined. The method of science destroys itself, and prevents it from discovering anything about reality. The usual approach in apologetics is to flatter science, and to say that it can indeed discover truth if it is properly conducted. Then the defense of the gospel turns into a debate about science, and thus the unbeliever neutralizes the Christian's purpose regardless of the outcome of the debate. The kingdom of heaven makes no progress.

Even the popular version of presuppositional apologetics endorses science, although it teaches that we cannot account for it without biblical presuppositions. But this is even more ridiculous. Science is irrational *in itself*, which means that no set of presuppositions can justify it or account for it, except to account for its falsehood. Therefore, this form of presuppositional apologetics makes the Bible an accomplice to a lie. Rather than to defend the faith, it commits blasphemy. Reason belongs to the Christians. We must not let non-Christians hijack it by loading it with their private assumptions. They claim reason for themselves. I am taking it back.

Some Christians have used the informal fallacies to illustrate Scripture's disagreement with reason. But the informal fallacies are themselves applications of reason, and do not strictly belong to reason itself. These applications might be right, or they might be wrong. For example, the informal fallacy of name-calling points to a genuine logical problem only when it is reduced to a fallacy of irrelevance. That is, if one person insults another with a name or label that is irrelevant to the debate, and if he utters the insult as if it is relevant, then it is a logical fallacy. But there is no logical problem in the act of name-calling itself.

In fact, if the name-calling proceeds from the person's worldview, then it is a necessary part of what needs to be discussed. For example, Scripture uses the words "sinners," "fools," "dogs," "snakes," and the like to describe unbelievers. If the Christian avoids using them, then he is no longer speaking for the Christian faith. So in these cases, the insults are not informal fallacies, but part of the Christian worldview. This is what we believe – we believe that the non-Christians are sinners, fools, dogs, and so on. And if the non-Christian disagrees with these characterizations, then that is part of his worldview. The conflict now becomes more clear, and the debate can become more relevant and productive as a result.

Second, the unbiblical approach to apologetics places a restraint on rhetoric. This is another loaded word. It is often associated with sophistry, or a skillful use of language for the purpose of deception or manipulation. This is not what I mean. When emptied of these assumptions, the word can simply refer to an effective use of language, or skill in speaking or writing. The purpose is to bring clarity into our communication, and to bring out the force inherent in our beliefs.

Words are symbols that convey ideas. The symbols are not associated with the ideas by necessity, since one symbol can represent an idea just as well as another. So it does not matter which symbols we use to represent our ideas. But once the symbols are associated with the ideas, then it matters which symbols we use when we communicate our ideas, since the different symbols now represent different ideas. Then, the tone, style, and structure of our communication also affect the precise nuances of the ideas communicated. Thus rhetoric is not for mere effect.

In apologetics, the Christian is to use all the rhetorical devices, forms, styles, and expressions exhibited in Scripture. Many of these are not opposed by believers and teachers in apologetics, but others are denounced as harsh and unloving, even though they come from Scripture. As mentioned, rhetoric cannot be entirely divorced from content, so that to oppose the rhetoric of Scripture is to oppose its content. Scripture denounces sin, but it does this in certain tones, using certain words, and with certain attitudes. If we retain what we think are the ideas expressed, but use only the tones and the words that unbelievers do not find offensive, then we are still not telling the world what the Scripture really says, or what the Christian worldview really is. In addition, the language of Scripture also evokes a certain response. If you change the language, you change the response. Therefore, to present or defend the gospel in this manner is unbiblical and unsatisfactory.

The rejection of biblical rhetoric is a liability in debate, and it is a sin before God, since it implies shame or contempt regarding his word. May God liberate his people from the human traditions that forbid them to follow the Bible in both its content and its language, in both its reason and its rhetoric. It does not matter how many of you are on the other side of this issue. You are wrong. And you cannot fight God and win. My Father is greater than all. As for those who have ears to hear, you are free to speak and write the way that the prophets did it, the way the apostles did it, and the way the Lord Jesus did it.

Do not let religious traditions or cultural standards hinder you from following the word of God. Unless you shake yourself from these, you will not find freedom in wielding the sword of the Spirit.

We are to throw off all restraints that limit our use of reason and rhetoric to attack the non-Christians, to criticize their way of life, and to destroy everything that they believe in.

The sword of the Spirit is a spiritual weapon. The Christian wields it in preaching and in argument. But this weapon is the sword of the Spirit in another sense also. That is, it is the Holy Spirit who determines the effect that the word of God has on people. The Christian wields it in speech and in writing, but the Spirit causes it to penetrate into the hearts of men. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would convict the world regarding sin, righteousness, and judgment. The Holy Spirit is the Christian's secret weapon. He should not be a secret to us, but he is a mystery to the unbelievers. He is the ghost, so to speak, that haunts them. He is the X-factor that they can never plan for, escape from, ensnare, or subjugate.

The Holy Spirit is a tower to the Christians. His influence is not limited to the moment of conflict, but he is the spirit of love, of power, and of a sound mind. He is the spirit of boldness, so that the early disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit when they prayed that God would grant them the boldness to preach his word. He is the spirit of knowledge and understanding, of insight and revelation, of assurance and exuberance in the defense of the faith. So he does not only teach me apologetics, as in words to say and techniques to use, but he makes me an apologist, an able vindicator of the faith. As it is written, he "trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle" (Psalm 144:1). "For by thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall" (Psalm 18:29, KJV).

But the Holy Spirit is a terror to the non-Christians. They are helpless and defenseless before his power. They cannot kill him, and they cannot argue against him, and they cannot escape him. Their minds are under his sovereign control. The Spirit can confound them in debate, and convict them of their sins. And even as they leave the scene, he goes with them, introducing doubts into their minds about their beliefs and conviction into their consciences about their sins. He can convert them to the Christian faith at any time he chooses. If the Spirit wills, I can break through the most hardened mind with the gospel just by asserting it. The unbelievers have no defense against me. They cannot prevent the conversion of anyone whom the Spirit has chosen to convert. The chosen ones are ours for the taking. No willpower, argument, education, or experience can resist the Holy Spirit's direct action in the mind. If God has chosen you for salvation, no power can stop me from claiming your very soul for the Lord Jesus.

Many Christians might find this aspect of apologetics difficult to fathom. This is probably because the Holy Spirit is not subject to our control. Rather, he does what he pleases, and we are under his command. Nevertheless, there are principles about his activities whose nature is such that we may learn to deliberately and intelligently interact with him. For example, he is the spirit of truth who could enable believers to understand the things of

God. And Jesus taught that the Father would grant the Spirit to those who ask. So we may petition God for the Holy Spirit to fill us, to make us strong and to make us wise, and to confound the enemies of the kingdom of heaven.

The Great Invasion

From Pagan Humility to Christian Authority

Jesus turned the other cheek, but he also turned over tables. He did not do just one of the two all of the time, but he did both, depending on what was appropriate to the situation. Likewise, we are to do both, depending on the situation. The Christian who turns the other cheek even when he should turn over tables, probably turns the other cheek not because he is humble, but because he is a coward. And the one who turns over tables all the time, and who never turns the other cheek, probably turns over tables not because of spiritual boldness or zealotry, but only because he has an aggressive and impatient personality. Or, perhaps both have been misinformed as to how a believer should act. We are to be able to do both, and an understanding of biblical principles will guide us as to what we are to do in any situation. In apologetics, there are times when we need to turn over some tables.

Sometimes non-Christians use 1 Peter 3:15 to manipulate believers. They exploit the Christian's own false interpretation of the verse to make him answer for his faith, and to do it with gentleness and respect. This answer is usually taken in the defensive sense, so that the Christian is supposed to endlessly provide defensive responses to questions and objections. Given the false interpretation of the verse, there is never a point when the interrogation must conclude, and when the non-Christian must either answer for his own beliefs, or else surrender to the gospel.

The gentleness and respect are understood in a way that makes them resemble the passivity in Buddhism and Confucianism rather than the fruit of the Spirit. This is an abomination, and it allows unbelievers to pressure Christians to offer only defensive answers about their faith that pose no direct intellectual threat to the unbelievers, and that pose no direct emotional strain on their feelings. So they say, "Answer me, Christian! Defend your faith to me! Explain it to me! Prove it to me! Dance! Dance! Dance! And don't you dare raise your voice, or to insult and deride me. Be nice, like the Bible tells you! And when you are done, do it all over again!"

The implications of unbiblical apologetics encourage the unbelievers to keep the intellectual and emotional burden of the conflict on the Christians all the time. The unbelievers are able to get away with this as long as the Christians operate under a false interpretation of Scripture and unnecessarily permit the unbelievers to make them suffer, all the time thinking that they are enduring defeat and humiliation for the sake of Christ. The truth is that they suffer because of a silly hermeneutical blunder. Once the interpretation is set right, the Christians are set free.

In fact, for those who affirm this false interpretation, or who maintain a general misunderstanding of what Scripture requires in terms of the answer that we give and the

manner in which we give it, they will make themselves suffer without much effort from the unbelievers. They will offer defensive answers, and refrain from attacking the unbelievers. And all the time they will be doing this with exemplary Buddhist humility and Confucian gentleness. I denounce this pagan rendition of biblical ethics.

But how the truth sets us free! First, Peter is talking about the way Christians ought to behave under official interrogation, so that the gentleness and respect are shown to authorities for the sake of God, who established all authorities. Second, an "answer" refers to *anything* that might explain why we affirm the gospel or why we are justified in affirming the gospel. This must include our belief that unbelievers are foolish and wicked, that they are mentally bankrupt and morally depraved, and that all their beliefs are false and irrational. Once we possess this understanding, then we will drop that obnoxious, effeminate, and anti-biblical "humble" apologetics. We will take up the sword of the Spirit and slaughter the non-Christians, totally subduing and humiliating them in argumentation. This shall be our answer.

When this becomes our answer, the unbelievers will realize that they are no longer safe. They can no longer manipulate us with our own Scriptures or use 1 Peter 3:15 as a shield for their unbelief and rebellion. If they attack the Christian faith, they are not going to walk away from the conflict unscathed. They will have their own ideas thoroughly examined, challenged, refuted, and destroyed – every time. Every question that they ask us will cost them. Every objection that they launch against us will backfire. And when they become weary of debate, they can no longer excuse themselves from the situation, as if they have no obligation to answer us, to answer our challenges against what they believe and how they behave. They will know that not only will we fight back when they attack, but we are going after them. We are the hunters, they are the prey.

You say, "This apologetic frightens me." You are a fool. Do you not see that this is the Great Commission? Do you not see that the Commission is a manifest for spiritual world invasion? Jesus Christ is Lord over all, and he sends us to every part of the earth, even to every person, to declare his lordship to them, and to teach them to obey everything that he has commanded. Therefore, we have the duty and the right to invade all areas of the earth, to intrude into all lives, and then to challenge and command them to repent, and to tell them what to believe and how to behave. This is the commission and the authority of the Christian.

You must accept and follow your Lord's command, and the power of his Spirit will be with you. When I answer the unbelievers, I do not answer by my own authority – I am not defending myself or asking them to worship me. But I answer in the name of the Lord Jesus, and so I answer according to his teachings, and according to what he has wrought in my life. In his name I order the unbelievers to repent and believe the gospel, and to obey everything he commands. I am a messenger of life and glory to those chosen for salvation, and a messenger of death and damnation to those who refuse to believe. We are called to world conquest, to confront the unbelievers, to attack their way of life, and to convert them to our way of thinking and living. Nothing less than this can count as

Christian ministry. If we will think this way, we will advance, we will conquer, and nothing will be able to stand before us. And we will be always ready, ready to win.