

Apologetics at the Cross: An Introduction for Christian Witness

Joshua D. Chatraw and Mark D. Allen

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Reviewed by Fred H. Smith

Apologetics at the Cross presents an excellent tracing of apologetics through the centuries from the early Church until the present day. This historical trace, however, also reveals that “If taken too far, apologetics can negotiate away the very soul of the church, the very heart of Christianity.” The trace starts with the early Church’s struggles in defending the faith against the constant threat of heresies and progresses to Leslie Newbigin, and now Timothy Keller amongst the many other apologists reviewed in the intervening years. In the process, the authors emphasize that there is no set methodology for doing apologetics. Since the time of Christ, and even before, many “apologetic methods” have been used to counter the various philosophies sown throughout the centuries. What is offered “is not a narrowing of apologetics, but rather a wider, holistic vision in which the people of God demonstrate the truth of the gospel by living out the implications of the cross in word and deed...” In connection with that purpose, the apologist needs to understand “how people’s assumptions and beliefs are *historically* and *culturally* conditioned” (emphasis in original). This knowledge is critical for an intelligent presentation to the apologist’s counterpart and is addressed within the book.

After laying the groundwork in Chapters 1 – 9, Chapters 10 - 12 address the issue of apologetics in late modernism. There is a wide-ranging presentation on how to apply apologetics under multiple scenarios. This is a section that would be an excellent tool for anyone interested in apologetics as, according to 1 Peter 3:15, we are to “be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” The authors then highlight the last phrase of that verse, “but do this with gentleness and respect.” They make the case that every

person worships something. And, that being the case, this is a bridge the apologists can take advantage to enter the world of the postmodern. In Chapter 12, eight of the most salient reasons the gospel is rejected are reviewed in the light of offering responses with said “gentleness and respect.”

The closing chapter, Chapter 13 - “Making a Case,” recognizes “that only shallow truths can be proven absolutely, the deepest answers of life are beyond absolute proof.” Nevertheless, the authors explore the responses of the materialist or evolutionist as compared to the uniqueness of the biblical response that makes a case for an ultimate Creator and Messiah. This becomes a very fitting end to a volume that should find its way into many classrooms and online courses.

With some skepticism, I ventured into the book thinking, as was addressed early on, “Can there be any new approach to apologetics?” I was not totally surprised to discover that the answer is a positive and that *Apologetics at the Cross* proved its worth. The only part that seemed to be less “energetic,” was Chapter 12. However, that chapter also meshed well with the overall tome.

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