

I'm a Christian apologist as part of my spiritual gifting. When I was first faced with the reality of this aspect of my gift, that is, really faced with it (not as I once aspired to it when I had fun debating atheists), I didn't want it. I had already spent five years on "that" stage, and I didn't like it at all. I was constantly angry with the unreasonableness of unbelievers who just plain hated Christ for no reason. I didn't want to spend my life in that emotional strain. In fact, this was the reason that I found it hard to believe that I had any such gift at all. How on earth could I handle apologetics with such a disposition?

That was nearly two years ago. Since that time, I have come to embrace this aspect of my pastor-teaching gift. I just didn't want to put it to work like I once did. My approach to apologetics, after all, is not to prove any kind of point, not really. The more I have come to understand the Truth of the Bible, the less I care what anyone else really thinks of it. That works out for both good and bad, if I am not careful. That brings me to the point of this post.

To explain, life here on earth is really all about the Truth. That is, the Truth that God is not only the ruler of creation by right, but that He deserves to rule Creation. The God we speak of here is the Trinity in the Bible, of course. Not everyone actually agrees with this. Satan does not, nor does the third of the angels that joined his rebellion in pre-human history. They cannot deny that God does rule, but they do not agree that He is worthy of rule. They want rule for themselves exclusive of Him. The vast majority of humans agree with that point of view, and have throughout human history.

To hold up that position, a variety of excuses and insane rationalizations are churned out and recycled by these enemies of God. God's Character is constantly impugned by these rebels. Nothing suffers more attacks than said Character. Now, if you have ever loved someone, you know just how hard it is to listen to someone else bad-mouth them. It's very hard to take. So, to be able to care less about it while learning to love that person more is always a very desirable thing. For this reason, learning the Bible and growing more adept at it everyday is an incredible blessing because the deeper into it I get, the less I find myself concerned about the lies that people tell themselves about God.

The other side of this is that if I'm not careful, I may alienate some of these rebels from the Grace of God. Although I think that with the way spiritual growth works, compassion for rebels is strongly linked to increasing understanding of the Bible, so that it is really natural to find oneself being more compassionate to those still trapped in Satan's clutches as one understands the Bible more, I realize that it is still a choice to actually have that compassion rather than the anger at them for their hatred of a God Who never did anything wrong to them, Who rather did and does everything good for them. Because it is still a choice, one can

fall into the trap of making the wrong one, and reacting solely to their wicked assassination of God's Character, rather than to their obvious need for His Mercy.

My specific talent in apologetics grants me the ability to refute lies against the Bible. I often find that I have to correct unbelievers about their wrong suppositions about what the Bible actually says. I also find that many questions that such people ask in that arrogant belief that there are no answers to them are often my bread and butter. Of course, because this is the Age of the Laodicean Church - the church that is more concerned with social justice (the more or less literal translation of 'laodikea') and other earthly concerns than with the Truth - even fellow believers don't often know that there are answers to these questions that the atheists and their like try to trip Christians up with. I also have a wider grasp of world and church history, as well as a fair understanding of science, technology, and philosophy and a fairly quicker mind than is often expected of Christians. These things are all part of the gift that I have, or, at least, they serve it. I consider them a part of the gift because it was in my desire to understand the Truth of the Bible that I was often led in directions of questioning and exploration that equipped me for my job of defending the Faith.

Having said all of this, I need to point out that not everyone who challenges the Bible actually expects or cares for an answer. Some people present themselves as honest inquirers, but the instant answers are provided to them, they turn tail. There are apologists who believe that if the Bible was presented in an intellectual light, then some, if not all, atheists would turn to the Truth and be saved. The Bible does not actually hold this view. The Truth is entirely a spiritual affair. Not that it does not make any actual rational sense, it does indeed. But the attitude of people - whether angels in their turn or human beings in ours - to the Truth is not strictly a matter of rationality. It is a question of spiritual allegiance.

To give God the glory, to bow to Him in worship, to surrender power to Him is to relinquish all these for oneself. That means that you accept that you cannot be God yourself. That seems like an obvious truth that makes little sense to even state, but when you take any kind of honest look at human nature, you quickly appreciate that human beings do not like to let anyone else define what the Truth is. We make things up. We will carve a tree, sculpt a stone, swirl something in a test tube, write long or short lines of code so that we can worship these things, but in fact, we are claiming the right to anoint a God over ourselves. That is, we are retaining worship and refusing to give it where it is due. In order to retain worship and deny the True God of it, we must deny the Truth and replace it with any number of lies that justify our rejection of God's Authority and Right to our worshipful obedience.

This is the source of all the world's religions and of all the human philosophies that dispense with the Bible. One cannot beat such a thing with great intellectual arguments. The best that one may do with such a tool is to expose its hypocrisy and its failures. But the only thing that can save anybody out of the madness of these fantasies is the Naked Truth of the Gospel, completely unvarnished and unadorned by pretty arguments.

So, while I have no problems going toe to toe with an atheist or agnostic or deist or Sikh or Muslim or pagan in a debate, I never let myself lose sight of the fact that the thing that saves is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This, in fact, is why I still don't care for the stage. I don't so much defend the Faith as defend weak believers and seeking unbelievers from the wicked lies of unscrupulous elements who both reject the Truth and wish to deny it to others who may benefit by it.