

E. HISTORICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY OF APOLOGETICS

A survey of the major surviving writings of Christian apologists from earliest times to the last century

1. The New Testament (AD 40-95)

A number of the NT books or portions thereof may be properly considered apologetic. Jesus argues with the Pharisees and Sadducees regarding correct doctrine and practice, and also concerning His own claims. John writes his Gospel that the reader "may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" and "have life in His name" (Jn 20:31). Both Peter and Paul's speeches arguing for the truth of Xy to Jews and Greeks are recorded in Acts. Paul defends the Gospel against Judaizers in Galatians, against some sort of Essene or Gnostic heresy in Colossians. The Letter to the Hebrews argues that Jesus is the proper continuation (and consummation) of God's redemptive work begun in the OT.

2. Apology of Aristides (about AD 125)

This work -- which survives in Syriac translation and, in an edited form in the early Xn novel Barlaam and Joasaph -- was presented to the Roman emperor Hadrian (ruled 117-138).

Aristides' argument may be divided into two parts. The first seeks to demonstrate the existence of God. Aristides claims that philosophical contemplation of the beauty and majesty of the world shows that God is the power that moves the world. As the cause of motion God is greater than the world. All things need Him, but He needs nothing.

In the second part of Aristides' argument, he divides mankind into four classes: Barbarians, Greeks, Jews and Christians. The Barbarians worship idols made in honor of the elements rather than their Creator. But the elements (earth, air, fire, water), the sun, moon and stars are not gods but were created by God for man. The Greeks have introduced fictitious gods, based on myths, idle tales, and superficial speculations. Some are female, some male; some adulterers, others murderers; some are thieves, some insane, and some are magicians. These gods are wrathful, envious, perverted, incestuous, and vain. By worshiping such false gods, the Greeks accepted foolishness and began to imitate the same foul practices themselves. The Jews approach the truth more closely than any other nation. However, they err in their ritualism, their worship of angels, and their rejection of Jesus as the true Messiah. The Christians trust and know the one true and living God. Their lives are exemplary. Their teachings are readily available in their Scriptures, from the study of which one can have full assurance of their truth. Xns pray for their persecutors, even those who charge them with monstrous impurities, of which they are completely innocent.