

THE CONTEMPORARY APOLOGETIC TASK

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Warren C. Young, Professor of Philosophy of Religion in Northern Baptist Theological Seminary since 1946, states in his work A Christian Approach to Philosophy, the challenge:

May it not be argued that what is needful in terms of Christian ideals and activity can be achieved without resorting to a study of empirical philosophies at all? It is possible that it can, but we are reminded that R. A. Torrey once remarked that he who understands only the Bible does not understand the Bible . . . Dr. Torrey, . . . recognized that Christian scholarship begins with an understanding of non-Christian interpretations of many areas of experience. If non-Christian affirmations are to be evaluated from the Christian perspective, then certainly the minimum requirement is that they be understood . . . Understanding makes the difference between dogmatic opposition and scholarly evaluation. . . . It is the task of the Christian leader to understand the ideologies of his day so that he may be able to meet their challenge. The task is a never-ending one, for, although the Christian's world-view does not change, the world about him does. Thus the task of showing the relevance of the Christian realistic philosophy to a world in process is one which requires eternal vigilance. To such a task, to such an ideal, the Christian leader must dedicate himself.

More precisely, we must again ask the question: What is the apologetic task? Among others, five proposed answers suggest themselves:

- (a) The apologetic task is to prove by reasoning that Christianity is the only true world-view.
- (b) The apologetic task is to give reasons for the contention that Christianity is the most adequate, or the most reasonable, or the most probable world-view.
- (c) The apologetic task is to give reasons to support the assertion that Christianity is at least as probable a world-view as any other.
- (d) The apologetic task is simply to present Christianity as the only true world-view, without resorting to evidences or reasons in its behalf.
- (e) The apologetic task is to present Christianity as the only true world-view, and then to present evidences, reasons, arguments in support of this view.

The answer as to which of the above views fulfills the task of Christian Apologetics must, in part at least, be decided upon the basis of the solutions to three rather pressing problems: (1) The question of the effect of Sin upon General Revelation; (2) The question of the relation between TRUTH and human knowledge; and