



Alister McGrath: Christian Apologetics an introduction

This is a foundation 'course' book for the study of apologetics and so it breaks things down into small chunks for easier digestion. But for those unfamiliar with the art of apologetics it is a very useful guide to its main principles.

Apologetics is the defence of Christianity in the face of opposition and while the opposition has changed throughout history, many of the fundamentals of apologetics have remained consistent.

McGrath agrees with Chesterton that it is not the individual elements of Christianity which provide conclusive proof but that its overall Big Picture offers a version of reality which accords with our lived experience and helps us to engage with our deepest questions. He compares it to Darwin's defence of Natural Selection which has never been 'proved' but which fits the evidence of our eyes.

He challenges the assumption that atheism is the neutral and natural position one should take – it is just as much a construct as faith. He also exposes the circularity of the argument that reason suggests that reason is the only criterion by which we access truth. Although he does insist that Christianity is reasonable – it isn't contrary to good sense. He sees no inevitable battle between science and religion: a street map and a tube map of London often bear little resemblance to each other but still make things clearer. Both disciplines can reveal the depth and truth in life.

He draws our attention to what he calls the balcony view and the street view. Clever answers from above do not always have much traction within the warp and weft of daily problems and cites CS Lewis's The Problem of Pain and A Grief Observed as very different treatments of the same subject.

McGrath is keen for modern apologists to use modern idiom. He wonders whether things obvious to New Testament writers (especially with regard to Temple sacrifice) are still obvious metaphors for us today. Better to think through with people their sense of longing, of injustice, of alienation, of failure, of wonder to consider what Christianity might have to offer.

CS Lewis said that he believed in the sun, not just because he saw it but because by it, he saw everything else. Christianity is a particular way of seeing the world. But, McGrath would argue, it is both a reasonable and an enriching one.