

1. Contemporary Fideism

It is neither lame brains nor idiots who are opposed to reasons. It is not unreasonable people who are violently against reason for religion. Karl Barth was certainly the greatest theological genius of this century. He wrote the longest series of theological volumes in any century.

Before he reaches page thirty of the first volume of his *Church Dogmatics*, he is asserting that what is philosophical is not Christian and what is Christian is not philosophical. He does not say “apologetical,” but that is what he means, as demonstrated in an experience of one of my professors.

Julius Seelye Bixler, under whom I studied what was called “theology” at Harvard in the early 1940s, once visited Karl Barth. On Barth’s desk he saw a copy of *The Reasonableness of Christianity*. Bixler, interested because he had studied under its author, he asked Barth what he thought of the book on his desk. “No good” was the answer.

“Have you read it?” Bixler asked.

“No,” responded Barth.

“How, then, do you know that it is no good?” Barth then explained that he had read the first few pages where the author promised that he would show the reasonableness of Christianity. Barth then knew the book *couldn’t* be any good. For him, Christianity was not “reasonable.”

The father of this kind of thought (or nonthought) was the nineteenth-century melancholy theological Dane, Søren Kierkegaard. He simply could not stand the neat synthesis of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. He blew the whistle in the name of paradox and Christianity has never been the same since.

The grandfather of the Barthian anti-apologetic Chris-

tianity (if one skips *the* quintessential father of the whole movement, Immanuel Kant, as too technical) is Blaise Pascal, who had reasons for Christianity that the mind knows not of.

2. Objections to Apologetics

It is not too difficult to see why intelligent people don't want to use their intelligence defending or proving Christianity. It is hard work. You have to prove, prove, prove to an age that is intellectually lazy and hostile to biblical truth. Jonathan Edwards, preaching from Psalm 94:8, demonstrated this in his sermon "Man's Natural Blindness in the Things of Religion."

One will do hard work when he thinks it necessary, but who works hard when it is thought *unnecessary*? Most Christians deem reasoning unreasonable. Reason isn't just a rocking chair business, though even that is harder than it may appear. But defending Christianity rationally means research in dusty libraries (where I, for one, got a heart attack), and among even dustier archeological ruins. These aren't nine-to-five jobs, forty hours a week. Apologetics is a lifetime endeavor for many, and the object of study for others. Meanwhile, for every answer Christians give, the doubters are ready with two more questions. It is just not commonsensical, not to mention reasonable, when the whole apologetical enterprise is unnecessary.

Second, few think about your conclusions and fewer still follow your arguments. You do it all for people, most of whom wonder why you do it at all. Their interest is elsewhere. You are accused of elaborately answering questions people aren't even asking.

Third, you stir up more opposition than you make