

**Summary of *The Only True Apologetic* by Charles Moore:**

Like Van Til before him, Charles Moore rejects the classical method of defending Christianity. But to a greater extent than most others, Moore places his emphasis completely away from what is commonly viewed as apologetics. Instead of explaining how the Christian faith should be defended in an argument or what are the best tactics, Moore's thesis is that the best apologetic is not a formal defense of the faith, but a lifestyle. If Christians would just *behave* like Christians, they would bring far more to the faith than by having the best argument.

Moore begins his work by telling the reader about his seminary roommate Tim. Tim's faith was at first strengthened by his studies, because he learned of the incontrovertible evidence in favor of Christianity. Fresh from this assuredness in his faith, he got married and went off to work in the ministry. Not long afterward, however, his faith dwindled. He found himself falling back into that which, just a few years earlier, he was certain was wrong. Tim's problem was not that he didn't know the reasonable arguments for Christianity, but because he had not lived with Christians who acted like a Christian should. In short, he had plenty of head knowledge, but no experience. Thus he knew in his head that Christianity made the most sense, yet the fact that he rarely witnessed any outworking of it led him to become disillusioned. His faith suffered because all he had experienced was the strictly reason-based belief system taught in his seminary.

Moore uses this example to show how impractical the common method of apologetics is in actually encouraging conversion or faith. He does not deny the

importance of *knowing* why Christianity is reasonable, but he denies that it is of any real value in bringing others to the faith. It cannot even sustain someone's faith without being supplemented by experience, as shown in the example of Tim. To Moore, Christianity is not only best conveyed through actions rather than arguments... it cannot even be treated as a worldview. "Christianity as a worldview is essentially gnostic. [...] It reduces Christianity to metaphysics. But Christianity is essentially about discipleship" (41). There are plenty of worldviews for a non-Christian to choose from, it is the Christian lifestyle that will make it stand out. "Christianity is not determined by its ability to explain the world, but by the church's power to transform the world" (41). In other words, non-Christians can and will be won not by beating them in a debate, but by behaving in a way that runs opposite to the world. Moore is an advocate of Christians who stand in the gap, who go against the flow, who are witnesses just by showing love for others. A great Christian apologist, to use that term, is not he who has the most eloquent argument in defense of Christianity, but he who represents Christ on earth through his actions and behavior.

Moore certainly makes some important points. As interesting as "The Great Debate" between Dr. Bahnsen and Dr. Stein is, it is doubtful that many atheists will be converted as a result of the discussion. An atheist and Christian can argue all day about whose belief is most reasonable, but as Van Til and Richard Pratt pointed out, Christianity only makes sense to a Christian. Thus, arguing why Christianity makes sense with a non-Christian is futile. Instead, we should reach them in a method they *do* understand – lifestyle. An atheist will not care about Christianity if it does not appear to have a positive affect on the lives of those who hold to it. Thus, we Christians must draw

others by being different from the world, by showing love to others, by being selfless and by giving up that which the world prizes. It is when non-Christians see us loving our enemies that they will stop and take notice. Their interest in Christianity will be piqued by results, not by how reasonable a belief system it is.

Thus, I do agree with Moore that the way to spread Christianity is not found in complex syllogisms or profound metaphysical proofs but in these simple words from Scripture: “love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you” (Luke 6:27b-28). *This* is how we fulfill the great commission – by showing how Christianity has transformed our lives. However, I do not completely dismiss the classical arguments as worthless, for I believe that they can be of great use to a Christian and strengthen his faith. The reason Tim strayed from Christianity was not because of the reasonable arguments for Christianity, but because that was all he had. Within the context of an active, practicing Christian life, the proofs for God and the other logical arguments can be helpful in giving us yet more confidence in our beliefs.

Additionally, there are a couple of possible ways that someone could counter Moore’s method. First, his argument applies to more than just Christianity. Like the classical arguments which could be said about many non-Christian gods, Moore’s argument could apply to several other religions. Mormonism, especially: they are some of the nicest, most friendly people you’ll meet. They understand that this method of evangelizing is effective. Other religions that involve works for salvation could also come across to unbelievers as attractive religions. True, these faiths will not actually impact the person’s life like Christianity because they do not inspire good out of God-

given love but out of training and/or hoping for salvation. But to the non-Christian a Mormon's good deed and a Christian's good deed are equally impressive. Secondly, not all non-Christians will be impressed by a Christ-like lifestyle. For example, a Christian who is righteously outspoken against abortion or homosexuality would be noticeably different from the rest of the world, but would be viewed by the non-Christian not as a hero, but as an intolerant fanatic. Still, this does not necessarily pose a serious problem to Moore's argument, for the non-Christian's impression could yet be changed if the Christian treats the homosexual or the mother who just had an abortion with kindness. In other words: hate the sin, love the sinner.

In conclusion, Moore's points are very important. While I think he goes to an extreme in his dismissal of the classical arguments, I do agree that they are ultimately useless in bringing others to realize the veracity of Christianity. The best defense of Christianity is indeed through a Christ-like lifestyle. Yet reasoned arguments are still important. Not only do they serve to cement our own faith – they are necessary to differentiate us from the other work-producing religions.