

Heinrich Fries, From Apologetics to Fundamental Theology 57-68

p 57 "It (apologetics) came to regard itself as the justification of one's own position and the rebuttal of another's position. This conception was most clearly in evidence during the centuries of inter-confessional dispute. Imbedded within a Christian culture and social order, apologetics felt ~~xxxxif~~ that its task was to vindicate one's own denominational beliefs and to point up the error in the position of other Christian confessions."

"The social order of that day was still Christian. Belief in God and Christianity was taken for granted. Against this backdrop, each denomination felt it had to articulate and stress the inter-confessional differences. Only by polemic and debate, presumably, could it preserve and reconfirm the truth of its own faith."

p 57 "Today however neither belief in God nor Christian adherence can be presumed from the start." To remain engaged in the old procedures would be anachronistic.

p58X "... theologians can no longer treat men's real fundamental questions as they were often treated in the past. They cannot tackle them 'apologetically', ~~xx~~ regarding them as error, apostasy, sinfulness."

"Today the main concern is not to rebut error. It is to create a basis for discussion, to open up doors, to listen and ask questions, and to seek answers to these questions."

"One of the ~~xx~~ characteristics of the old-style apologetics was that it regarded the truth it was defending as an unassailable fortress.... It does not ask itself whether there might be points of common agreement, nor does it ~~xxxxx~~ see the possibility that the other side might pose some valid and unanswered questions to one's own position."

"By virtue of its approach and methodology, the old-style apologetics is mainly concerned to... articulate both positions in neat formulas and theses, so that they can be handled more easily. This involves the danger of not giving due consideration to the personal decision involved in the act of faith or to the person of the believer. It also involves the danger that the believer himself is made part of the antagonistic conceptual picture. As a result there is often a tendency to turn the opposing party into a straw man ...

p 59 "... we let the other person set the theme, and then we simply react to what he has said. Our response is not made from the depths of our own belief or in real dialogue with the other person, but in deliberate opposition to him. Such an approach is ultimately based on an optimistic confidence in the power of proofs and demonstrations, a confidence that is much questioned today. Underlying it is the attitude that only lack of intelligence or deliberate ill will could reject the validity of our demonstration

"This attitude forgets that faith itself would mean nothing if it were simply the result of clear-cut proofs and demonstrations. It is worlds apart from another legitimate function of faith: the possibility of pondering the faith, making it understandable, and working out answers to the question which man himself represents.

p 59 "Foundations here mean the basic presuppositions /60/ which show that faith is possible, that it is a serious question, and that it may provide the answers men are looking for."

p 60 "... in the context of the modern critical outlook, these very proofs (from miracles, fulfilled prophecy, Church signum DS 3013) have become problematical, and they pose difficulties for the faith. They are not insoluble problems, but their probative force is not what it used to be."

p 61 Summary professions of faith: Rom 10 9; 1 Th 1 9.10; Vat II De act. Missionali eccl, n 13; Rahner Schriften VIII 159 ff.

p 61 Second meaning of fundamental theology "It is based on this simple consideration that the object and content of faith (whatever it is to be) and the act of faith itself are possible only if they have a real and intrinsic and primeval connection with man and his reality... The tenets of faith must strike man in such a way that he is real in them and finds himself in an authentic encounter. In this encounter, man should really come to /62/ understand himself; he should find himself and the answers to his questions. Otherwise, faith is simply ideology." (it. BL)

p 62 "... faith is one of man's basic possibilities and actions -- in so far as it essentially means 'I believe in you' and not 'I believe that'

p 62 Faith is the way in which I encounter a person ~~and~~ and enter ~~him~~ into communion with him, the way in which I move out of myself and come to ~~x~~ rely on another. It is also the way in which I can come to know another person at his deepest level. I gain this access to another person only in so far~~x~~ as he reveals himself to me. That he can do this is a sign that he is free and capable of communicating himself, and if he does ~~#~~ do this, it is an expression of love."

1 "Faith, as encounter with another and as commitment to him, is the foundation for faith as belie~~x~~ in a specific content."

"When faith is erroneously construed as a substitute for knowledge, it necessarily becomes more constricted as the scope of our knowledge broadens; it dies slowly of strangulation.

p 63 "It is not a superfluous addition to our life, but something which touches our very core and gives meaning to our existence."

"Now this (the absence of the old presuppositions) does not mean that contemporary man has no access to the reality we call God. But today man finds this access to God in himself and in self-reflection. Man experiences unconditioned resp~~x~~onsibility, absolute dictates of conscience, radical self-surrender and love. He encounters the consolat^aion of trust, the call to recon~~x~~ciliation, and the obligation of universal brotherhood. He comes to realize that he is at the disposal of another, that he is indebted to another for many gifts, that he is the recipient more than the author of many things. In suffering, tragedy and death he experiences his limitations and his passivity."

"All these experiences point man to a beyond outside himself. It is not a geographical beyond out there, but a beyond that is ~~X~~ 'present in the very midst of human life' (Dietrich Bonhoeffer). It approaches us unconditionally (Paul Tillich)~~x~~, and we meet it /64/ as soon as we are courageous enough to stop running ~~x~~ away from ourselves.

X "Thus interpersonal human faith does not and cannot provide us with an absolute, unconditional belief in another, even though it points in that direction. This absolute claim upon man, which represents the very core of man himself, cannot be subsumed under the attributes of the human person as such. It cannot be ranged alongside human autonomy, freedom, love, self-communication, and self-revelation."

p 64 "The reality of God is suggested to man in the phenomena mentioned above. But they exhaust neither God's ~~many~~ capabilities nor the reality of man. We cannot say that it is not possible for man to experience further encounters or communications from God. Why? Because man is an open-ended being with no sharply defined limits. The unlimited range of his questioning process ~~is~~ indicates this. Behind his questions there always lies something further toward which they are pointed.

Now this means that the religions of the world, as expressions of man's ~~many~~ orientations toward God, are markedly ambivalent, ambiguous and vague --, not to mention the fact that there can be abuses of religion. Conscience too as summons and response (G Ebeling) is ever open to a more concrete ~~and~~ articulation and a more decisive word; this is especially true because man often 'holds back' (Rom 1 18) and falsifies the truth which conscience provides. Finally we must note the mute dumbness ~~which~~ which man faces in the most decisive questions of his existence. All these experiences transform man into a listener, open ^{to} ~~and~~ yet to another word from himself or from someone else and waiting expectantly for it."

"If there is to be some divine self-disclosure to man, it can come only in the realm of history..."

p 67 "What is the difference between the believer and the unbeliever? It is not that the former accepts things uncritically while the latter does not; it is simply that the former does not reject the Christian faith out of hand, but allows it to encounter him as the decisive ^{reality} and summons. It is not that the ~~is~~ believer has blind faith while the unbeliever opts for intellectual honesty; it is that the unbeliever chooses to remain skeptical, to avoid opting for anything, while the believer makes a responsible option for faith and tries to make it a real part of his life."

In closing, we should note that the questions confronted here are of the utmost ecumenical relevance."