

# APOLOGIA

... always be ready to give a defense [Greek, *apologia*]  
to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you ... 1 PETER 3:15

## Counting the Cost of Discipling

### Building a balanced Christian library

BY DAVID ASPINALL

**T**HE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP is Dietrich Bonhoeffer's most famous work. It is read even by evangelicals completely unsympathetic to Bonhoeffer's views. Conservatives can admire Bonhoeffer for at least one thing: his death at the hands of the Nazi regime proved he was willing to live out to their natural conclusion the principles laid out in *The Cost of Discipleship*.

We who consider ourselves more 'biblical' than Bonhoeffer in our vision of what it means to be Christian would do well to ask ourselves, and each other, some soul-scouring questions. First, since we consider it self-evident that *evangelical* includes commitment to evangelism, how committed are we to discipleship? Since the cups we seek to fill can only rise to the level we ourselves attain, how full is our vessel? Our own attainment in discipling others will obviously be limited



Dietrich Bonhoeffer

by the level of our discipleship, measured both by our commitment and our understanding of the faith we are attempting to communicate. So, how competent are we as disciples? And if we presume to teach others the faith of Christ, how competent are we as disciplers?

We evangelicals expend much energy on evangelism and mission. We take seriously the Lord's last command, *make disciples*. But let us adopt a metaphor of Paul to test our effectiveness as disciplers. *Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air.* (1 Cor. 9:26, TNIV) Are we running aimlessly? Are we fighting like blind boxers, wasting energy waving at the air?

### The Cost of Incompetence

I would suggest that there is a catastrophic cost to our non-commitment to discipleship. If some should immediately object that we ARE committed to both discipleship and discipling, then I will change my suggestion to clarify a necessary distinction. Simply put, commitment does not necessarily imply competence. And even competence may not be enough if our ambitions outstrip our abilities.

Many Christians have marked skills in running businesses, balancing budgets, designing programs and projects, even churches. If we have achieved competence, even excellence, in such areas, we have likely paid the price to get there. A few years at college and a few more years in post-graduate education are the normal cost of excellence in any field. And if one wishes to remain competent in any professional field, the assumed cost is commitment to ongoing education, perhaps hours a week of reading and discussion with our professional peers, till we retire from our career, content with self and status – a life well done.

Alas, compare that standard for competence and/or excellence in the professional world with the standard within the church. Sure, we demand a degree or two of our pastor. But if we aspire to responsibility in our local assembly, what do we demand of ourselves? If we consider a doctor irresponsible, even downright negligent, if he does not keep up with the latest medical information, how do we judge ourselves for our neglect of the food the Lord provides His church, a diet that amounts to a veritable avalanche of culinary delights in the last generation?

I have visited many churches and inspected more than a few church libraries. I can tell you without exaggeration: *there are very few churches with a well-stocked refrigerator*. Many churches have capable 'chefs'. Very few have nutritionists on staff. Very few, it appears, consider the Lord's table an important priority in the congregation budget.

What is the cost of our 'fast food' addiction? First, an incredible lack of insight in spiritual judgement and priorities. We can build vast sanctuaries, but not deep saints. We can find energy for political polemics and agendas, but have no passion for social injustice in our own cities. We can weep over starving children in Darfur, but shed not a tear for North America's youth, starving to spiritual death because the food we offer them is most often ill-prepared, sloppily served and, worst of all, not that healthy to begin with. Alas, what are we eating ourselves? If it has a generous lacing of sugar and sodium chloride, we are content.

Are there any other costs of our neglect and/or incompetence? Incredible waste. Churches divided from each other, divided within. Energies expended duplicating 'ministry', outreach, missions. Over-extended budgets and mortgages, justified by our insistence that our peculiar 'vision' demands our continued 'separation unto the Lord'. Division which is a visible denial of the 'holy catholic church', affirming with our lips what we deny with our hearts and hands.

A third cost of incompetent discipling: the world is paying no attention to us. If all our energies and expenditures are beating the air, are we at all accountable to the 'God of all flesh' for the lives of those who don't listen to our 'gospel'? Paul said to the Ephesian elders that he was *innocent of the blood of everyone* by virtue of his faithfully laying before saint and sinner *the whole will of God* (Acts 20:27). How are we doing in setting 'the whole will [counsel] of God' before each other and our increasingly anti-Christian communities? And how would we react to 'the whole will of God' if it were thrust before us? Would we even recognize the real meal, after so long an addiction to its substitutes?

## The Cost of Competence

If incompetence costs us thus dearly – in division, in waste, in unfruitful, even futile efforts – what is the cost of competence? Let us consider first

what might be considered competence in discipling others.

First, the *purity* of the provision we place on the table. If the table we set for consumption is contaminated, it matters not one whit if we be the greatest cooks in all creation. We might even succeed in making what is essentially unpalatable into the most irresistible of dishes.

Second, the *palatability* of what we present for public consumption. If our culinary confections are not suitably cooked, dressed and spiced, the nutritive value of our offering might be for naught. Few will wish to test our offering if the first taste is unsavoury.

Third, the *potency* of the meal we offer. Delicious food cannot create healthy people. Protein, carbohydrates, vitamins can. And let us not forget minerals and trace elements which we all need to enjoy vibrant health. Who is competent to create a balanced diet?

In the western church we have learned to subsist on the most restricted of diets. We are satisfied with quelling hunger pangs, rather than achieving good health. We mistake motion for life, emotion for vitality. While our diet is, by habit, deficient of many of the building blocks of good health – *the whole will of God* the faithful pastor Paul fed his flock – we cannot hope to avoid the constant threat of impurity, unpalatability and impotency in our efforts at evangelizing and discipling.

What can we do to protect ourselves and our spiritual dependents? First, let us evaluate our sources and resources. Most people in western democracies get their information from the media, especially television and internet. Most of their opinions about EVERYTHING are filtered and controlled by the media. Their opinions and sentiments are also to a great extent controlled by their sources. If their sources are biased and unbalanced, so too will be those who depend upon them.

But if "we are what we eat", then how can we get out of the trap in which most non-specialists find themselves? We are increasingly like the poor dog under the table, scrounging whatever scraps drop in our vicinity. This is an age of specialization. As the 20<sup>th</sup> century ended, most of us were in a very precarious position in trying to understand the world we live in. Even specialists (ie *scholars*) are not exempt from this truth: *we know more and more about less and less*. 'Facts' and theories are confused, understanding decreases as 'knowledge' exponentially increases, even the notion of relevance swept away before a tsunami of

trivia. How can the concerned Christian ever navigate through the ocean of information which engulfs the modern “consumer”?

Can we separate the wheat from the chaff? Well the good news is that other seekers have anticipated the need and risen to meet it. In secular circles that means there have appeared numerous helps as our “information age” progressed, helping the average guy find the best books in important categories. The best in literature, both classical and modern. The best in history, with recommendations for all periods. The best in music and recordings, classical and modern, with jazz, blues, rock, country etc each having their own “What to listen to ..” volumes.

In Christian circles we have also seen a welcome profusion of works on “best books”, authored often by famous Christian educators and scholars. These books will normally suggest priority recommendations in the major categories of Christian study: Old and New Testament, theology, church history, worship, missions, apologetics and much more.

So we need not shrug in existential despair. It does not take extreme effort to find 2 or 3 recommendations in any category of knowledge we seek to explore. The problem, it seems, is more that we have become mentally lazy. It is far easier to hit a search button on the computer than to take the trouble to find reputable sources. Far easier to let a search engine prioritize than to learn to do it ourselves. But there is a cost attached to this online ‘research’ habit. At best, we will find sources we will not find elsewhere. At worst, we find sources which will not be high on any objective list of reliable, unbiased witnesses. And often even Christian sources will be just as, if not more, unbalanced than the sources conservative Christians would never touch because of their “liberal bias”.

Another problem with online research, and it is a huge one: whereas it is possible to find “Christian classics” now in the public domain from commendable evangelical websites, it is not at all recommendable to do Bible research exclusively by this method. Devotional classics, say on Genesis and Luke, yes. But where the subject or Bible passage generates questions respecting authorship, translation, cultural background etc, older sources can be misleading, even catastrophically misinformed. One needs up to date, modern reference works and commentaries to do even adequate work in Bible research and exposition. And these works

will almost never be online, unless in expensively downloadable versions. The best works will cost a fair amount to buy, and a lot of time to utilize properly. In other words, we must PAY for competent sources – at least the new ones. Again, if this idea offends, how seriously do we take the sacred principle, “the worker is worthy of his wages”? Therefore we must think seriously about our lead question: when doing research in Bible and related areas, are we willing to count the cost of competence?

So competence has minimal requirements on its price tag: two or 3 reliable, substantial works on the given subject. You might get away with one excellent source, but there are almost always multiple perspectives on the important issues. A Christian need not espouse more than one position, but he better be respectfully aware of the others if he wants to communicate knowledgeably and sympathetically.

## The Cost of Excellence

In any area of human knowledge, whether fibre optics or theology, the sum total of understanding is multiplying exponentially. Some will stress that the faith does not change – Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. True. Yet the expression of the Christian faith DOES change. The early apologists and theologians of the church, most of whom are now available *free* online, are still able to help us immensely in our task of making disciples. But Christ keeps raising up new teachers and thinkers, whose peculiar gifts are expressly attuned to the needs of the modern age – and its successor, the post-modern era.

The communication of the faith to the people of this age demands acute apologetic skills. Never since the days of Caesar have the forces of the enemy been so militant and so dangerous. But never have the resources of the church been so abundant. Competent apologists are welcome. There is no shortage of work. There is also, unfortunately, no shortage of incompetent and/or mean-spirited ‘defenders of the faith’ in the North American media and on the internet.

So competence is requisite. Excellence, however, is still better. And what is the price of excellence?

We hear talk of ‘prohibitive prices’. One could wish that the price of doing popular apologetics and media ministry in North America was

considered 'prohibitive'. It is far too easy for irresponsible, ill-prepared and psychically and spiritually maladjusted sorts to get an audience. The price paid by many pop-preachers, apologists and 'prophecy teachers' is too often merely the dollars they take from the gullible Christian public, dollars then reinvested to keep their 'ministries' on the air milking the cash cow. Too many self-appointed 'teachers of the blind' give no evidence that they have ever read a book outside their own 'school' of interpretation. Too many give indication that they are functionally illiterate, not merely in theological subjects, but even in English.

Cyril J. Barber was librarian for years at Dallas Theological Seminary. He authored what is still one of the most helpful works on Christian bibliography, *The Minister's Library*. In the first paragraph of the introduction to that book, Barber remarks on the fact that it seems the great preachers of the past 200 years invariably had large and well-balanced personal libraries. One of the examples he cites is the most famous preacher in Victorian England, Charles Haddon Spurgeon. The famous Baptist preacher started a college for pastors, and he wrote a book to guide his students in their choice of food with which to nourish their flocks. On the very first page of that work, *Commenting and Commentaries*, Spurgeon answered with withering sarcasm the attitude even of many pastors in his day, who relied on their own wits (or more piously, directly upon the Holy Spirit) for correct understanding of Scripture. Spurgeon said:

In order to be able to expound the Scriptures ... you will need to be familiar with the commentators: ... Of course, you are not such wiseacres as to think or say that you can expound the Scripture without assistance from the works of divine and learned men who have labored before you ... It seems odd that certain men who talk so much of what the Holy Spirit reveals to



themselves, should think so little of what He has revealed to others. *Commenting and Commentaries*, p.1

Would that more preachers, pastors and evangelists shared Spurgeon's passion for the Word – and the spiritual hunger of those faithful men who loved the Word so much that they gave their lives to its exposition.

That is the cost of excellence for the Christian teacher – a life cast upon the altar. *Offer your bodies a living sacrifice ... be transformed by the renewing of your mind.* (Rom. 12:1,2) If the cost of competence is the selection and close perusal of a handful of choice books on your selected subject – a dollar expenditure of a day's wage or less, and an expenditure of time and mental labour of perhaps a few weeks – if that is the cost of competence, then what is the cost of excellence? Well, Spurgeon taught through virtually the entire Bible in his 58 years. We have shelves full of his sermons, a rich and tasty harvest for all generations. And did he 'wing it' in preparing these sermons? In his *Commenting and Commentaries* Spurgeon lists 58 works on Genesis, 55 on Job, and no less than 195 volumes on the Psalms. With virtually all of these works he seems acquainted well enough to evaluate their worth; with a large proportion he is obviously intimately familiar. He lists and annotates 44 works on Romans, 42 on Hebrews. All in all Spurgeon evaluates 1437 works. This number only covers books which directly bear upon the exposition of Scripture. We have less clear light on Spurgeon's familiarity with non-Biblical subjects. But if we judge just by the wealth and range, the wit, literacy and often poetic lilt of his sermons, the "prince of preachers" left few areas of human thought, art and culture outside his range of resources.

What was the consequence of Spurgeon's diligence, his devotion to the art of teaching the Word? First, an unprecedented circulation for his printed sermons. Second, an audience which transcended the boundaries of evangelical/non-evangelical, even believer/unbeliever! Spurgeon's voice reached virtually every sphere of English life, and crossed seas and continents. Everybody – rich and poor, educated and unlearned, pious or just curious – wanted to hear this fervent Christian, often referred to in his generation as the most eloquent and inspiring voice in the English-speaking world. His works are still treasured – and plundered – by preachers who value the art of teaching.

## The Cost of Scholarship

Charles Haddon Spurgeon lived, of course, at the cusp of the modern era of Bible scholarship. Archaeology was a science in its infancy in 1870. Bible criticism, both 'lower' criticism – having to do with manuscripts, translation and external factors influencing the Bible as we have it – and too 'higher' criticism – dealing with more subtle historical and interpretive issues – all such Bible criticism was new and suspect when Spurgeon's influence was at its peak.

But within a generation the advancing tide of unbelief had made the formerly arcane sciences of hermeneutics and Bible study in the original languages a practical necessity, especially for pastors and frontline Christian workers engaged in dialogue with the doubting modern mind. 100 years after Spurgeon's heyday, say about 1970, even the formerly fiercely resistant forces of fundamentalism reluctantly resigned themselves to the new reality. Conservative schools were now teaching the finer shadings and subtleties of hermeneutics, the diversity of biblical literature, various systems of apologetics, eschatology and methods of reconciling science with Scripture.

A look at the bibliography of a representative evangelical Bible commentary published since the 1980s will mark the contrast with Spurgeon's century. Let us take, for example, Douglas Moo's magisterial work on Romans, published in 1996. This work of 1012 pages has a bibliography which lists over 80 works on Romans, together with dozens of other works consulted. Of the 80 works on Romans which Moo utilizes, he selected 12 as "constant witnesses", "exegetical 'sparring partners'". What will be the cost of such intellectual pains? What will it take in work hours to familiarize oneself with even the *existing* literature on Romans, not to mention to keep abreast of that research and meaty meditation steadily flowing from theological journals? If a Douglas Moo were to read one book on the New Testament per day, would he ever succeed in catching up?

The sobering answer is NO. This age of hyper-specialization has made it impossible to create an actual "Bible scholar" in our generation. The literature even on the New Testament is beyond the scope of any one scholar. There is no way that even the most dedicated student can hope to master much beyond his special area of study. Raymond Brown and

C.H. Dodd, for example, can become world class scholars on the John literature. Joseph Fitzmyer and F.F. Bruce can be experts on the works of Luke and Paul respectively. But no single scholar can be of world reputation on all aspects of even the New Testament, let alone the Old Testament and theology.

The days when any of us could master the intricacies and subtleties of the 100s of disputed points related to Bible study and evangelism and apologetics are over – if they ever existed at all. We are all forced to rely on experts for the fine points of Bible interpretation. If the Devil is in the details, all of us are bound to have a devil of a time doing effective field work *without heavy reliance on the scholars*. Therefore we have to know whom to consult, which 'experts' are consistently dependable, which are of world reputation and which are in fact self-appointed, and therefore without the accountability which the exposure of scholarly interaction guarantees. But since not even an 'expert' is infallible, we had better line up at least 2 or 3 witnesses on any disputed issue or text BEFORE we step out on any fragile limb of interpretation.

## The Cost of Competence for You and Me

How then will we meet the challenge of discipling, given the intimidating acceleration of this "age of information"? First, now that we have considered even the limitations of scholars, let us stop to confront our own. The average literate, diligent Christian worker might read, say, one book per week. If he chooses well, he might therefore read 50 good books per year, 500 per decade. Within a lifetime he might reasonably grapple with 2000 worthwhile works. We quickly confront a major problem. If there are, for instance, 5 to 10 "indispensable" works on the major Bible books – Genesis, Psalms, Isaiah, the gospels, Acts, Romans and a few others – you and I will spend much of our lifetime just becoming and remaining well-read on the Bible itself. Then there are the many categories of theology, apologetics and church history. The literature on cult apologetics, for example, has exploded in the last generation. Just the recommendable material on Jehovah's Witnesses numbers in the dozens of volumes. On the inspiration of the Bible, there are over 100 influential scholarly works, as many good 'popular' treatments, and this without counting the more sensational and

polemical works which, unfortunately, too often are the sole resources of the less discerning Christian reader. Research in church history now poses a dilemma similar to Bible study. If you wish to be well up on the Puritans, let us say, there are dozens of basic overviews, biographies and specialized subjects, such as the impact of Puritanism upon the subsequent history of America. Then there are, blessedly, scores of weighty reprints of the Puritans themselves. Spurgeon would rejoice that works that had fallen into oblivion even by 1870 are again available – even to download free! The downside, however, is this. One can conceivably be expert on the Puritans. But you cannot be expert on the Puritans AND their near neighbours in time, the Reformers. Nor can you be an expert on the Reformers AND the early church fathers (the historical science we call *patristics*.)

The evangelical printing presses of North America overflow with the efforts of so-called *discernment* ministries. This literature, especially concerned as it must be with the errors of heterodoxy, is particularly susceptible to the inherent vulnerabilities created by this era of hyper-specialization. To be expert in Islam, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormonism, the New Age, means that you must make a trade off in knowledge. What must one sacrifice in exegetical and theological expertise to become a recognized 'expert' in 'discernment ministry'? Well, to be at all qualified for such a role one must be well-acquainted with dozens of critical works on cults, comparative religion, worldviews, apologetics and dogmatics. If the 'expert' goes a step further, as he inevitably must to be a credible witness in, say, cult research, and acquaints himself with the source materials of the group(s) he is critiquing, we add to his workload necessary familiarity with at least dozens of primary source documents. With such a research burden, what time does the 'discernment expert' have left for the MOST necessary tools of all true ministry – intimate knowledge of Old and New Testaments, history, historical theology and the history of ideas, ie philosophy and hermeneutics, the science of Bible interpretation? At the cutting edge of 'discernment ministry', truly the 'expert' knows more and more about less and less. In short, he sacrifices breadth for depth, scope for specificity, understanding for knowledge.

But to sacrifice understanding for knowledge, or more precisely, *data specificity*, is also to sacrifice what the Bible calls wisdom. The name Solomon has become synonymous with wisdom. Yet Solomon was no

specialist. First Kings makes clear the reason Solomon's wisdom became renowned to "the ends of the earth". *He spoke 3000 proverbs [those practical and theological insights contained in the book of Proverbs] and his songs were 1005. And he spoke of trees, from the cedar tree of Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springs out of the wall. He spoke also of animals and birds, of creeping things and of fish.*

When the Lord answered Solomon's prayer for wisdom, clearly the answer the Lord gave was not limited to an unprecedented grasp of the law of Moses and the history of Israel – in other words, a knowledge of the Bible as it existed 3000 years ago. It was not theological wisdom ONLY which brought the educated and prominent of all nations to Jerusalem. *And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand of the seashore.* Solomon's wisdom gave him something transcending knowledge, even intellectual understanding – largeness of heart. That which we would call sympathy, compassion was even more important to the biblical concept of wisdom than the acquisition and organization of facts.

## 'Largeness of heart' and Hard Choices

We start with the problem. If you have to decide on the 2000 books you will read in this lifetime, how will you break up your reading schedule? If you 'major' in New Testament, you will want to read at least 200-300 works in that area. To 'major' in apologetics a similar sacrifice will be necessary. Was it not Solomon himself who said "of the making of many books there is no end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh" (Eccl. 12:12)? The choice of sources today on virtually ANY subject is intimidating, and choosing the WRONG sources can be not only 'wearisome', but downright dangerous. Yet Solomon is also remembered for this assurance: "My son, if you receive my words and treasure my commands within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of YHWH, and find the knowledge of God. For YHWH gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding ...".

The search is not vain, the quest is not pointless. But in our age the separation of wheat from chaff is far more difficult than in past ages. The libraries of the ancient world held at most thousands of volumes. The great university libraries of today preserve millions. If you wish to be 'expert' on apologetics, you will sacrifice Bible and theological expertise. If you wish to specialize in church history, choose your subcategory. There are 100s of works on just the Puritans, numerically even more on the Reformation, and a bottomless well on the early church fathers. But while it is virtually impossible today to be expert in more than ONE field of human knowledge, it IS possible to be competent in many areas – IF you choose your resources wisely. Read 2 or 3 good sources on most subjects and you will be protected against being seriously misled. You might even serve as a guide to others, though competence should be modestly aware of its limitations, and seek to point beyond itself.

## Building a balanced library

Below we have a chart which distinguishes areas of knowledge which should be of some concern to the Christian worker today. Although virtually all categories of learning find a place somewhere among these subjects, special weight is given to those general categories which most impact upon Christian witness. The chart covers 26 major subjects, over 230 subcategories. Using this chart we may evaluate our competence in various fields. Here is a suggested method by which we might measure our level of competence and understanding :

### EVALUATING OUR OWN MENTORING SKILLS

SCORE    LEVEL OF COMPETENCE

- 10    world class scholar; will have read 1000s of works in chosen field (eg New Testament), 100s on specialized subjects (eg the gospel of John); this level demands full-time commitment
- 9    university or seminary level professor; similar numbers to above, but probably less specialized; needless to say, full-time commitment
- 8    well-read; not content with 2 or 3 good resources;

- 7    maintenance requires ongoing engagement with subject  
competent; relatively objective, has wrestled with and retained the substance of 2 or 3 good witnesses in subject area
- 6    perhaps passable; obtains most information from undifferentiated sources, likely TV or internet
- 5    opinionated – among the 'dangerous things' created by 'a little knowledge'; may even be obsessed with subject, but most knowledge comes from flagrantly biased sources
- 4    general public; if interested at all in subject, pick up scraps of information without discrimination or focused effort

With these levels as an approximate guide, evaluate your own present skills. If this proves difficult to judge, rate the quality of your personal library and/or resources in the specific area.

CODE	CATEGORY	SCORE
AC	Authority, apologetics - Culture, Arts	
AE	Authority, apologetics - Evidences	
AG	Authority, apologetics - General, Intro	
AM	Authority, apologetics - Miracles, Resurrection	
AP	Authority, apologetics - Prophecy	
AS	Authority, apologetics - Social Issues, Ethics	
AT	Authority, apologetics - Theodicy, Suffering	
AY	Authority, apologetics - Philosophy	
BA	Bible - Authority, Origin, Canon, Apocrypha	
BB	Bible - Background	
BC	Bible - Commentaries	
BG	Bible - General, Intro	
BH	Bible - Hermeneutics, Criticism, Study	
BI	Bible - Inspiration, Revelation	
BL	Bible - Language	
BP	Bible - Personalities, Characters	
BR	Bible - Reference	
BS	Bible - Miscellaneous Special Subjects	
BT	Bible - Text, Translation, History	
BV	Bible - Versions	
CE	Church - Evangelism, Missions	
CG	Church - General, Intro, unity, ecumenism	
CH16	Church History - 16 <sup>th</sup> Century, Reformation	
CH17	Church History - 17 <sup>th</sup> Century, Puritans	

CODE	CATEGORY	SCORE
CH18	Church History -18th Century	
CH19	Church History -19th Century	
CH20	Church History -20th Century	
CHB	Church History - Biography	
CHE	Church History - Early Church	
CHG	Church History - General	
CHM	Church History - Middle Ages	
CP	Church - Pastoral, Preaching	
CW	Church - Worship, Sacraments	
DA	Denominations - Anglican, Methodist	
DB	Denominations - Baptist, Brethren	
DC	Denominations - Roman Catholicism	
DL	Denominations - Lutheran, Mennonite, Amish	
DO	Denominations - Orthodox	
DP	Denominations - Pentecostal	
DR	Denominations - Reformed	
E	Evangelism, Preachers	
FA	Film - Actors	
FC	Film - Criticism	
FD	Film - Directors	
FG	Film - General, Reference	
FG	Film - Genres	
FH	Film - History	
FT	Film - Theory, Technique	
G	geography, geology, earth science, environment, atmosphere, climate	
H16	History - 16 <sup>th</sup> century	
H17	History - 17 <sup>th</sup> century	
H18	History - 18 <sup>th</sup> century	
H19	History - 19 <sup>th</sup> century	
H20	History - 20 <sup>th</sup> century	
HA	History - ancient, Egypt, middle east, orient, Greece, Rome	
HG	History - general, historiography	
HM	History - medieval	
IF	Psychology - Freud	
IG	Psychology - general	
IH	Psychology - history	
IJ	Psychology - Jung	
IP	Psychology - popular, Adler, May, Fromm	
JC	Judaica - Christianity & Jews	
JD	Judaica - diaspora	
JG	Judaica, Judaism - general	
JH	Judaica - history of Jews	
JR	Judaica - Judaism, kabbalah, orthodox & reformed	

CODE	CATEGORY	SCORE
JZ	Judaica - Zionism, land of Israel	
K	Children (Kids)	
LA	Literature - American	
LC	Literature - classical	
LC	Literature - criticism	
LE	Literature - English	
LF	Literature - French	
LG	Literature - German	
LI	Literature - intro, general	
LR	Literature - Russian	
LW	Literature - world	
M	Music - opera	
M	Music - popular, jazz, blues, folk	
M	Music - general	
M	Music - history	
M	Music - composers	
M	Music - artists	
M	Music - theory & criticism	
NA	New Testament Authority, Canon	
NB	New Testament Background	
NC	New Testament Commentary	
NEG	New Testament Epistles - General	
NEH	Hebrews	
NEJ	Epistles of James, John	
NEP	Epistles of Peter	
NG	Gospels	
NGH	Gospel Harmonies	
NGJ	John (Gospel)	
NGL	Luke	
NGM	Matthew	
NGP	Mark (Peter)	
NGS	Sermon on the Mount (Lord's Prayer, Beatitudes etc)	
NH	New Testament History	
NHA	Acts	
NI	New Testament Intro, General	
NL	New Testament Language	
NPC	Corinthians	
NPD	Paul - Doctrine	
NPE	Ephesians	
NPF	Colossians, Philemon	
NPG	Galatians	
NPL	Paul - Life	
NPP	Philippians	

CODE	CATEGORY	SCORE
NPR	Romans	
NPT	Thessalonians, Timothy	
NR	Revelation	
NS	New Testament Special Subjects	
NT	New Testament Theology	
OB	Old Testament Background (geography, archaeology)	
OG	Old Testament General, Intro, Survey	
OH	Old Testament History	
OHC	Chronicles	
OHE	Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther	
OHJ	Joshua, Judges, Ruth	
OHK	Kings	
OHS	Samuel, David	
OL	Old Testament Language, Hebrew	
OM	Old Testament Pentateuch (Moses)	
OMD	Deuteronomy	
OME	Exodus	
OMG	Genesis	
OML	Leviticus	
OMN	Numbers	
OP12	Minor Prophets	
OP6	6th Century Prophets (Haggai, Malachi)	
OP7	7th Century Prophets (Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah)	
OP8	8th Century Prophets (Joel, Obadiah, Jonah)	
OPA	Amos	
OPD	Daniel	
OPE	Ezekiel	
OPG	Prophets General, Intro	
OPH	Hosea	
OPI	Isaiah	
OPJ	Jeremiah, Lamentations	
OPM	Micah	
OPZ	Zechariah	
OS	Psalms	
OT	Old Testament Theology	
OWE	Ecclesiastes	
OWG	OT Wisdom General, Intro	
OWJ	Job	
OWP	Proverbs	
OWS	Song of Solomon	
PA	Poetry - American	
PC	Poetry - criticism	
PC	Poetry - ancient, classical	

CODE	CATEGORY	SCORE
PE	Poetry - English	
PF	Poetry - French	
PG	Poetry - German	
PI	Poetry- intro, general	
PM	Poetry - modern	
PW	Poetry - world	
QA	Science - astronomy	
QB	Science - biology	
QC	Science - chemistry	
QG	Science - history, general	
QM	Science - math, numbers, numerics	
QP	Science - physics	
QR	Science & religion	
QT	Science - technology	
RC	Religion - Cults	
RG	Religion - General, Intro	
RH	Religion - Hinduism, Buddhism	
RI	Religion - Islam	
RM	Religion - Myth, primitive	
RN	New Age	
RO	Religion - Occult	
RP	Religion - ancient, paganism	
SE	Social Sciences - Education	
SF	Social Sciences - Family, sex, women & men	
SL	Social Sciences - Language	
SM	Social Sciences - Economics (Money, Business, Advertising)	
SP	Social Sciences - Political science, war	
SR	Social Sciences - Race, Nationalism (fascism, Nazism)	
SS	Social Sciences - general, sociology	
SU	Social Sciences - urban studies	
TA	Theology, Anthropology - Sin, Fall	
TD	Theology - Doctrinal, Systematic	
TGA	God - Attributes	
TGS	God - Holy Spirit	
TGT	God - Trinity	
TH	Theology - Historical	
TI	Theology - Intro	
TM	Theology - Modernism	
TSA	Salvation - Atonement, Cross	
TSE	Salvation - Election, Grace, Predestination, Assurance	
TSF	Salvation - Faith, Justification, Regeneration	
TSG	Salvation - General, Intro	
TSH	Salvation - Holiness, Sanctification	

CODE	CATEGORY	SCORE
UA	Unbelief – atheism	
UC	Unbelief - communism, Marxism	
UN	Unbelief - nihilism, humanism	
UP	Unbelief - postmodernism	
US	Unbelief - superstition, irrational pseudo science, astrology, > new age faith	
VA	Visual arts - architecture	
VP	Visual arts - painting, photography	
VS	Visual arts - sculpture	
VT	Visual arts – theatre, dance	
WA	World - Africa	
WE	World - Europe, Eurasia	
WF	World - far east	
WL	World - Latin America	
WM	World - middle east	
WN	World - North America	
WO	World - Oceania	
WP	World - population	
XD	Christ - Death, Passion	
XG	Christ - General	
XI	Christ - Influence	
XL	Christ - Life	
XM	Christ - Miracles	
XR	Christ - Resurrection	
XT	Christ - Teaching, parables, sermon on mount (> gospels)	
YA	Philosophy - ancient, Greek	
YE	Philosophy - English	
YF	Philosophy - French	
YG	Philosophy - general, history	
YG	Philosophy - German	
YM	Philosophy - modern	
ZA	Eschatology - amillennialism, postmillennialism	
ZD	Eschatology - death, hereafter, hell & heaven, angels	
ZG	Eschatology - general	
ZK	Eschatology - kingdom, Israel, Millennium	
ZL	Eschatology - last days, second coming, tribulation, rapture	
ZP	Eschatology - premillennialism	
ZU	Eschatology - utopianism, futurism	

I would submit that the Christian who takes seriously the admonition of Peter, *know how to give an answer to everyone who asks a reason for the hope within you*, will NOT be content with less than competence. Limitations of time may never allow us to achieve scholarly expertise, or

even ‘well-read’ level of competence, but it is possible to be conversant with most subjects on our list by simply organizing our library and/or other resources with balanced attention.

Those of us who feel that the Lord is calling us to teach *must* first heed well two sobering exhortations from His lips, and another ‘hard saying’ from the Lord’s half-brother James:

1. *Count the cost* (Luke 14:25-33)
2. *You will give an account for every careless word you utter* (Matthew 12:35)
3. *Not many of us should be teachers ... we who teach will be judged with greater strictness* (James 3:1)

Christ gave a simple instruction to the spokesman of the first disciples — *Feed my sheep* — and felt this particular commandment so important that He repeated it 3 times (John 21:15-17). Peter always seemed to have his mouth open. Now he had to realize the responsibility which comes with the gift of ‘tongue’. Whether the sheep we are called to care for are tender young lambs or mature members of the flock, we must therefore take all pains to make sure we feed them *enough* food to keep them healthy, and make sure the food we supply and prepare for them is *pure*. To be able to supply a diet both sufficient and salubrious to those entrusted to us demands of us a knowledge of the Lord’s ‘pantry’.

Let us hear Spurgeon once more:

... Of course, you are not such wiseacres as to think or say that you can expound the Scripture without assistance from the works of divine and learned men who have labored before you ... It seems odd that certain men who talk so much of what the Holy Spirit reveals to themselves, should think so little of what He has revealed to others.

We must therefore be determined to draw upon the “gifts in men” – teachers and pastors – that Christ has given the church for the very reason that He loves the flock and will not see them malnourished, or worse still, given stones or poison instead of bread.