

LUTHERAN APOLOGETICS: *From Our Classrooms and into the World*¹

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“I don’t do apologetics. I just step aside and let God’s Word defend itself.” “Apologetics undermines Scripture’s authority and the Holy Spirit’s work of conversion.” These are two responses Lutherans have offered for not engaging in apologetics. While these sentiments may flow from good intentions, they reveal a misunderstanding of what constitutes biblical (and confessional Lutheran) apologetics. Biblical apologetics (1 Peter 3:15) is always being ready to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope that you have. A challenge to, or a questioning of, the Christian faith calls for apologetics.³ C. F. W. Walther, the great theologian of the Missouri Synod, wrote of the need to confess the truth and oppose error. He wrote,

These fake Christians do not know how hard it is for the bold champions to go public and become targets for the hatred, enmity, slander, scorn, and persecution of people. However, they [the bold champions] cannot help but confess the truth and at the same time oppose error. Their conscience forces them to do this because such behavior is required of them by the Word of God.⁴

Walther did not use the word apologetics in his statement. However, he encouraged us to do what Peter stated in his first epistle, namely, be ready to give a defense of the hope we have. Christians are apologists for the gospel of Jesus Christ. Christians have delivered defenses of the gospel throughout the New Testament era, and there certainly is a need for apologetics today. This morning, then, we will address the topic of Lutheran apologetics. We will consider what Lutheran apologetics is and what it covers, why we need Lutheran apologetics, why it deserves a place in our schools’ curricula, and also how it ties in with our Lord’s commission to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19,20). We will cover biblical apologetics in the following areas:

- What constitutes Lutheran apologetics
- Lutheran theology guides Lutheran apologetics
- The history of apologetics
- Fideism, evidentialism, and presuppositionalism
- Apologetics and the authority of Scripture
- Apologetics and philosophy
- Apologetics and science
- Apologetics, myth, and allegory
- Apologetics and culture
- Apologetics, the law, and human rights
- Apologetics and ethics
- Apologetics, cults, and world religions
- Apologetics in our classrooms

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³ Hereafter, understand all references to apologetics in connection with what Peter described in 1 Peter 3:15 and in connection with the doctrine of Scripture as it is confessed and taught by confessional Lutherans.

⁴ C.F.W. Walther, *Law and Gospel* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2010), 293.

Apologetics and our world-wide mission⁵

What is Lutheran (biblical) apologetics?

The primary Scripture passage which speaks of apologetics is 1 Peter 3:15. In order to keep the passage in its context, I will quote the entire section. Peter wrote:

Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened." But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. (1 Peter 3:8-17; NIV⁶)

This section of Peter's epistle addressed the issue of how to respond to those who have wronged or slandered us because of our faith in Jesus. Let me paraphrase Peter's response: Peter stated, Do not respond to persecution or slander by repaying evil with evil or insult with insult. Rather, respond in a way that is a blessing to those who have spoken evil of you (Psalm 34:12-16). When people speak evil of you, don't let that frighten you. Rather, "... in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord." Give Jesus the place he deserves in your heart. Keep yourselves from sin. Don't give the world any chance to slander either you or Christ. Always be ready to give a defense of the hope you have. Do this with gentleness and respect. In this way, your enemy may be ashamed of his slander. If you suffer for doing what God wants you to do, you are truly blessed.

What is the *hope* we have? Peter defined this earlier in his letter. He wrote:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. (1 Peter 1:3-7)

It should be noted that this hope is not a subjective feeling of the heart. We are not asked to share how we feel about God. Rather, the hope of which Peter wrote is the assurance of

⁵ It should be noted that most of the areas listed here are the areas of study covered by Dr. John Warwick Montgomery in his Academy of Apologetics, Evangelism, and Human Rights at Strasbourg, France. The content in these areas is my own.

⁶ All subsequent Scripture references are from the NIV.

salvation based on the objective facts of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. The Christian faith is founded on these facts. We address these facts every time we confess the ecumenical creeds.

Peter encouraged Christians always to be ready to give a *defense (apologia)* of the hope we have. Concerning this *apologia*, R.C.H. Lenski wrote:

Let whoever will constitute himself a judge, the Christian is never to evade or to put him off, he is to be ready to present his case, his defense, to render account as to what his hope embraces, and as to why he holds it in his heart. We may say that he is to be ready always to testify, to correct ignorance about Christ, to spread the gospel light, to win others for Christ, to justify his own hope, and as Peter adds here (v. 16), to silence evil speakers with his good conduct which certainly speaks for itself and puts slander to shame.⁷

There are many examples of this *apologia* in the New Testament. Paul presented a *defense (apologia)* of his mission to the Gentiles before the mob at the temple in Jerusalem (Acts 22:1). Paul spoke of being in jail because of his *defense* of the gospel (Philippians 1:16). In Ephesus, Alexander tried to make a *defense* (here the verb *apologeomai* is used) of the gospel, but was shouted down by the mob of idol makers (Acts 19:33). Paul said that those who deny God's existence are without a *defense (anapologetos)* (Romans 1:20).

Although the word *apologia* is not used in John's Gospel in connection with Jesus' discourses, he certainly gave a defense of his claims as Messiah. The same thing could be said of the discourse with Pilate concerning Jesus' office of king (John 18). When Peter and John stood before the Sanhedrin, they gave a defense of the hope they had (Acts 4). When Luther stood before the Diet of Worms and declared, "Here I stand," he did exactly what Peter stated he should do. He gave a defense of the gospel. The same could be said of Luther's defense of *sola Scriptura, sola gratia, sola fidei*. This was apologetics.

It is evident, then, that apologetics is Christocentric in nature. It flows from sanctifying Christ in our hearts. It gives a defense of the hope that we have in Christ. This hope is objective, not subjective in nature. The Christian faith is based on the historical events of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. Apologetics is a natural outgrowth of our faith in Christ. Christians do apologetics. Apologetics has often been called "pre-evangelism." I would rather put it this way: Apologetics may involve "pre-evangelism" (removing obstacles which prevent us from sharing the gospel). However, Lutheran (biblical) apologetics *is* evangelism.

Lutheran theology guides Lutheran apologetics.

We know that when we give people a defense of the gospel, we will not always have the time or opportunity to set forth the whole counsel of God. We will often have to deal with the basics of the Christian faith or specific issues. Yet, in connection with our study of Lutheran apologetics, it is good for us to review the Lutheran worldview which we have from Scripture. This will remind us where we come from, and where we intend to go, with our apologetics. It will help us to evaluate what we find in the study of apologetics, to utilize what is good, and to recognize what does not harmonize with God's Word.

This review will not be exhaustive. Rather, it will highlight a few salient points we need to stress as we give a defense of the hope we have.

Lutheran theology is Christocentric. We begin with Christ, who he is and what he has done for our salvation. We stress his active and his passive obedience together with his resurrection

⁷ R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Epistles of St. Peter, St. John, and St. Jude* (Columbus: Wartburg, 1945), 150.

from the dead (1 Corinthians 2:2). Christ is the center of all biblical teaching. We do not begin with the sovereignty of God. We do not regard Scripture as a manual for holy living. We proclaim Christ and his saving work as the focal point of all scriptural revelation. Lutheran apologetics, then, will not be concerned about merely defending the existence of a god. It will be concerned about identifying who God is and what God's Son did for our salvation.

Lutheran theology stresses the three *solas*:

- a. *Sola Scriptura*: The sole source and norm for the Christian faith is the canon of Scripture. We draw all doctrine from it, and we judge all teachers of doctrine by it. We reject oral tradition, the authority of the church, enlightened reason, and special revelation as sources for Christian doctrine.
- b. *Sola Gratia*: We are saved by God's grace alone. Unbelievers cannot save themselves by their works, for their works are an abomination in the sight of a holy God. Even believers' works cannot save them, because sin still contaminates all their works. No one can save himself. We could never do enough good to enter heaven by merit. Christ had to do it all. He carried out God's will for all people perfectly, and he suffered the penalty for the sins of the whole world. We must give God all credit for our salvation.
- c. *Sola Fide*: Faith is the instrument through which we receive the benefit of all Jesus did to save us. Faith is not a work we do to complete what Jesus did for us. It is not a decision we make to accept Christ as the Lord of our life and our Savior.

Lutheran theology stresses the importance of properly using the law and the gospel. The improper use of the law will lead people either to Phariseism or despair. Turning the gospel into a set of laws will rob sinners of their salvation.

Lutheran theology is rooted in the means of grace. The gospel, baptism and the Lord's Supper are the "giving instruments" through which the Holy Spirit distributes to individuals the salvation Christ won for all. The sacraments are not mere ceremonies which remind us of what Christ did. They are the means through which God actually gives us the benefit of what Christ did for all.

Lutheran theology asserts that justification is the doctrine by which the church either stands or falls. It teaches that justification is:

- a. Forensic: a change in our status before God, not a change in our nature.
- b. Objective: done, whether anyone believes it or not.
- c. Universal: done for all. No one was left out. Jesus died for all people's sins.
- d. Subjective: through faith we receive the benefit of what Christ did for all. Through unbelief, we lose the benefit of what Christ did for all.

Lutheran theology teaches that faith is trust or confidence in Christ as our Savior from sin. The foundation for faith is not our faith. The foundation for faith is Christ, his holy life, his substitutionary atonement, and his resurrection from the dead.

Lutheran theology teaches that conversion is the work of God alone. All people by nature are spiritually blind (unable to see their need for a Savior), spiritually dead (unable to do anything to save themselves), and enemies of God (actively hostile to his will). God alone can give faith through the gospel and baptism. Luther reflected this teaching of Scripture when he wrote, "I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him."

Lutheran theology teaches that sanctification (in the narrow sense) is the work by which the Holy Spirit produces in believers the ability to lead a Christian life. Sanctification flows from justification by faith. Sanctification is guided by the law but empowered by the gospel. Only

the gospel can produce sanctified living. Any attempt to use the law to produce sanctification is legalism or moralizing.

Lutheran theology recognizes the Christian has a dual nature: saint and sinner. It is not possible for the Christian to achieve perfection in sanctified living in this world because of the Christian's sinful nature.

Lutheran theology teaches that all good works are acceptable to God through faith in Christ. The Christian's vocation in life provides an avenue to do good works which are precious in the sight of God.

Lutheran theology recognizes that the last days of the world span the time between the first and the second coming of Christ. Jesus could come again at any time. His Second Coming will end this world's existence. God will create a new heaven and a new earth in which we will be forever with the Lord. We reject the teaching that Christ will come to reign on earth for a thousand years (millennialism).

Lutheran theology accepts the account of creation in Genesis 1 and 2, that God made the world and everything in it in six normal days. It also accepts the entire book of Genesis as historical fact. We reject atheistic evolution and theistic evolution (which involves progressive creation, the gap theory, the day-age theory, and the framework hypothesis) as contrary to Scripture.

What is the history of apologetics?

We do not have enough time today to make a thorough study of the history of apologetics. Such a study would be valuable, for we learn much from those who went before us. We will, however, consider a brief survey of the history of apologetics. This will help us know who has gone before us, what issues they had to face, and how they gave a defense of the hope they had.

The apostolic era furnishes us with many examples of those who gave an *apologia* (defense) of the gospel. On Pentecost, Peter responded to the charge that those speaking in tongues were drunk (Acts 2). He pointed out that the charge of drunkenness had no basis. Rather, the historical events of Pentecost fulfilled what the prophet Joel had foretold. Peter then proclaimed to the people the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Christ, the objective basis for our hope of eternal life.

The Sanhedrin summoned Peter and John before them to defend their miracle of healing the lame man. The Sanhedrin demanded, "By what power or what name did you do this?" (Acts 4:7). Peter gave his defense. "It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. ... Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:10, 12).

The Sanhedrin produced false witnesses to testify against Stephen. These liars testified, "This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. For we have heard him say that Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us" (Acts 6:13,14). Stephen used apologetics as he gave a survey of Old Testament history as his defense. He concluded his call to repentance with the words, "They [the prophets] even predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him" (Acts 7:52). This defense also served as the last will and testament of his life in this world.

We have already mentioned the many times Paul defended the message of the crucified and risen Savior. He gave a defense before the philosophers in Athens who disputed with him (Acts 17), as well as before the mob at the temple in Jerusalem (Acts 22:1), again before the Sanhedrin

in Jerusalem after his arrest (Acts 23), and also before Felix, Festus, King Agrippa, and Bernice in Caesarea (Acts 24–26). In each instance, Paul defended the message of the gospel which God had given him to proclaim.

It is evident apologetics lived and flourished in the apostolic era. Chronologically, after all of these previously mentioned examples had taken place, Peter exhorted Christians to do what the apostles and early Christians had already done: give a defense of the hope they had in Christ. We now turn to the history of the post-apostolic era for more examples of those who gave a defense of the Christian gospel.

In the second and third centuries, Christians felt the need to refute slanderous statements made by the pagans about their beliefs and practices. The following is a brief list of the scurrilous charges made against the early Christians.

People charged Christians with incestuous relationships. Christians called each other “brother” and “sister” and engaged in weekly “love feasts.”

Some slanderously reported that Christians practiced cannibalism (eating “body” and “blood”).

Some even charged that Christians concealed a newborn baby in a loaf of bread and then ordered a new convert to cut the loaf so he and the group could eat the flesh of the child.

The Roman senator and historian Cornelius Tacitus charged Christians with worshipping a donkey. He also said this about the Jews. His idea was that when Israel left Egypt and traveled in the wilderness, they followed thirsty donkeys to water. Tacitus believed that this was why the Jews had worshiped the image of a donkey’s head. He believed the Christians to be closely associated with the Jews. Tertullian defended the Jews and the Christians against this charge. He said that when the temple was destroyed, there was not one image in the temple which represented any animal at all.⁸

Some accused Christians of sedition because they would not worship the emperor as god.

Intellectuals among the pagans claimed Christians were stupid people whose doctrines were foolish and self-contradictory. (There is nothing new under the sun.)⁹

Over against these slanderous charges, Aristedes, Justin Martyr, Tatian, Theophilus of Antioch, Origen, and Tertullian arose to give a defense of their faith. True, some of these men went too far in their appeals to philosophy to justify their faith. However, there were many who endeavored to do what Peter had encouraged them to do: give a defense of the objective truths of the gospel. In the fifth century, Augustine (354–430) was one of the foremost apologists.

A survey of apologists must certainly mention Martin Luther. He stood before the emperor, before the hierarchy of the church, before princes, in defiance of the pope’s decrees, and in opposition to Islam’s teaching. Yet, he never wavered in giving a defense of the teachings of Scripture. Concerning Luther as apologist, Craig Parton observed:

Thus at the end of the day we can say that Luther, rather than casting doubt on the apologetical task, provides us with the surest foundation for making that effort Christocentric, cross-driven, and objectively centered. Luther would not let human reason think it could save itself by speculations or by rational deductions or philosophizing. But God gave us a reason that remains capable of determining if events in history really occurred. Believer and unbeliever can determine facts. Of course this is not yet saving faith. Those same facts carry with them the proper interpretation. Data always precede interpretations. The best interpretations are those that bubble up from

⁸ For further information on this charge, consult Steve Ham, *In God We Trust* (Green Forest: Master Books, 2010), 107–109.

⁹ Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: Vol. 1, The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation* (San Francisco: Harper, 1984), 49–52.

the text (or event) itself that is being investigated. Thus the Christian may lead the mind of the seeker to the conclusion that the witness of Scripture is reliable, in preparation for leading him or her to Christ.¹⁰

When we look at what Luther did, we thank God for his defense of the Christian faith. Certainly, God gets the credit for all he did. However, if we remove the historical Luther from our celebration of the Reformation, we turn the Reformation into an existential happening (What does this mean to you? How do you feel about this?) and we lose the benefit of seeing how God moved and enabled Luther to give a defense of the Christian faith. We learn from the examples of others. It is good to have “heroes” of the faith. It is even biblical (consider Hebrews 11). All of those mentioned in Hebrews 11 had their faults and sins. Yet, God did great things through them. Scripture encourages us to emulate the good that God enabled them to do (Hebrews 13:7). Luther also deserves to be in that category.

Though many more examples of apologists could be listed, the following is a list of people often associated with apologetics in their time. Not all of these were Lutherans, and not all of their apologetics would fit in with what Peter had encouraged. However, we mention their names simply because you will run into them in a study of the history of apologetics. They are: John of Damascus (c. 674–c. 750), Theodore Abu Qurrah (c. 740–c. 820), Anselm (1033–1109), Peter Abelard (1079–1142), Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), Raymond Lull (c. 1235–1316), Girolamo Savonarola (1452–1498), Philip Melancthon (1497–1560), Martin Chemnitz (1522–1586), David Chytraeus (1531–1600), John Gerhard (1582–1637), Abraham Calov (1612–1688), Johann Quenstedt (1617–1685), Blaise Pascal (1623–1662), David Hollaz (1647–1713), G.K. Chesterton (1874–1936), Cornelius Van Til (1895–1987), C.S. Lewis (1898–1963), Francis Schaeffer (1912–1984), Paul L. Maier (1929–), Norman Geisler (1932–)¹¹, and Greg Bahnsen (1948–1995).

Other apologists of today are those who come from Answers in Genesis, such as Ken Ham, Mike Riddle, Andrew Snelling, Gloria Purdom, Jason Lisle, Terry Mortenson, and David Menton (Menton is a Lutheran who comes from the Church of the Lutheran Confession). Lutheran apologists active and published in our time are Dr. John Warwick Montgomery, Craig Parton,¹² Alvin Schmidt, Adam Francisco, Angus Menuge, Gene Edward Veith, Mark Paustian, Allen Quist, and Ryan McPherson. If I have omitted anyone, I apologize. I thank God for all of you who give a defense of the hope that you have.

There are other apologists today who could be mentioned. A list of some could be obtained from the recently published book *Tough-Minded Christianity*, the volume honoring the legacy of Dr. John Warwick Montgomery. Some apologists today have undercut their defense of the gospel by accepting theistic evolution. The incompatibility of evolution of any kind with the gospel will be addressed in another section.

Having looked at a brief overview of the history of apologetics, we now move on to another area. We will spend some time in this area, for it deals with the crux of whether Lutherans should do apologetics and how they will do it if they should.

¹⁰ Craig Parton, *The Defense Never Rests* (St. Louis, Concordia: 2003), 65–66.

¹¹ Alvin Schmidt, “Christianity Needs More Lutheran Apologetes” (2008), in *Tough-Minded Christianity*, ed. William Dembski and Thomas Schirrmacher (Nashville: Academic, 2008), 497–498. Dr. John Warwick Montgomery prepared an excellent history of Apologetics. It is entitled: *Defending the Gospel Through the Centuries: A History of Christian Apologetics*. It and the other works of Dr. Montgomery are available through the Canadian Institute For Law, Theology and Public Relations.

¹² I thank especially Craig Parton, who first interested me in apologetics, and Dr. John Warwick Montgomery, whose knowledge of apologetics is encyclopedic and whose training has been invaluable in the study of apologetics.

Fideist, Evidentialist, Presuppositionalist: Which are you?

Apologetics involves being “prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Peter 3:15). What is the *content* of this answer? Is it a mere recitation of the words of Scripture? Can it involve the use of historical information? Does it allow for demonstrating that the skeptic’s viewpoint is not in accord with the facts or that it is unreasonable? Is it legitimate to point out that the truth claims of Scripture are supported by fact and are therefore not unreasonable? Does the use of anything but the passages of Scripture mean we are attempting to convert a person through the use of reason? We will examine these issues as we assess the three different approaches to apologetics. We will begin by examining the first two positions, fideism and evidentialism, as they are most closely related to Lutheranism.

Fideists adopt the view that it is wrong to use any arguments based on reason in apologetics. Craig Parton described the fideist view this way:

... the fideist ... argues that it is unspiritual to even attempt to reason with the unbeliever and to show him the truth of the Christian faith. Only the preaching of the Gospel should be engaged in, and any attempt to argue with the pagan is to substitute human reason for the work of the Holy Spirit.¹³

We will examine this view shortly.

The evidentialist’s view is that reason, though corrupted by the fall into sin, was not destroyed, that humans’ abilities to draw logical conclusions still remain. Therefore, reason is useful in apologetics. Alvin Schmidt gives us a simple overview of the evidentialist approach.

Proponents of this method hold it is important that apologetes present the biblical evidence—Christ’s miracles and especially His bodily resurrection—as historically reliable facts from which the Holy Spirit can bring skeptics to faith in Christ’s atoning work. Since Christ’s miraculous works and His resurrection are recorded as facts in the New Testament documents, shown by scholars to be historically reliable, the skeptic can conclude that those miraculous phenomena were indeed the work of God, in fact, that Christ is God Himself. This conclusion is especially true of Christ’s resurrection, for no man could raise himself from the dead, even if he had performed some lesser miracles.¹⁴

Concerning this matter, Craig Parton also comments:

Man did not lose his inferential capacities at the fall, though they were thoroughly tainted by sin. He did lose any ability to reason himself into heaven or to merit God’s favor by his use of that reason. ... When the unbeliever tries to distort those facts [of the gospel], refuses to face those facts, or imposes gratuitous interpretations unsupported by those facts, the Christian apologist can guide the discussion back to the historical record. Not all interpretations are equal, and we hardly abrogate the work of the Holy Spirit when we point this out to the unbeliever.¹⁵

How do we evaluate these two approaches? Scripture tells us, “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (Hebrews 11:1). Paul wrote, “Therefore we

¹³ Parton, *The Defense Never Rests*, 57.

¹⁴ Schmidt, “Christianity Needs More Lutheran Apologetes,” in *Tough-Minded Christianity*, 499.

¹⁵ Parton, *The Defense Never Rests*, 57–58.

are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. We live by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:6, 7). Does this mean, however, that saving faith is a blind leap into the dark? Is it like Indiana Jones standing at the edge of a precipice, jumping off into the void in the hope he will land on the bridge that leads to the Holy Grail? This may describe the faith of the evolutionist, but the Christian faith is founded on fact (Consider the two books by the evidentialist Dr. John Warwick Montgomery: *Evidence for Faith* and *Faith Founded on Fact*). The Bible gives us the historical record of Christ's entry into this world, of his atoning life and death, and of his physical resurrection from the dead. Faith is founded on these facts. If none of these events happened, we are of all people most miserable. We sing in one of our hymns:

This is the threefold truth on which our faith depends;
 And with this joyful cry worship begins and ends;
 Christ has died! Christ is risen! Christ will come again!
 (CW 406:1)

When Paul addressed those skeptics in Corinth who doubted the resurrection of the dead, he pointed them to the eyewitnesses who had seen the risen Christ.

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. (1 Corinthians 15:3-8)

For Paul, the resurrection of Christ was a well-attested fact supported by eyewitnesses who could verify it.

Luke wrote, "After his suffering, he [Jesus] showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). The Greek word for "convincing proofs" refers to evidence that is irrefutable. Jesus made clear the apostles could be absolutely sure he had risen from the dead. They would be asked to lay down their lives for Christ. Christ gave them the certainty he had risen, a certainty which we also have through their eyewitness accounts and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. As we continue to look at the evidentialist's view, please note that the facts of Scripture are the basis for the gospel proclamation. Though reason might conclude from the evidence that these are true, only the Holy Spirit can give the person faith in Christ and his promises of salvation. The Jewish rulers had the evidence Jesus rose from the dead. They just didn't believe it.

Alvin Schmidt makes an interesting observation concerning the fideist approach. He wrote:

Fideism often manifests itself in different forms. The following is an example that I as a professor experienced in the classroom at a Lutheran college in the late 1960's. I perceived that my students—all of them Lutherans and some products of Lutheran parochial schools—did not understand the relationship between faith and the resurrection of Christ. So I wrote the following statement on the blackboard: "The resurrection of Jesus Christ is true because my faith tells me so." Then I asked the students (about 25 of them) whether this statement was true or false. All but one said

“true.” The response of most students was clearly one of fideism; thus it required my telling them that it is not one’s faith that makes Christ’s resurrection true, but rather it is the historical fact of His resurrection that makes one’s faith true and valid. ... If I say, “I will some day rise from the dead,” that is a matter of faith. But whether Christ rose from the dead is not a matter of faith. That is an event that happened in history.¹⁶

Schmidt points out that fideism makes a person vulnerable to the attacks of modern critics on the reliability of the four Gospels. In 1892, Martin Kahler (1835–1912) introduced his distinction between *Historie* and *Geschichte*. He held that events in *Historie* were verifiable. However, events in *Geschichte* (supra history) were not verifiable, but were only accessible by faith.¹⁷ Critics place the resurrection of Christ into the realm of *Geschichte*, thus denying the reality of it. They tell us that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was real in the minds of the early disciples, but was not a real historical event. We all know what Paul said of that:

And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. (1 Corinthians 15:14–19)

This whole matter of making a distinction between *Historie* and *Geschichte* is something which confronts us today. We need to face this perversion of the gospel and deal with it, defending the historicity of the life of Christ as presented in the four Gospels.

Schmidt also deals with the question of the role of the Holy Spirit in apologetics. He wrote:

Christian apologetics is sometimes criticized by some who say that it ignores the role of the Holy Spirit, as it seeks to persuade unbelievers on the basis of evidence to become Christians. This criticism reflects a wrong understanding of Christian apologetics, for when apologetes point non-Christians to the biblical facts that happened in history, the Holy Spirit is invariably operative. Also, when the biblical facts of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection are defended, God’s Word comes into play. And when God’s Word is present, the Holy Spirit is also present seeking to create faith in the hearers by moving them to accept the benefits (eternal life and salvation) of Christ’s death and resurrection.¹⁸

The Holy Spirit did work through the miracles God enabled the apostles to do. When Peter raised Tabitha from the dead, we read, “This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord” (Acts 9:42). The miracles certified the truthfulness of Peter’s message, and the Holy Spirit created faith in Jesus in these people’s hearts. Jesus also gave Thomas the empirical evidence he needed to be convinced Jesus had risen from the dead (John 20:27). This evidence elicited a wonderful confession from Thomas. He said to Jesus, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28).

¹⁶ Schmidt, “Christianity Needs More Lutheran Apologetes,” in *Tough-Minded Christianity*, 501–502.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 505.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 507.

We need to look at three statements which have had profound influences on how confessional Lutherans have viewed apologetics. Two are from Francis Pieper, the great dogmatician of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. He wrote:

The arguments supplied by the science of apologetics—and there is a great wealth of them—cannot change the human heart, cannot produce an inner acceptance of the Gospel.¹⁹

The best apology of the Christian religion is its proclamation.²⁰

The other is from Dr. Siegbert Becker, formerly from the Missouri Synod, later from the Wisconsin Synod. He wrote:

The best defense of Scripture is Scripture itself. When men ask for proof of the truth of Christian doctrines, we are simply to quote the Bible passages which teach these doctrines. If men do not accept the doctrines of the Christian faith on the authority of the Bible, we are not even to desire their assent on other grounds. The Christian faith is not to be defended by rational argumentation.

[Becker continues] But again, this does not mean that we are not to employ reason in the struggle with the enemies of the faith. Every argument of reason can be overthrown with an argument from reason. We may use reason to show the unbeliever the untenableness of his position and the unwarranted nature of his conclusions. In this area we often hear Luther call his adversaries unreasonable.²¹

With regard to Pieper's statements, I would not agree that apologetics is a science. It is giving people a defense of the hope you have. Secondly, I would agree that the Holy Spirit works conversion only through the gospel and baptism. However, the gospel is founded on the historical facts of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. As Alvin Schmidt observed, the Holy Spirit is active as he works through the historical facts of the gospel message. To relate the historicity of the Bible is part of the apologetic task. With regard to Dr. Becker's statement, I think that people have often read his first paragraph and forgotten the second. Reason can be employed to show the erroneous thinking of a person who rejects the gospel message. It is part of the apologetic task of removing obstacles so people will listen to a presentation of the gospel.

It is because of fideism that we find little formal study of apologetics in Lutheranism. Alvin Schmidt makes some interesting observations concerning this. He wrote:

In spite of the massive inroads liberal theologians have made as a result of the Enlightenment by placing the miraculous works of Jesus outside the parameters of history into the realm of faith, Lutheran theologians, both in Europe and America, basically failed to respond as apologetes to this heretical maneuver. With the exception of a few American Lutherans like Theodore Graebner, Alfred Rehwinkel, John Klotz, and Paul Zimmermann in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS), who argued mostly against the theory of evolution, there were no Lutheran apologetes who argued against the theology that said Christ's resurrection occurred in *Geschichte* or in suprahistory. Only two Lutheran evidential apologetes of note have argued against this radical theology, and then only since the 1960s. These two Lutherans are Wolfhart

¹⁹ Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1950), 1:65.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1:109.

²¹ Siegbert Becker, *The Foolishness of God* (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1982), 238–239.

Pannenberg and John Warwick Montgomery. ... Strange as it may seem, before the days of Pannenberg [and] Montgomery, one finds Francis Pieper (1852–1931), a highly influential conservative theologian in the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, not favoring Christian apologetics. ... Given Francis Pieper's long-standing influence, which continues to the present time in the seminaries of the LCMS, where students still are required to read his three volumes in dogmatics, it is not surprising that fideism has not been countered apologetically in the circles of the LCMS. It is also interesting to note that to this day neither of the synod's two seminaries (Fort Wayne and St. Louis) has a required course in apologetics in their curricula.²²

Many in our own circles have reacted negatively toward apologetics. Some say apologetics involves attempting to "reason" people into the faith. They state that all we need to do is proclaim the gospel. They assert that rational arguments have no place in our proclamation. Let us examine this view.

To begin with, I believe that God converts people through the gospel and baptism. We do not, by our own thinking or choosing, come to faith in Christ. Yet, reason is involved in communicating the gospel. Take, for example, preaching a sermon. I don't think any preacher would make the statement that his sermons are totally devoid of reason. Reason is involved in translating the text. We don't read Scripture to people in the original Greek, Hebrew, or Aramaic. Pastors don't simply read their texts, say "Amen," and then sit down. My father had a vicar whom he asked to prepare a devotion for a Sunday School teachers' conference. The vicar opened his Bible, read a section of Scripture, closed the book, said "These are my sentiments exactly," and then left. Needless to say, my father had a discussion with him about expounding and applying the text.

Expounding and applying the text involves the use of reason. Developing a theme, parts, and outline for the sermon involves reason. Pastors are concerned that they present their sermons in a logical way which enables their hearers to understand. They use illustrations and object lessons to make things clearer for their parishioners. Some pastors even tell jokes in their sermons. No one, as of yet, has suggested we discontinue preaching sermons because reason is used in them. Reason used in a sermon does not convert the hearer. It does communicate the gospel message to the hearer.

Some have used infant baptism as a reason for not doing apologetics. Is this valid? In our baptismal rite we state, "In obedience to the command of our Lord and trusting in his promises you have brought this child to be baptized" (*Christian Worship*: 13). Because Christ told us to bring our children to him and because he promised that baptism grants rebirth and renewal through the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5), we bring our children to be baptized. God works renewal of infants through baptism. With adults, however, we instruct them and then baptize them. Instruction involves the use of reason in the process, but God converts through the message of the gospel communicated by reason.

What does reason do as we give a defense of the hope we have?

Reason communicates the message. Without communication there is no apologetics (or preaching or teaching of any kind).

Reason clarifies our message. If a Bible passage is too difficult for someone to understand, we put it into simpler words.

Reason can confirm what the Bible says. It doesn't prove the Bible, but it corroborates what the Bible says. Archaeology has confirmed the existence of many cities and

²² Schmidt, "Christianity Needs More Lutheran Apologetes," in *Tough-Minded Christianity*, 505–507.

places Luke tells us Paul visited. Observations from the created world (such as design) confirm there is a Creator. This is also biblical. The writer to the Hebrews stated, “Every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything” (Hebrews 3:4). Reason recognizes and corrects errors. When people make assertions that have no evidential basis, or, which contradict the evidence, we use reason to remove the obstacles so we can present what God’s Word says. For example, if two statements contradict each other, both cannot be true.

Reason can be used to consolidate the evidence for the truth of the Bible. Reason may tie all the evidence together. Biblical evidence remains primary. Other evidence may simply confirm or corroborate what the Bible states.

Does apologetics make use of reason? Certainly! Does this mean we cannot use apologetics because we are trying to “reason” people into the Christian faith? Certainly not! The Lord wants us to give a defense of the hope we have. Reason is involved in the process. However, the message conveyed by reason, the gospel, alone can convert. Studying how to do apologetics is as valid a study as homiletics and catechetics. We don’t send ministers of the gospel out into the field and tell them to write or say whatever comes to their minds. We train them before we send them out. Why should we do any less when it comes to equipping our students for defending the hope they have?

We will now turn our attention to Presuppositionalism. The presuppositionalist says that the fall into sin has created such a wall between the believer and the unbeliever that no amount of rational argument can address unbelief or the reasons for it in order to break it down. Nancy Pearcey described it this way:

Because nonbelievers are created in the image of God, the force of their own human nature compels them to live in ways that are inconsistent with their professed worldviews. In evangelism, our goal is to highlight that cognitive dissonance—to identify the points at which the nonbeliever’s worldview is contradicted by reality. Then we can show that only Christianity is fully consistent with the things we all know by experience to be true.²³

Presuppositionalism comes from the camp of the Reformed. Craig Parton evaluated it in the following way:

... those Christians inclined to appreciate the apologetical task are given supposed theological reasons *not* to defend the faith with evidence to the unbeliever. Calvinist presuppositionalists (which, sadly enough, also influence some Lutherans) have emasculated serious apologetical activity among pagans. By arguing that their system is more “self-consistent” than that of the pagan, and by spending their apologetical time refuting non-Christian belief systems, the presuppositionalists forget two critical points: First, consistency does not mean that you have divine revelation.... Second, the refutation of non-Christian belief systems, while necessary, does not *ipso facto* establish the truth of Christianity. In addition, the refutation of every non-Christian alternative would consume a lifetime.²⁴

²³ Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth* (Wheaton: Crossway 2004), 319.

²⁴ Parton, *The Defense Never Rests*, 61.

The Lutheran apologist defends the authority of the Bible.

Confessional Lutherans accept the authority of the Bible. There are a number of reasons for this. Jesus accepted the authority of the Old Testament. He referred to the canon of the Old Testament (Luke 24:44) as the Word of God. This settles the matter for us. In addition, the Jews of Jesus' time accepted the same canon of the Old Testament as the authoritative Word of God. As for the New Testament, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to enable the sacred writers to make an accurate record of what he said and did. The apostles, then, wrote, approved, and gathered the books of the New Testament which are the authoritative Word of God. Further, we accept the authority of the Bible as God's Word because the Holy Spirit has worked that conviction in us through the words of Scripture. We did not come to the conviction on our own that the Bible is God's Word.

At Luther's time, Lutherans, Roman Catholics, and Calvinists all accepted the Bible as God's Word. All believed the Bible carried the authority of God himself. This changed in the eighteenth century. The Enlightenment scholars rejected the authority of the Bible. Critics said the Bible was a product of human evolution and development. The critics denied the Bible alone could establish what we should believe and how we should live. Biblical criticism began with the rejection of the Mosaic authorship of Genesis and ended with the denial of the Christ of the four Gospels.

Critics developed elaborate scenarios as to how the parts of the Bible eventually came together. They based their hypotheses on human speculation, not on empirical evidence. They disregarded the internal evidence in the Bible itself. The speculation concerning the four Gospels became so wild that, in 1906, Albert Schweitzer, himself a critic of the Bible, lamented the mess made by the biblical critics up to his time (*The Quest for the Historical Jesus*). We can demonstrate that the scenarios developed by the critics fly in the face of the facts. Their claims are unreasonable.

To begin with, critics say that it is impossible to believe the Bible is the Word of God because the manuscripts contain so many variant readings. This charge does not take into account the reliable nature of textual criticism. Because we have so many biblical manuscripts, textual critics have arrived at a very reliable received text. There is also a great deal of commonality between the various manuscripts of the Bible. For example, though separated by 1000 years, there is a 95% agreement between the Leningrad Text of Isaiah and the Qumran Isaiah text found with the Dead Sea Scrolls. Instead of an unreliable textual transmission, we have a transmission that has produced a very reliable text.

Also, critics place the writing of the books of the Bible long after the time when the evidence indicates they were written. Take, for example, the four Gospels. Redaction criticism places the final product of the Gospels around A.D. 160. Yet, we have references to the Gospels by the church fathers at much earlier dates than that. Craig Parson quotes Sir Fredrick Kenyon, former director and principal librarian of the British Museum, concerning the reliability and integrity of the four Gospels and the entire New Testament. Kenyon wrote:

In no other case is the interval of time between the composition of the book and the date of the earliest extant manuscript so short as in that of the New Testament. The books of the New Testament were written in the latter part of the first century; the earliest extant manuscripts (trifling scraps excepted) are of the fourth century—say, from 250 to 300 years later. This may sound a considerable interval, but it is nothing to that which parts most of the great classical authors from their earliest manuscripts. We believe that we have in all essentials an accurate text of the seven extant plays of Sophocles; yet the

earliest substantial manuscript upon which it is based was written more than 1,400 years after the poet's death. Aeschylus, Aristophanes, and Thucydides are in the same state; while with Euripides the interval is increased to 1,600 years. For Plato it may be put at 1,300 years, for Demosthenes as low as 1,200.²⁵

If the critics of the Bible applied their canons of criticism to the classics, it would destroy the study of the classics. Parton also points out that the four Gospels meet the commonly accepted canons of historical scholarship used to determine if any work that predates the printing press has reached us in substantially the same shape in which it was authored. The criteria are: The documents ... give no evidence of tampering, are well-attested as coming from a strong tradition of manuscript evidence, arise almost on top of the events they record, and have no peer among all the works of antiquity based on the sheer number of excellent and early manuscript copies.²⁶

The evidence is clear. The critics (Dan Brown included) have made claims which do not square with the facts. They are in error. This gives us the opportunity to explain from Scripture why we believe the Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God, of which Jesus Christ is the focal point.

The Lutheran apologist recognizes that philosophy cannot be the source of Christian teaching, but it can be used in the service of Christian doctrine.

Reason is a good gift which God has given to us. Reason helps us to examine our environment to determine what is good and what is harmful. The fall into sin caused the corruption of reason, but it did not eradicate reason. Because sin has corrupted reason, it cannot be the source of teaching concerning God and his salvation of sinners. Paul wrote, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9). Through the means of grace God comes to us and offers us the benefit of all Christ did for all people. Through these means he also converts, giving us a faith in Christ in our hearts. Through faith in Jesus, God sanctifies our reason for service in his church in obedience to his Word.

There are those who maintain that Luther did not believe reason belonged in the realm of the church. Concerning Luther and reason, Craig Parton wrote:

As for Luther, he certainly railed against reason as the devil's whore. But what "reason" was Luther referencing? Surely not man's inferential capacities, for Luther clearly understood that the fall had not obliterated man's ability to discover truth in all fields of learning. No, what Luther railed against was any use of reason to achieve salvation or to allow the unbeliever, by his own striving, to climb up to heaven. ... Some of the most important of Luther's interpreters, however, give the impression that the reformer's stress on the two kingdoms meant that reason and proof only operate in the secular realm of this world but are of no heavenly value. In point of fact, Luther's position is that reason operates in both kingdoms, but in the church reason is to be subservient to the Word of God. In the Christian faith, reason must operate ministerially, not magisterially.²⁷

²⁵ Parton, *The Defense Never Rests*, 76-77. For a chart giving an overview of the best works of antiquity, see also Parton, *Religion on Trial* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock: 2008), 47-48.

²⁶ Parton, *The Defense Never Rests*, 77.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 50-51, 64.

We use our reason in the ministerial sense. Paul wrote, "We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). In this way we also make philosophy subservient to the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, some may say Tertullian stated, "What does Athens have to do with Jerusalem? What does the Academy have to do with the Church?" (*Prescription against Heretics* I.7.)²⁸ Others may say that Paul wrote, "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God" (2 Corinthians 10:4-5a). Again, Paul wrote, "When I came to you brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God" (1 Corinthians 2:1).

However, Paul was not averse to quoting the philosophers to touch a contact point with the pagans. In Athens, Paul quoted the classical Stoic poets Cleanthes, Aratus, and Epimenides. These poets reflected a longing for God. Paul went from where they were to where they needed to go: to the risen Christ (Acts 17).

Philosophy gives us a tool for displaying the revelation of God. Dogmaticians regularly make use of the syllogism to demonstrate the deity of Jesus. For example: "God alone is almighty. Jesus is almighty. Therefore, Jesus is God." A study of philosophy enables us to understand the worldviews people hold. This gives us valuable insights as to how we may reach people with the gospel. A study of logic enables us to recognize faulty and erroneous arguments. It enables us to arrange and communicate the message of the gospel in a way that people can understand. Used in service to Christ and subservient to God's Word, philosophy can be a very useful tool.

Before leaving the area of philosophy, permit a few words on the philosophical arguments for the existence of God. The ontological, cosmological, historical, teleological, and moral arguments for God's existence have been used in apologetics to deal with agnostics, atheists, and skeptics. These arguments can serve a useful purpose. However, they will be of no benefit to the unbeliever if they do not lead to Christ. *World* magazine reported some years ago that Anthony Flew, the atheistic analytical philosopher and author of the parable of the invisible gardener,²⁹ had become a theist. The apologist, Gary Habermas, had convinced him of the existence of a god. We can thank God for this movement from atheism to theism. However, if Flew does not come to faith in Jesus Christ, he will still perish. My point is that, if we use these arguments, we dare not set as our goal merely presenting philosophical evidence that God exists. We need to take people further, to Jesus Christ, who said, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). Do you want to see God? There he is in the flesh, in the person of Jesus Christ, who proved his deity by his resurrection from the dead, and who saved the world from sin by his holy life and substitutionary death.

The "transcendent" argument for God's existence has been used with some success against atheists. Presuppositionalists Greg Bahnsen (1948-1995), Jason Lisle, and Francis Schaeffer have used this approach (Pearcey describes it in her book on pages 313-314) to show the atheist the inconsistency of his beliefs. It argues that the atheist with his belief in evolution will eventually have to admit that he is not living in harmony with his views. While evolution says there is no absolute morality and all actions spring from a chemical reaction in the brain, he will not actually want to live that way with his family. The statement, "I love you dearly" sounds a lot better than to say, "My attitude toward you is merely a chemical reaction in my brain. I have no

²⁸ Justo Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, Vol I, *The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation* (San Francisco: Harper, 1984), 53.

²⁹ Parton, *The Defense Never Rests*, 62.

permanent basis on which to build a relationship with you.” Here again, we may use this argument to clear the way to present Christianity as the absolute religion because it offers the only way to salvation and it is based on the unchanging Word of God.

The Lutheran Apologist will defend the gospel against the attacks of what is falsely called knowledge (1 Timothy 6:20).

Many have written about apologetics in the area of science. Nancy Pearcey wrote much about science in her book, which we will discuss for the next two days. She portrayed the extent to which evolution has taken over not only science, but also our culture. If we needed someone to reinforce that opinion, Ben Stein has done that. In his movie, “Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed,” Stein has chronicled the extent to which Darwin’s theories have influenced the institutions in our society. Both Pearcey and Stein indicated that those who have embraced Darwinism have also said it ultimately led them to deny the existence of God. Will Provine, the atheist scientist who spoke in Ben Stein’s movie, made it clear that Darwinism left him “without hope and without God in the world” (Eph 2:12).

Pearcey has chronicled how Darwinism affected evangelicalism. It has really affected most areas of the visible church today. Ever since the days of Charles Lyell and Charles Darwin, many in the visible church have attempted to bend their teaching on Genesis 1-11 to fit with evolutionary views. Charles Hodge and B.B. Warfield taught theistic evolution. The *Schofield Reference Bible* (1909) accepted the gap theory. Roman Catholicism listed evolution in the Syllabus of Errors at the end of the 19th century. By the middle of the 20th century, Rome had accepted theistic evolution and the historical-critical interpretation of the four gospels. Gleason Archer, the Old Testament scholar, and Wayne Grudem, the Reformed dogmatician, have also espoused theistic evolution.

Ken Ham, in his book *Already Gone: Why Your Kids Will Quit Church and What You Can Do to Stop It*, relates the results of a study of 1,000 twenty-somethings, raised in the church but no longer attending.³⁰ The study found that evangelicals are losing their children in elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools rather than in colleges. The cause is the “Sunday school syndrome.” Evangelicals have embraced theistic evolution. This is what they teach their children in Sunday schools. The children get the message. “If creation, Adam and Eve, Noah and the flood, and the Tower of Babel are all myths, why should we believe any of the rest of the Bible?”

Jesus said, “As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man” (Matthew 24:37). If we were to change this to say, “As it was in the days when Santa Claus came for Christmas, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man,” the message would be clear. Santa Claus isn’t real; neither is Christ and his Second Coming. Paul wrote, “Just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men” (Romans 5:18). Again, if Adam and his sin aren’t real, neither are Christ and his salvation of the world real. Jesus accepted the accounts of creation, Adam and Eve, and Noah and the flood as historical facts.

What about those who accept theistic evolution as an explanation for the origin of the world and its inhabitants? Can they be saved? We hold that a person who errs in ignorance or in weakness in a non-fundamental doctrine can still be saved, as long as the person believes in Jesus as his Savior. However, evolution is not inclined to allow God or Christ to remain in the

³⁰ Ken Ham & Britt Beemer with Todd Hillard, *Already Gone* (Green Forest: Master Books, 2009).

picture. It is basically an atheistic view concerning the origin of things. It also views people as no more than matter in motion. It leaves you without hope, without a Savior, and without God.

This simply demonstrates that if you tamper with any section of Scripture, you tamper with Christ. The devil's plan to destroy the Christian faith started with an assault on the book which serves as the foundation for the rest of Scripture, namely, the book of Genesis. Christ is the foundation for faith, and the book of Genesis clearly presents Christ as this foundation for the rest of the Bible. If the foundation is destroyed, whatever is built on it will also collapse.

We need to speak out and defend the biblical teaching on creation. To begin with, we can point out that in the areas of cosmological evolution (formation of the universe), of geological evolution (formation of the earth), and of biological evolution (molecules to man, or from "goo" to you), evolutionists operate with many assumptions and unproven hypotheses. As Pearcey ably pointed out, evolution is a secular religion involving blind faith. When confronted with the facts, the evolutionist may respond, "No I can't observe this happening now. However, given millions and billions of years, it must have happened." This is blind faith, not empirical evidence.

There is evidence from the created world that testifies to the Creator and reflects the teaching of the Bible. The incredible complexity of information in the cell as well as the incredible body we have are evidences of the Creator who designed them. David wrote,

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. (Psalm 139:13-16)

The incredible size, complexity, and orderliness of the universe are testimony to the Creator who made it. David wrote, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands" (Psalm 19:1). Again he wrote, "When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him" (Psalm 8:3-4a). The complexity of the earth and its geology testifies to God the Creator. The Lord said to Job, "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone...?" (Job 38:4-6).

Finally, we must return to the Genesis record and defend it as historical fact, for that is how it is presented in its context and in the rest of Scripture. We need to answer the assertions of evolution. If we do not offer any answers, people will think we have none.

Above all, we need to remember, as we pointed out earlier, the important foundation that Genesis lays for the rest of the Bible. The Holy Spirit has furnished us with a historical framework for the message of the gospel. This is why Paul in Acts 17 started at the beginning with the Athenians—with the God of creation, ultimately leading to Jesus Christ and his resurrection. I appreciate Answers in Genesis' emphasis on the chronological approach to apologetics, beginning with Genesis. This is the approach also of New Tribes Mission, an organization which does evangelism among the most primitive peoples on earth. They start out with creation in their mission approach. This method has made me rethink the two questions

we asked in the “Talk About the Savior” evangelism method.³¹ We started with God without putting him into the historical framework he has given us in Genesis.

Ken Ham has defended the importance of Genesis in evangelism and apologetics. He told of a translator, Nathan, he had in Japan who brought him to understand this importance. He writes:

The first thing Nathan explained to me was that whenever I used the word “God” he could not just translate this as “God.” Because of the prevalence of the Shinto religion in this country, and thus their belief in many gods, the people would just add this god I was talking about to all their other gods. So whenever I used the word “God,” Nathan would define who this God is—the God who created and upholds all things. He is the God who is separate from His Creation... . Without the foundational basis of the account of the Fall in Genesis, and the fact that we all are traced back to one man, Adam, whom God created, how would they understand the gospel? You can tell people they’re sinners, but unless they understand what sin is, they will not comprehend the message. Nathan explained to me that if I was to communicate the message of the gospel to the average Japanese, I would first need to lay the foundation of the gospel from Genesis, before they would really have much understanding.³²

Another reason for beginning with the historical Genesis account is that unbelievers are troubled by the suffering and misery they see in the world. Whereas a believer may look at the world and say it is a beautiful creation of God, the unbeliever will have a different outlook. He will say:

“Around the world I see children dying, people starving, senseless killing, terrorism, horrible accidents. I don’t see a beautiful world. I see physical and emotional pain everywhere I look. It’s a chaotic world. It’s a world where only the fit survive—the weak get stomped on. I don’t see a God of order and love. If He does exist, He must be a vicious and hateful God.” [Ham continues:] The problem is that you and your friend are looking at the...world through different eyes. If you put on truly biblical glasses, and look at the world through the Bible, then we know that God created a perfect world, but man rebelled. Sin entered the world, and thus death and the Curse came as a consequence of the judgment of a Holy God. And look what *our* sin has done to this world: children abused, families splitting apart, mental diseases, rapes, cancer killing our loved ones, etc. It is a horrible world. But a Christian understands there’s a God of love because even though man rebelled, God sent His Son to die so we can be restored to our Creator.³³

The historical record of Genesis gives us the framework from which we can communicate God’s message of sin and grace. May God enable us to use the historical framework of Genesis to lead people to Jesus Christ and the salvation from sin we have through him. May he move us to do this now, while we have the opportunity to give a defense of the hope we have.

Permit a few comments on the Intelligent Design movement, in order to promote discussion. We usually say we do not favor the inclusion of “intelligent design” in public school

³¹ “If you were to die tonight, are you sure you would go to heaven?” “If God were to say to you, ‘Why should I let you into my heaven,’ what would you respond?”

³² Ken Ham, *Why Won't They Listen* (Green Forest: Master Books, 2002), 19–20.

³³ *Ibid.*, 93–95.

science courses because this involves mixing the mission of the church and the state. However, watching the movie by Ben Stein (“Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed”) caused me to rethink the matter. The intelligent design movement is not exclusively a Christian movement. Its goal is to follow the evidence in the world of science where it leads. If what we observe in the world gives evidence of intelligent design rather than natural selection, why should we prohibit scientists from following the evidence where it leads?

Further, the intelligent design people are concerned about freedom of speech. If they observe intelligent design in the world, should they not be allowed to publish their research without fear of losing their jobs? The reason establishment scientists react so strongly to intelligent design is that it does not follow the dogma that the world is a closed system and that we cannot use any outside influence to explain how everything got here. In the face of mounting evidence against their ideas of chance formations, some evolutionists have offered the idea that perhaps some intelligent life from another planet seeded life on this planet.

I could favor trying to get local school boards to permit intelligent design into the classroom on the basis of civic righteousness. The teaching of evolution is destructive to morality, ethics, and respect for the importance of human life. At least the reference to a supreme designer might work with the natural knowledge of God to slow the rate of corruption in our society. Obviously, intelligent design does not communicate the message of our Savior God who made the world and saved the world from sin. This message we will proclaim in our sermons, apologetics, and teachings.

The Lutheran apologist will recognize the opportunity to reach people with the gospel through the literary medium of myth and allegory.

There are Christian writers who have tried to reach people with the gospel through the writing of myth and allegory. G.K Chesterton, Charles Williams, J.R.R Tolkien, Dorothy Sayers, and C.S. Lewis are among them. Gene Veith, who is among the leaders today in defending magic and fantasy as a tool to lead people to the cross of Christ, offers some observations concerning this genre of literature.

Just as C.S. Lewis’s nonfiction works are effective in reaching modernists by showing reasons to believe in Christian doctrine, his fictional works are effective in reaching postmodernists by telling the Christian *story*. Lewis addresses his readers’ intellect with Christian truth in his nonfiction, and he addresses his readers’ imagination with Christian truth in his fiction.

The Chronicles of Narnia, his science-fiction trilogy, *The Great Divorce*, and *The Screwtape Letters* relate objective Christian doctrine to tangible, concrete life. They also appeal to another quality of postmodernists, their desire for mystery. Postmodernists not only do not have to have logical reasons to believe in something, they tend to prefer beliefs that do not have a logical reason. This is why they prefer “spirituality” to “religion,” embracing the mystical rather than the rational. This tendency can get postmodernists into trouble, leading them into flying saucer cults and New Age occultism. Those who have no concept of truth in their religion can be manipulated into believing just about anything, as long as it appeals to their desires and gives personal meaning to their lives.

One way Christianity can answer is to recover its own rich “spirituality,” and the “mysteries” of salvation—the incarnation, the atonement, the resurrection, and the life of the redeemed—which no one can fully grasp by human reason. Nor could we have

ever just dreamed up or constructed for ourselves such mind-blowing truths. Rather, they come from outside ourselves, by revelation of the Holy Spirit in God's Word, which puts them into a completely different category from both modernism with its reason and postmodernism with its anti-reason.

... I used to give copies of *Mere Christianity* to my non-Christian friends. At one time, the book left a strong impression (and sometimes still does for some people, the modernists and those who still use their minds). But lately, I have been frustrated by the way they say how glad they are that Lewis has the beliefs that he does, but that they have their own truths. His logical handling of Christianity does not get through to them. For people like that, I have them read Lewis's fiction, including *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.³⁴

The review of Veith's book by Angus Menuge also points us to the value of literary apologetics. He wrote:

Veith does a great service by giving a nuanced and measured reply to skeptics of Lewis's *Chronicles*, including Christians who think magic and fantasy are necessarily threats to the faith, and unbelievers, like Philip Pullman who seek to evangelize for atheism. Veith argues convincingly for the enduring value of Lewis's approach in a pluralistic, postmodern age, showing how his narratives lead the reader to the cross of Christ and away from unhealthy introversion and the occult.³⁵

The Lutheran apologist seeks to proclaim and defend the gospel in a culture which is hostile to Christ.

We will not spend a great deal of time on cultural apologetics. This is not to say it is not important. We have read Nancy Pearcey's book and will spend two days discussing it. So there isn't a great need to discuss the issues involved in cultural apologetics in this paper. However, permit some observations.

First of all, cultural apologetics covers a great variety of areas. It could be called apologetics and art, music, drama, media, education, etc. In considering all these different aspects of culture, it is important to know what is good and in harmony with God's will and what is at variance with God's will. Nothing comes to us in a vacuum. All things in culture are produced from specific worldviews which people have. I can listen to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and say it is a beautiful piece of music. However, when I hear the *Ode to Joy* from the choral section, I have difficulty considering the music apart from its worldview.³⁶ When I look at a picture Pablo Picasso painted of a woman, I have difficulty disassociating his art from his outlook on women. When we teach art, drama, education, etc., it is important to discuss with our students the worldviews from which our culture operates and whether they are in harmony with God's will.³⁷

Then, to do cultural apologetics, Christians need to live their faith out in the culture. Pearcey's observations are in place: "...many believers have absorbed the fact/value,

³⁴ Gene Veith, *The Soul of the Lion, the Witch, & the Wardrobe* (Colorado: Cook Communications Ministries, 2005), 201-203.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, back cover.

³⁶ The *Ode to Joy* was based on Schiller's poem, which emphasized the Enlightenment setting of humanism, rationalism, romanticism, and Deism.

³⁷ As examples of cultural apologetics, consider Gene Veith's book on art, *State of the Arts: From Bezalel to Mapplethorpe*, and the work done by Allen Quist in connection with *EdWatch*.

public/private dichotomy, restricting their faith to the religious sphere while adopting whatever views are current in their professional or social circles.”³⁸

On the one hand, John tells us, “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world” (1 John 15,16). On the other hand, Jesus tells us, “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:13-16).

These two statements do not contradict each other. On the one hand, the Lord directs us to remain uncontaminated by whatever our culture offers which is at variance with his Word. On the other hand, we are to be out and about in our society, giving a defense of the hope we have. In this way, we will act as a preserving influence against the corruption of society and as a beacon of light to the world around us.

Justo Gonzales, in his history text, offers some interesting observations as to why the early church grew so rapidly. He wrote:

The enormous numerical growth of the church in its first centuries leads us to the question of what methods it used to achieve such growth. The answer may surprise some modern Christians, for the ancient church knew nothing of “evangelistic services” or “revivals.” On the contrary, in the early church, worship centered on communion, and only baptized Christians were admitted to its celebration. Therefore, evangelism did not take place in church services, but rather, as Celsus said, in kitchens, shops, and markets. A few famous teachers, such as Justin and Origen, held debates in their schools, and thus won some converts among the intelligentsia. But the fact remains that most converts were made by anonymous Christians whose witness led others to their faith. ... Another surprising fact about the early expansion of Christianity is that, after the New Testament, very little is said of any missionaries going from place to place, like Paul and Barnabas had done. It is clear that the enormous spread of the Gospel in those first few centuries was not due to full-time missionaries, but rather to the many Christians who traveled for other reasons—slaves, merchants, exiles condemned to work in the mines, and the like.³⁹

Are there some lessons for us here? We could say:

Know your culture. Know the culture of those to whom you will speak. Know what is good and what is bad. Give a reason for the hope you have.

Equip God’s people so they can go out into the world and give a reason for the hope they have (Lutheran Apologetics: From our Classrooms and into the World). Recognize the potential every Christian has as a witness for Christ.

Recognize the importance of letting your light shine wherever you are, not just in church.

Don’t underestimate the power of the gospel. Apologetics doesn’t depend on us. We give a reason for the hope we have, and the Holy Spirit does the work.

³⁸ Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 33.

³⁹ Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: Vol. 1, The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation*, 98-99.

The Lutheran apologist will seek to be an influence for good in the political realm by giving a reason for the hope he/she has.

We know the horrible things that happened when the church became enmeshed in the affairs of the state. The Crusades, the Inquisition, the persecution of Puritans, and the Salem Witch Trials all stand out as glaring examples. However, does this mean that Christians should shun government office, stay out of politics, and never bring their Christian faith to bear on the societal issues of the day? No, it doesn't. Christians will recognize that the church's mission is to proclaim the gospel of Christ, not to improve society through legislation. However, that doesn't mean Christians should withdraw from the public square. As Nancy Pearcey indicated, this also is a realm where the Christian can give a reason for the hope he/she has.

We know that, in the Old Testament Law, God provided for the defense of those who often could not defend themselves: the widows, the orphans, the deaf and the blind. The psalmist Asaph also wrote, "How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked? ... Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked" (Psalm 82:2-4). There were provisions in the Mosaic Law that provided rights for women in a culture dominated by men. There were laws that protected women from being dumped precipitously by their husbands (Deuteronomy 24:1-4). If a man married a captive woman, he could not sell her into slavery if she displeased him. There was a test for an unfaithful wife (Numbers 6:11ff). If the woman was innocent, she had protection from the suspicions of a jealous husband.

There still is room for the Christian to defend the weak, the orphans, the poor and the oppressed today. As we do this, we have opportunity to give a defense of the hope we have. First of all, we are all part of the same family, the human family. Paul stated to the Athenians, "From one man he made every nation of men" (Acts 17:28). It is evolution that teaches there are superior and inferior people on earth. Paul declared all believers equal in status before God. He wrote of believers, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). John wrote, "I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne, and in front of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:9). Jesus said, "I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 8:11). In heaven there will be room for all believers at the banquet of the Lamb. No one will be excluded because of racial, societal, or gender issues. This is the hope that we have. There is no reason why we should exclude others from our company or oppress them because of these differences.

As we defend the cause of those who cannot defend themselves, we cannot but think of the unborn babies who are killed every day, offered at the altar of self-interest. In the face of millions of abortions, we need to speak out on behalf of unborn babies and give a biblical defense of the sanctity of human life. We also are reminded of the many people who face end-of-life issues who need counsel from the Word of God. We have a wonderful opportunity to give a defense of the hope believers have.

John Warwick Montgomery has written a number of works on the issue of the law and human rights.⁴⁰ We quote him as we conclude this section:

When Christians abrogate their responsibilities in national life, they present engraved invitations to non-Christians to step in and impress their values on the nation.

⁴⁰ *Law and Gospel* (1978), *The Law Above the Law* (1975), *Law and Morality: Friends or Foes?* (1994), *Human Rights and Human Dignity* (1986, 1995), *Slaughter of the Innocents* (1981), and *Christians in the Public Square* (1996).

According to John 8, only Christians are “free indeed,” because only they have been emancipated by Christ from debilitating slavery to sin; Christians, therefore, are just the people needed to articulate and put into practice the foundational American ideal of freedom.

What, in sum, is the root problem in American life that the revelationally committed Christian must bend all his efforts to solve? What produces melancholy in our bicentennial American as he faces the third century of his national existence? He fears that “things are out of control” – meaning out of his control – and thereby betrays the self-made-man syndrome that has corrupted so much of his history.

It may therefore be a blessing in disguise that things no longer appear to bend to our control. Perhaps the way is now open to a new era of dependence on the God of Scripture. If so, the proclamation of that wondrous option will depend squarely on the courageous entrance of Christian believers into all spheres of national life.⁴¹

The Lutheran apologist will give a defense of the hope he/she has in dealing with issues of ethics.

Ethics deals with what is right or wrong. Christian ethics is the practical application of the teachings of the Bible. Generally, ethical systems in the world have fallen into one of two categories. The following is a summary of the two categories and the ethics practiced by representative philosophies.

Deontological Systems. They are duty orientated. They require that we judge what is right or wrong according to a duty. Examples are:

Emotivism establishes right or wrong on the basis of emotional reasoning.

Voluntarism seeks to establish duty through the moral laws or rules formulated outside of a person.

Autonomism stresses that a person makes laws for himself by his own reason.

Positivism accepts the rules of the functional authorities in our lives. This may be government, an institution, or popular opinion. If the majority of people want abortion, then it must be right.

Teleological Systems focus on the goal or outcome of an action. If the outcome is good, then the end justifies the means. Examples are:

Natural law ethics denies the total depravity of man. It states that God has given us laws, and we must obey them. However, it believes that we can interpret these laws according to the intelligence and freedom which remain a part of our human nature even in our fallen state.

Proportionalism denies there are any general absolute principles which determine the good or evil of an action apart from the circumstances in which they take place.

Consequentialism or utilitarianism teaches that what brings the greatest good for the greatest amount of people must be right.

Situation ethics (Joseph Fletcher) states that each act in its own circumstances and with its own consequences may demand a different moral response imposed by the highest law of love.

Evolutionists and atheists deny there are any moral absolutes. The scientist, Will Provine, stated in the Ben Stein movie that evolution destroys any basis for ethics. We would respond to him and the systems above that God has given us absolutes in his Word, and that these

⁴¹ John Warwick Montgomery, “If You Can’t Beat ‘Em, Separate From Em,” in *Christians in the Public Square: Law, Gospel & Public Policy*, essays by C.E.B Cranfield, David Kilgour, M.P, John Warwick Montgomery (Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: Canadian Institute for Law, Theology, and Public Policy, Inc., 1996), 47.

commands are binding on all people of all times. Many Reformed ethicists join us in saying the Bible contains absolutes for all people of all ages. However, they forget the gospel which alone can move the Christian to respond in joy to God's will. As we live our faith and practice ethics, we must steer a clear course between the Scylla of evolutionary thinking and the Charybdis of legalism. As Lutheran apologists, we will defend both the absolutes of God's Word and the place of the gospel in enabling God's people to respond in joyful and willing service to God's will.

The Lutheran apologist will defend the gospel against cults and world religions as well as seek to proclaim the good news of salvation to free people from slavery to the devil.

We sing in one of our favorite mission hymns, "What though the fragrant breezes blow soft o'er distant isles" (CW 571:2). When I grew up, the word "distant" seemed to describe the religions of the world. They were all "over there" somewhere. That is not true today. They are here, flourishing among us. The church my son serves in Louisville, Kentucky, is less than a mile from a Hindu temple. Muslims have erected mosques in many of our cities. Buddhists present cultural exhibits on college campuses. When I served a congregation in California in the 1970s, traveling to Broadway Street in San Diego brought you into contact with the Hari Krishna group. Anyone who attempted to pass through the San Diego airport, the San Diego zoo, or the Wild Animal Park would encounter the Hari Krishna trying to raise money by selling flowers "for the children." New Age religions blend these world religions and serve them up in attractive "self-help" ways. These religions also intend to make converts. Islam is growing rapidly throughout Europe as well as in America. Anyone who lived through the 70s knows the impact the Hindu religion had on America through the Beatles and George Harrison's song, "My Sweet Lord." Book stores are full of Buddhist literature.

In addition, there has been a proliferation of cults in America. Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses aggressively seek converts in our neighborhoods. Names like "Heaven's Gate," Jim Jones, David Koresh, Mo Berg, and Sun Myung Moon (Unification Church) remind us how dangerous and how aggressive these groups can be. (A member of the Unification Church approached me in our mall in New Ulm about two years ago.) Many of you will remember the "deprogrammers" parents hired to get their children out of cults.

If we circulate in society, we will come into contact with world religions and cults. (With the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses, we don't have to circulate. We just have to be home when they call.) How should we react to these people? When the Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons call at our house, I don't slam the door in their face. I talk with them about Jesus and what he did to save us. When they come to my door, we generally speak for about an hour. Usually, their compatriots, who drive up and down the street, finally come and take them away. I talked with the lady from the Unification church about Jesus for over half an hour until her partner came and led her away. These are opportunities to give a defense of the hope that I have.

There are many books that have been written of late which help us in reaching out to people of world religions and cults. It is well worth our time to study these books, so we learn what these people believe, what their worldviews are, and how we can reach out to them. This will equip us to prepare ourselves to defend and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Lutheran apologetics belongs in our classrooms.

The title of this paper assigned to me was "Lutheran Apologetics: From Our Classrooms and Into the World." Perhaps the question that needs to be asked is, "What are we currently

doing in our courses to prepare our students to give a defense of the hope they have?" After going through the section on fideism, one might conclude that a formal study of apologetics in our midst is a rare occurrence. We noted Alvin Schmidt, a member of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, indicated there is no formal apologetic instruction in his synod. What about in our own synods? The *Quarterly* did present a favorable review of Craig Parton's book, *The Defense Never Rests*. Mark Paustian and Allen Quist have published books on apologetics. Bethany and Wisconsin Lutheran College have a course on apologetics. President Zarling made a presentation on apologetics to the Aulic at MLC a year or so ago. There have been two Summer Session classes on apologetics offered at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Beyond that, I don't know of any formal courses in apologetics that any of us have.

I would assume that we consider apologetics in conjunction with other courses. In religion courses, we equip our students to give a reason for the hope they have. We give them a doctrinal base from which to operate as apologists. In science, we deal with evolution and its aberrant beliefs. In literature, we point out Christ-figures and discuss ways in which they can serve as a bridge for leading people to Christ. In philosophy we look at the worldviews of the world's philosophers and our own Christian worldview. In education courses, we strive for Christ-centered education as we examine the methodological presuppositions used to teach others. In physical education courses, we teach why Lutheran coaches have a different worldview from non-Christian coaches. In other courses we do cultural apologetics. However, the question remains, "Is this adequate?"

I believe there is a need for more apologetics. Our students are looking for answers to the questions they have and the questions others have posed to them. These questions may come from parents, siblings, relatives, friends, dates, fiancés, spouses, or people with whom they work. Our students sincerely desire to be able to give people a reason for the hope they have. Are we meeting their needs, or, are we sending them out into a hostile world poorly equipped to deal with the barrage of questions they will face?

Rather than attempting to dump a collective guilt trip on us about whether or not we are teaching apologetics (guilt is a lousy motivator), rather than attempting to lead a crusade or a revival for more apologetics in our classrooms, I will offer a series of questions in the interest of encouraging the teaching of apologetics.

Does God want us to sanctify Christ in our hearts and always be ready to give a defense of the hope that we have?

Is apologetics a fruit of our Christian faith?

Should apologetics be in our curricula? If so, where should it be taught?

What concept of apologetics do we have? Is a faulty view of apologetics keeping us from teaching and encouraging people to give a defense of the hope they have?

Do we teach apologetics in our classes? If we are, where are we teaching it? If not, why aren't we teaching it or where do we expect it will be taught?

Are we doing the best job we can of teaching apologetics in our schools? Are there things we could do better? Are our hearts really into it?

Why aren't we offering apologetics to all our students in a formal course? Are other things more important? Is apologetics one of those things which would be nice but we just don't have time or room for a formal course? Is our current roster of courses the best we can do? Are we intimidated from trying to get a formal course in apologetics by the fear of including something else in the curriculum? (What will be removed so this new course can take its place?)

In pondering these questions, let us also remember Jesus Christ, “the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart” (Hebrews 12:2, 3). There is joy in the forgiveness of Jesus Christ. He always was ready to give an answer to people for the mission he had. He carried out all of God’s will for us. He suffered the punishment for our sins of commission and omission. Through faith in Jesus, through our baptism, God has given us Christ’s righteousness and forgiveness for all of our sins. We are the redeemed and forgiven sons and daughters of God.

Therefore, we do find joy in doing apologetics. Even in the face of persecution and scorn, there is still joy. “The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name” (Acts 5:41). There is joy in going out into the world and giving a defense of the hope we have. There is joy in equipping our students so they always are able to give a reason for the hope they have. Our joy will become their joy, and their joy is our joy. We will do our best to equip our students in apologetics as a way of saying “thank you” to Jesus who gave his all for us.

The Lutheran apologist’s mission is global: From our classrooms into the world.

Let us revisit the statement made by Justo Gonzalez as he examined reasons why the early church grew so rapidly (page 27). He stated, “It is clear that the enormous spread of the Gospel in those first few centuries was not due to full-time missionaries, but rather to the many Christians who traveled for other reasons—slaves, merchants, exiles condemned to work the mines, and the like.” Certainly, we encourage our students to do apologetics wherever they are. The world includes our immediate localities. However, our students and members are traveling the globe as never before. The airlines have made global travel easy. In half a day or so we can get to practically any area of the world. The internet and cell phones have opened up for us avenues of global communication. Our people are out there in all areas of the world.

What a fantastic opportunity we have to spread the gospel if our students give people an answer for the hope they have. We often think in terms of sending a missionary to an area of the world to establish a church there. Why, however, do we restrict our thinking to missionaries alone? All Christians are able to give answers for the hope they have. We need to lift our students’ vision to see a global picture. In view of the unprecedented opportunities the Lord has set before us, we need to equip these students to do the best they can to defend and proclaim the Christian faith.

What about the fear that the world is a nasty place in which to witness for Christ? The early Christians faced a world as nasty as ours. Yet, in spite of the opposition, they went out and gave a reason for the hope they had. We can persuade ourselves that it is too dangerous to go out into the world and share our faith. However, we may also look at the opposition we face as an opportunity to give people a defense of the hope we have.

The story is told in Marine Corps history of Lt. General Lewis B. “Chesty” Puller. During the Korean War, twenty-two enemy divisions surrounded his First Marine Division at the frozen Chosin Reservoir in Korea. Army headquarters fully expected to lose his entire division. Puller’s assessment of the situation was this: “All right, they are on our left, they’re on our right, they’re in front of us, they’re behind us...they can’t get away this time.”⁴² And, they didn’t. Puller destroyed seven divisions of enemy troops and led his division to safety.

⁴² <http://www.military-quotes.com/chesty-puller.htm>

We may look at all the opposition to Christianity in the world, wring our hands, and say there is nothing we can do. Or, we can look at all the opponents of Christianity out there in the world and say, "They can't get away from us this time." We have an army of troops, our students, to send out into the world to defend and proclaim the message of the crucified and risen Christ. In thankfulness to God we will equip them as best we can to give a defense of the hope they have.

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