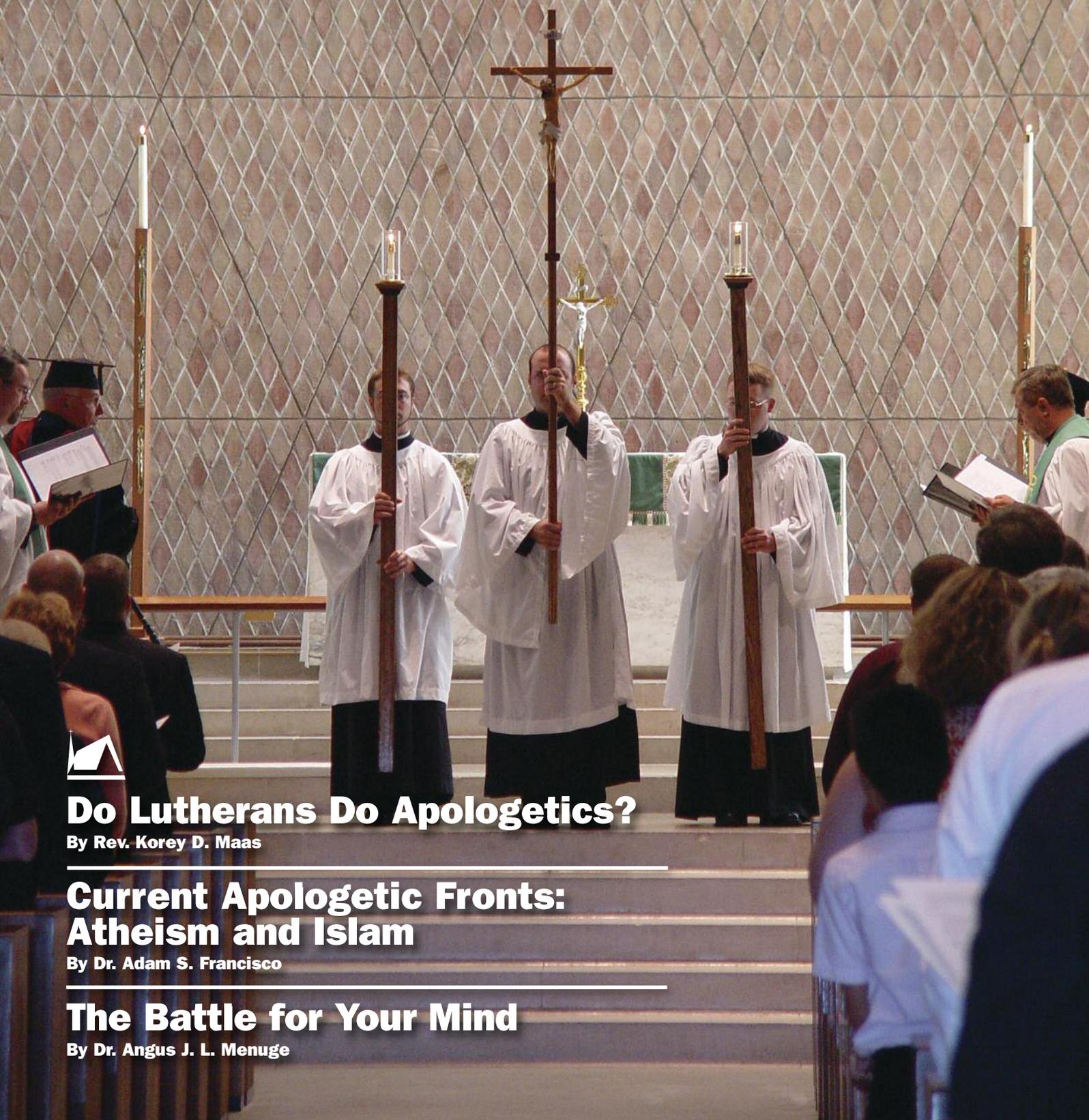


# For the Life of the World

## Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne

---

Spring 2009, Volume Thirteen, Number One



### **Do Lutherans Do Apologetics?**

By Rev. Korey D. Maas

---

### **Current Apologetic Fronts: Atheism and Islam**

By Dr. Adam S. Francisco

---

### **The Battle for Your Mind**

By Dr. Angus J. L. Menuge

# CONTENTS

Volume thirteen, Number One

## FEATURES

### 4 Do Lutherans Do Apologetics?

By Rev. Corey D. Maas

Likewise, the modern apologist says merely that if there are certain objections to the faith that can be addressed by reasonable appeals to evidence—or certain foundational facts that can be similarly established—then by all means, when speaking to the rational unbeliever, make every possible use of reason and evidence. By all means, tear down the intellectual barriers the skeptic has constructed to “protect” himself from a confrontation with the Gospel. No, doing so will not argue anyone into faith. But by means of reasonable and persuasive argument, as by means of the Law, “every mouth may be silenced” (Romans 3:19). And with mouths closed, perhaps way is made for ears to be opened

### 6 Current Apologetic Fronts: Atheism and Islam

By Dr. Adam Francisco

Proponents of Islam and atheism know that the best way to discredit their common enemy of Christianity is to raise doubts over the object of its faith. So they have both directed their attacks to the records of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. Historic and creedal Christianity, however, knows that such challenges are really nothing new. Still, this is not an excuse to ignore them, nor is it reason for Christians to further separate themselves from an increasingly hostile culture. Instead, it is a reminder that Christians must now, as always, be prepared to “make a defense” (1 Peter 3:15) for the hope that is ours in Christ as we “contend for the faith once and for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

### 10 The Battle for Your Mind

By Dr. Angus Menuge

Sensing the intellectual weakness of contemporary Christians, the so-called “new atheists” have mounted a ferocious attack on Christianity . . . In many ways, this has been a blessing in disguise. Bewildered and unprepared Christians have been awoken to the need to defend their faith. They have flocked to seminars on apologetics. And they have been encouraged by a torrent of articulate and scholarly replies to the skeptical onslaught. We can outdo our critics in admitting the weaknesses of individual Christians but show that God is not a delusion and that authentic Christianity has been great for civilization in many ways that have been forgotten.



## For the Life of the World

### PRESIDENT

Rev. Dr. Dean O. Wenthe

### PUBLISHER/EDITOR

Rev. Timothy R. Puls

### COPY EDITOR

Trudy Behning

### MANAGING EDITOR

Adriane Dorr

### ART DIRECTOR

Steve Blakey

### EDITORIAL ASSOCIATES

Rev. James Bushur ✕ Dr. Charles Gieschen

Dr. Naomichi Masaki

*For the Life of the World* is published quarterly by Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 6600 North Clinton Street, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46825. No portion of this publication may be reproduced without the written consent of the publisher of *For the Life of the World*. Copyright 2009. Printed in the United States. Postage paid at Minneapolis, Minnesota. *For the Life of the World* is mailed to all pastors and congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in the United States and Canada and to anyone interested in the work of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Current Apologetic Fronts: —

# Atheism and Islam

By Dr. Adam S. Francisco

American Christianity has always found itself in tension with secular culture. Very recently, however, two challenges with future ambitions have surfaced within that culture: atheism and Islam. The former seeks to overhaul the theistic heritage of the West with the purportedly scientific worldview of naturalism (or materialism). The latter attempts, with great stealth, to influence—and ultimately to dominate—secular space and popular religious discourse as part of its mission to advance the “cause of Allah.”





---

**Proponents of Islam and atheism know that the best way to discredit their common enemy of Christianity is to raise doubts over the object of its faith. So they have both directed their attacks to the records of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.**

---

Ten years ago, neither would have been taken too seriously. Atheism seemed to be on its way out, and Islam was viewed as a foreign, if not exotic, religion. Things changed, however, at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

On September 12, 2001, Sam Harris started writing his bestselling *End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (2004). Attempting to explain the roots of ideologically-inspired violence, he pointed at theology and religious faith in general. Other more-seasoned atheists such as Richard Dawkins seized the opportunity to publish extensive critiques of Christianity in particular. Comedian and outspoken agnostic Bill Maher went so far as to write and star in what was the most successful documentary of 2008—the portmanteau of religion and ridiculous—*Religulous*. The combined wit and sarcasm of these and other public critics of Christianity have guaranteed them an enormous amount of popularity in various media and academic environments.

Amidst this anti-Christian milieu, Muslim organizations have been busy constructing a kinder, gentler image of Islam. Counting on our general ignorance of world religions, they have been largely successful at passing it off as “the religion of peace.” And they have also moved on to fulfill the Quran’s injunction to “cause Islam to prevail over all other religions” (9:33) by advancing it as a simple, rational, and moral religion.

Proponents of Islam and atheism know that the best way to discredit their common enemy of Christianity is to raise doubts over the object of its faith. So they have both directed their attacks to the records of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. In *God Is Not Great* (2007), after suggesting Jesus may not have been a historical personage at all, Christopher Hitchens claims that biblical scholars no longer trust the canonical gospels as historical documents. Louay Fatoohi, an Iraqi-born Christian and now British convert to Islam, argues similarly in *Mystery of the Historical Jesus* (2007) and *Mystery of the Crucifixion* (2008). He goes a step further, however, and asserts that the best record of Jesus’ life is the Quran (where Jesus escapes crucifixion, ascends into heaven, and awaits His return on Judgment Day when He will denounce those who confess Him to be the Son of God). What is so interesting about all these attacks on the historicity of the Christian faith is that they all cite modern biblical scholarship—particularly that of Bart Ehrman whose books are widely used in religious studies departments across the country—to support their assertions.

This is all taking place at a time when many Christians have grown complacent of the apologetic task. This is a potential recipe for disaster. Historic and creedal Christianity, however, knows that such challenges are really nothing new. Still, this is not an excuse to ignore them, nor is it reason for Christians to further separate themselves from an increasingly hostile culture. Instead, it is a reminder that Christians must now, as always, be prepared to “make a defense” (1 Peter 3:15) for the hope that is ours in Christ as we “contend for the faith once and for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). [▲](#)

*Dr. Adam S. Francisco is Assistant Professor of Historical Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana.*

