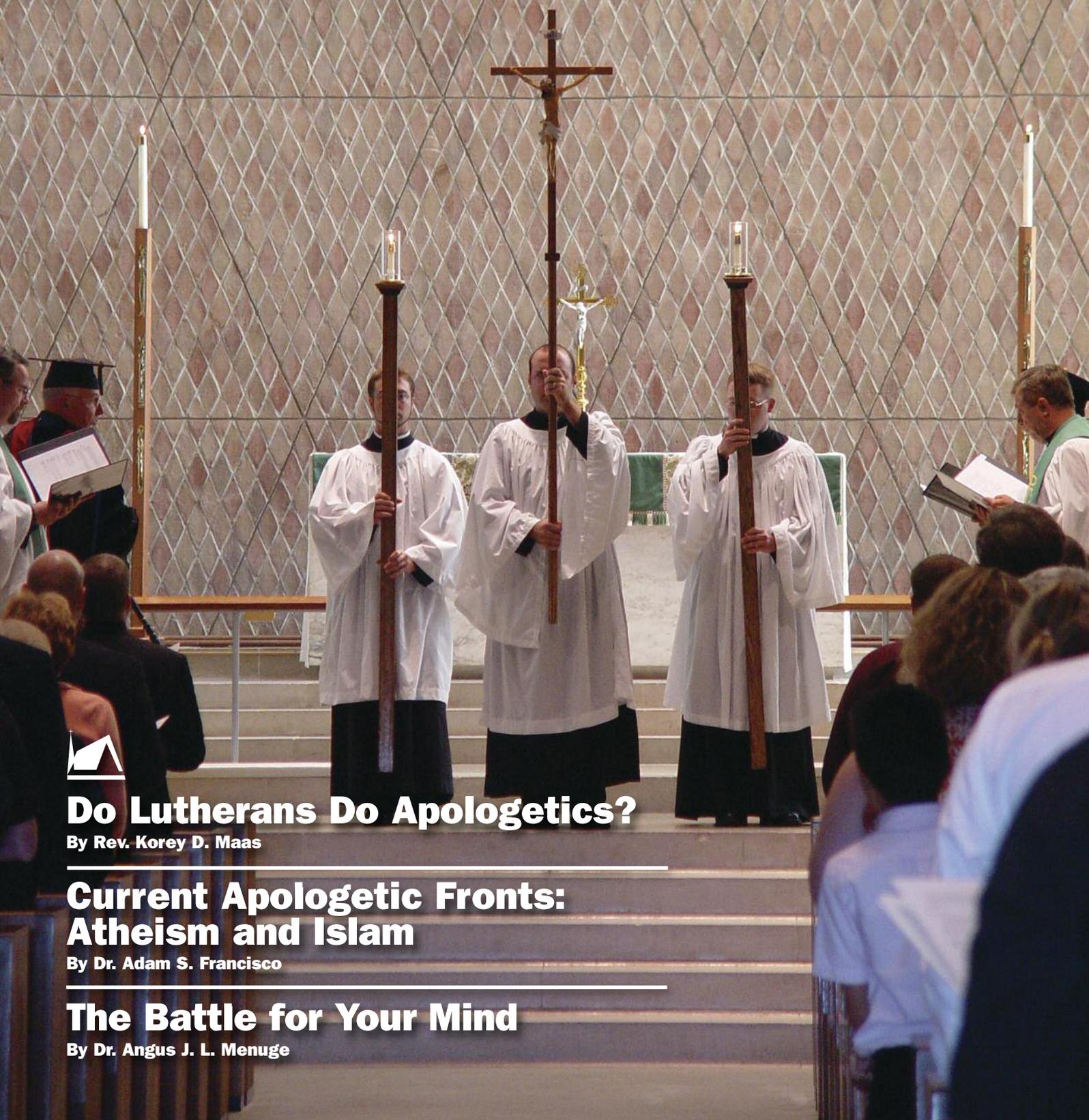


For the Life of the World

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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?

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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.



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Do Lutherans Do Apologetics?

By Rev. Korey D. Maas

In this issue implicitly devoted to what is known among the theological disciplines as apologetics—the intellectual defense of the faith—it is well worth addressing the often heard objection that “Lutherans don’t do apologetics.” When heard, this claim is frequently followed by a supporting statement to the effect that, “You can’t argue people into faith.” For good measure, the historically-minded might even point out that Martin Luther himself had some not very nice things to say about theological appeals to fallen human reason.

And while each of these statements might be true, each also needs to be thoroughly qualified. To say that Lutherans don't do apologetics may be, unfortunately, largely true as a simple description of recent North American Lutheranism. Yet it is certainly not the case that Lutherans have always been averse to the project, as becomes evident even upon examining the prolegomena of many seventeenth-century Lutheran dogmatic works.

Similarly, it is indeed true that Luther, in high polemical mode, did sometimes rail against reason's misuse and abuse. Yet in less polemical writings—the Small Catechism, for example—he is quick to point out that reason is, of course, one of God's good gifts. And even in his more controversial writings he could admit that “we must use our reason or else give way to the fanatics” (*AE* 37:224).

But this is not at all to suggest that one can argue people into faith. Doing so, however, is not the task of apologetics. Given that faith is created by God Himself via the proclamation of the Gospel, the primary apologetic task might simply be characterized as addressing those intellectual objections the unbeliever raises in an attempt to dismiss a clear proclamation of the Gospel. And quite understandably, these objections are most frequently aimed at matters of empirical fact, the sorts of Christian claims that might at least in theory be verified or falsified by some logical or investigative means. The reason this is perfectly understandable is that Christianity, unlike most world religions, is firmly grounded in objective historical events.

To ask whether Jesus existed, or whether He publicly claimed to be God incarnate, or whether He rose from death in order to establish that claim is not at all to ask an esoteric “religious” question

such as, “What is the sound of one hand clapping?” It is to ask a question about objective, historical facts. It is, therefore, not surprising that the apostles themselves regularly appealed to empirical evidence in their proclamation of Christ. John insists that he writes about what he and his companions “have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched” (1 John 1:1). Peter, presenting the case for Christ to a hostile audience, not only reminds his hearers that he was an eyewitness to the events described, but refers to these events having happened “as you yourselves know” (Acts 2:22).

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. 🏹

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