

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

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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).

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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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The Battle for Your Mind

Dr. Angus J. L. Menuge

In 1963, Harry Blamires's book *The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think* warned that there was no longer a Christian mind in post-Christian Europe. There was still a reservoir of Christian values, but even intelligent Christians had lost the ability to think Christianly about the world. According to Mark Noll in *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, despite America's greater Christian vigor, the Christian mind has suffered here as well. Starting in the late nineteenth century, universities and even seminaries were increasingly influenced by the naturalistic assumptions of modern science, doubting the miraculous and reducing Jesus to an ideal human example. Many Christians responded by withdrawing from the intellectual world, which only accelerated its secularization.

Today, this means that almost everything the academy calls knowledge is deeply conditioned by a secular outlook. This may not matter in the case of basic facts (there is no so-called Christian periodic table), but it does matter when we consider questions of meaning, value, and

Many of today's Christian teenagers subscribe to an unbiblical moralistic therapeutic deism. In this vision, God is a comforting spiritual abstraction who exists to make you feel good about yourself but who does not pester you with any actual teachings or demands on your life.

purpose. Is work simply a means to gain revenue, or is it a calling from God to serve one's neighbor? Are human beings merely biological and sociological resources, or are they especially made in the image of a God who also redeemed them?

The abdication of Christian thought to secularism has produced the confused and divided Christians of today. In *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity From its Cultural Captivity*, Nancy Pearcey has shown that contemporary evangelicals have conflicted, two-story minds. In the lower story, one finds the realm of objective fact, scientific materialism, and secularism reign. Ethics, religion, and meaning are relegated to the upper story of subjective, personal opinion where knowledge is impossible.

This is why some Christians are afraid to confess that Jesus is the *only* way of salvation. And it is a reason some reject apologetics: if faith is like a private preference for rum truffles, how can it possibly be defended? While some argue that we should simply get on with preaching the Gospel, the great Presbyterian theologian J. Gresham Machen long ago revealed the weakness in this approach in his *The Importance of Christian Scholarship in the Defense of the Faith*:

When men talk thus about propagating Christianity without defending it, the thing that they are propagating is pretty sure not to be Christianity at all [but] . . . an anti-intellectualistic, non-doctrinal Modernism; and the reason why it requires no defense is simply that it is so completely in accord with the current of the age.

Machen has been proved correct. With no way to defend Christian doctrine as truth, say Christian Smith and Melissa Denton in *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, many of today's Christian teenagers subscribe to an unbiblical moralistic therapeutic deism. In this vision, God is a comforting spiritual abstraction who exists to make you feel good about yourself but who does not pester you with any actual teachings or demands on your life.

Sensing the intellectual weakness of contemporary Christians, the so-called "new atheists" have mounted a ferocious attack on Christianity, which can be clearly seen in works such as Sam Harris' *Letter to a Christian Nation* and Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion*. 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 are often forgotten.

Really, we can see this situation as a gift, an opportunity to recapture the idea of Christian truths, and to show the world just how much Christianity has to offer. I am delighted to see Concordia Theological Seminary moving boldly in this direction. 🏰

Dr. Angus Menuge is Professor of Philosophy at Concordia University Mequon. After obtaining his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in philosophy, he was awarded the Diploma in Christian Apologetics from the International Academy of Apologetics in Strasbourg, France, in 2003.



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