



## Brief

### *Reasons to Believe · Chapter 1 — More Than a Feeling*

#### Chapter Summary

In the opening chapter of *Reasons to Believe*, Scott Hahn challenges the contemporary assumption that religious faith is a subjective, emotional "leap in the dark." Drawing from his personal intellectual journey—specifically a college-era challenge regarding the biblical basis for infant baptism—Hahn illustrates that genuine faith is a reasonable and intellectually grounded response to objective truth. He argues that while feelings are unstable and temporary, faith must rest on the enduring foundation of reason, logic, and divine revelation. The chapter establishes apologetics not as a form of verbal aggression, but as a disciplined, humble, and prepared defense of the hope found in Christ, asserting that the mysteries of the faith are eminently knowable because God willed them to be revealed through Scripture, creation, and the heritage of the Church.

#### Core Thesis Statement

Faith is not an irrational leap or a mere emotional experience; it is a reasonable, intellectually honest response to truth that harmonizes the heart and the mind.

#### Key Arguments

- 1. The Instability of Emotion:** Feelings and "spiritual highs" are temporary and fluctuate; therefore, they constitute a weak foundation for a lifelong commitment to truth.
- 2. The Biblical Precedent for Infant Baptism:** Using the continuity of God's covenants, Hahn argues that just as infants were included in the Old Covenant through circumcision, they are included in the New Covenant through baptism, as supported by the commands of Christ and the preaching of the Apostles.
- 3. The Harmony of Faith and Reason:** Reason helps individuals investigate truth, while faith allows them to trust truths that reason points toward but cannot fully grasp alone. They are complementary rather than contradictory.
- 4. The Knowability of Divine Mysteries:** Although the mysteries of Christianity are



unfathomable and surpass human reasoning power, they are not "unknowable" or "unreasonable," as God has willed to disclose them through the "book of nature" and Scripture.

5. **The Intellectual Necessity of Dogma:** When officially defined teachings (dogma) are dismissed in favor of generalized emotion, religion eventually loses its force and collapses. Dogma provides the necessary rational framework for faith.

6. **The Nature of True Apologetics:** Effective defense of the faith (apologetics) requires deep preparation, prayer, and humility rather than "snappy answers" or memorized talking points.

7. **The Universality of Truth:** Following the principle of St. Justin Martyr, Christians can engage with any philosophy or science because "whatever is true is ours," as all truth originates from God.

Key Vocabulary Term, Definition Apologetics, "The theological art of explaining and defending the Christian faith using reason, logic, history, and Scripture (from the Greek apologia, meaning a formal defense)." Dogma, Officially defined teachings of the Church held as divinely revealed truths; definitive doctrine rather than opinion. Mystagogy, Guidance into the mysteries of faith; leading a person deeper into truths they have already received. Fideism, The erroneous belief that one should rely on faith alone without any engagement of reason. Objective Truth, "Truth that exists independently of personal opinion, feeling, or subjective experience." Transcendence, The reality or existence of something beyond the material world.

**Notable Figures St. Justin Martyr:** An early Christian apologist who taught that "whatever is true is ours," allowing Christians to claim truth wherever it is found, including in pagan philosophy. Worthy Successors in Apologetics: Hahn identifies several modern figures whose work continues the apologetic tradition, including: James Acon, Dave Armstrong, Mark Bromley, Jeff Cavins, David Curry, Fr. George Dugan, Marcus Grodi, Fr. John Harden SJ, Thomas Howard, Kenneth J. Howell, Karl Keating, Peter Kreeft, Patrick Madrid, Rosalind Moss, Fr. William Most, Fr. Mitch Pacwa SJ, Steven Ray, Allen Schreck, David Scott, Mark Shea, and Tim Staples.

Scripture References and Apologetics Functions Scripture

Reference, Content/Context, Apologetics Function 1 Peter 3:15, ""Always be ready to give a logical defense... yet do it with gentleness and respect."" "The foundational mandate for apologetics; emphasizes a reasoned, humble defense rather than argument for its own sake." Matthew 19:14, ""Let the children come to me... for the Kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."" "Used to demonstrate that children are rightful members of the Kingdom, providing a basis for infant baptism." Matthew 28:18-19, "The Great Commission: "Go therefore and make



disciples... baptizing them." "Establishes baptism as an authoritative directive and command from Christ, not a feeling-based preference." Acts 2:38-39, "The promise was made to you and your children." "Explicit biblical evidence that the promise of baptism and the Holy Spirit extends to the next generation, mirroring Old Covenant inclusion." Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel..." "The "apologetics imperative" to own the gifts of the faith (like dogma) even when they are caricatured by the culture."

## Suggested Discussion Questions

- 1. Defining the Terms:** Many people confuse "apologetics" with "apologizing" for one's beliefs. Based on Chapter 1, how does Scott Hahn redefine this term, and why is the distinction between "snappy answers" and "deep preparation" so vital for a modern believer?
- 2. Faith vs. Feeling:** Hahn argues that "faith is not a feeling; it is a way of knowing." How does anchoring faith in reason change the way a person handles seasons of emotional dryness or "spiritual lows"?
- 3. The Role of Dogma:** In a culture that often views dogma as the "antithesis of reason" or an external imposition, why does Hahn insist that religion without dogma eventually loses its "force" and "impulse"?
- 4. The "Book of Nature":** Hahn mentions that God reveals Himself through both Scripture and creation. How can we use "natural reasons"—logic, science, and common sense—to build a bridge for skeptics who may not yet accept the authority of the Bible?
- 5. Preparation and Humility:** 1 Peter 3:15 calls for a defense made with "gentleness and respect." In a polarized digital age, how can we balance the "good offense" of deep intellectual study with the humility required to be a persuasive witness?