



# Thematic Glossary

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

### 1. Introduction: Moving Beyond Feeling

In a contemporary culture that often dismisses faith as a "blind leap" or a private emotional high, it is essential to recover the intellectual rigour of the Christian tradition. This glossary is designed to facilitate your transition from a "feeling-based" faith—which is inherently unstable and temporary—to a "reason-based" conviction grounded in objective truth. By anchoring our belief in the mind rather than just the heart, we ensure our witness can withstand the fluctuations of emotion and the pressures of skepticism. Course Objective: The aim of this study is to help learners understand that believing in God is not a sign of intellectual weakness but of intellectual honesty. Christians are called to be prepared, thoughtful defenders of the faith who utilize reason, scripture, history, and logic to explain the grounds of their hope. With this objective in mind, we begin by defining the foundational terms that govern the relationship between faith and the human intellect.

### 2. Category I: The Nature of Faith

The following terms establish the intellectual framework required to understand faith as an act of the mind directed toward reality. — Term — Definition (Scott Hahn's Perspective) — Apologetic Significance — — — — — Faith — A form of trust or belief that is firmly grounded in truth, testimony, and reason rather than mere emotion. — Anchoring faith in truth protects it from the charge of being an "irrational leap." It demonstrates that faith is a valid way of knowing. — Reason — The human capacity for logical thinking and analysis, which mirrors the rational trust we exercise daily when we believe a doctor's diagnosis or a historian's account. — Reason provides the necessary foundation for the trust that faith requires, allowing us to investigate and verify the signs of revelation. — Objective Truth — Truth that exists as a fixed reality independently of personal opinion, cultural trends, or individual feelings. — Defending the faith requires an objective target; the laws of God remain inexorable regardless of how a subject feels about them. — Transcendence — The reality or existence of a divine order that lies beyond the confines of the material world. — Recognizing transcendence acknowledges the universal human longing for ultimate meaning, suggesting we are naturally oriented toward God. — By establishing this intellectual foundation, we see that faith is a reasonable response to evidence, which necessitates a specific, disciplined method of defense.

### 3. Category II: The Practice of Apologetics



Apologetics is the theological art of explaining and defending the Christian faith. It is derived from the Greek *apologia*, meaning a formal defense, and requires a balance of intellectual preparation and spiritual humility. **The St. Justin Martyr Principle:** This principle asserts that "whatever is true is ours." **Why It Matters** This gives you the freedom to engage with science, philosophy, and secular culture without fear; because all truth ultimately belongs to God, secular insights can be viewed as "seeds of the Word."

**Preparation vs. Aggression:** Apologetics is a matter of being intellectually prepared rather than being interpersonally combative. **Why It Matters** If your defense is rooted in deep study and prayer rather than just memorized talking points, your witness becomes a persuasive invitation rather than a perceived attack. **The "Good Offense" through Study:** Hahn suggests that the best defense is a "good offense," which begins by seeking answers that satisfy the apologist's own intellect first. **Why It Matters** By resolving your own intellectual difficulties through profound study, you develop a clear-eyed Catholic worldview that naturally and authentically addresses the objections of others. **Gentleness and Respect (1 Peter 3:15):** The foundational command of the New Testament is to provide a logical defense with humility and reverence. **Why It Matters** Approaching a skeptic with gentleness changes the tone of the encounter from an argument to a witness rooted in hope, making the truth more attractive to the seeker. This disciplined practice of defense ensures that the specific theological pillars of our faith are presented with clarity and conviction.

#### 4. **Category III:** Theological Concepts and Pillars

**Dogma** Dogmas are the officially defined teachings of the Church held as divinely revealed truths. They represent definitive doctrine rather than mere personal opinion or preference. **Reflective Note:** Dogma is a gift because it provides a firm foundation for the mind; it is not an imposition, but a partner to reason that prevents faith from collapsing into sentimentality. **Mystagogy** Mystagogy is the guidance into the mysteries of faith, leading a person deeper into truths they have already received. It focuses on the "inside" participation in the life of God rather than a simple "outside" explanation of doctrines. **Reflective Note:** This is a gift because it moves the learner beyond abstract definitions and into a lived experience of the divine mysteries. **The Mysteries of Christianity** These are truths of the faith that are unfathomable, meaning they cannot be fully mastered by the human mind. Despite their depth, they are eminently knowable because God has willed them to be revealed through Scripture and creation. **Reflective Note:** These mysteries are gifts that allow us to participate in God's own life, ensuring that our search for truth is an eternal journey rather than a finite puzzle. **Baptism** Baptism is a sign instituted by Christ using water to signify the coming of the Kingdom and inclusion in God's new covenant. This sacrament follows the logic of the Old Covenant, where God welcomed infants into His people through circumcision for two thousand years. **Reflective Note:**



Baptism is a gift of inclusion; by reflecting on Matthew 19:14 ("the Kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these"), we see the rational scriptural basis for extending God's promise even to children. "Faith is not a feeling; it is a way of knowing." Understanding these pillars allows the apologist to identify and avoid the common intellectual pitfalls that characterize modern secularism.

## 5. Category IV: Common Errors and Misconceptions

To defend the faith effectively, one must recognize the philosophical errors that lead to a distorted or weakened belief system.

**Fideism:** The error of relying on faith alone while completely ignoring or rejecting the role of reason in the life of a believer. **Skepticism:** The doubt that certain truths—specifically those concerning God and religious revelation—can be known with certainty. **Subjectivism:** The belief that religion is based solely on personal emotion or private opinion rather than on objective, historical facts. When faith is stripped of dogma and reason, the following outcomes are inevitable: **Collapse:** Without a rational foundation beneath the feeling, the structure of religion eventually falls apart when emotions change. **Caricature:** Faith is easily mocked by the culture as "bigotry" or "superstition" because it lacks a logical, defensible framework. **Loss of Essence:** The religion loses its transformative force, becoming merely "morality touched by emotion" rather than a supernatural life. **Countering the Secularist View:** Secularists often claim that dogma is an "imposition on the mind" or even a form of intellectual violence. To counter this, the apologist must demonstrate that the dogmas of faith are entirely compatible with reason. While the articles of the Creed surpass the limits of human reasoning power, they are never unreasonable.

## 6. Summary Checklist for the Aspiring Apologist

To move from a feeling-based faith to a prepared defense, integrate the following steps into your weekly routine: **Rational Examination:** Spend 15–20 minutes weekly evaluating why you believe. Write down the evidence, historical data, and logical reasoning that support your convictions. **Separating Feelings from Foundations:** When your emotions fluctuate, pause and ask: "What do I know to be true?" and "What evidence supports this truth regardless of my current mood?" **Pursuing Truth through Study:** Commit to one intellectual resource a month—a work of theology, history, or philosophy—to ensure your mind is formed by "profound study" rather than "snappy answers." As you engage the world, let your efforts be guided by the "apologetics imperative" found in Romans 1:16: Do not be ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation. Armed with reason and truth, you can provide a credible accounting for the hope that is within you.