



# Scriptural Commentary

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

### 1. Introduction: Moving Beyond "More Than a Feeling"

In our contemporary age, faith is frequently reduced to a subjective emotional impulse—a fleeting "feeling" that one either possesses or lacks. However, as we explore the foundational insights of Scott Hahn, we recognize that genuine faith is far from an irrational leap into the dark or a wave of unstable emotionalism. On the contrary, it is a reasonable, intellectually disciplined response to objective truth. While our emotions are prone to fluctuate, the truth of God's revelation remains fixed and "inexorable." As we begin our study of the *preambula fidei*—the preambles of faith—we must first correct the modern tendency to divorce the heart from the mind. Fideism is the theological error of asserting that faith is independent of, or even adversarial to, human reason. This view suggests that we should rely on "blind faith" alone, excluding the rigorous engagement of the intellect. The Catholic intellectual tradition firmly rejects this, teaching instead that faith and reason are the "two wings" on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth. Reason prepares the way for faith, and faith, in turn, elevates reason to grasp truths it could never reach on its own. Having recognized the internal trap of fideism, we must now look to the external mandate that calls us to account for the hope within us. Our faith is not a secret to be felt, but a truth to be articulated and defended.

### 2. The Mandate for Reasoned Defense: 1 Peter 3:15

Verse Text (AMP): "But in your hearts set Christ apart as holy, as Lord. Always be ready to give a logical defense to anyone who asks you to account for the hope and confident assurance that is within you, yet do it with gentleness and respect." Hahn's *Apologetics Context* Scott Hahn identifies this as the "foundational apologetics verse," the very cornerstone of our calling. He emphasizes that the Christian life is not merely a private experience of hope, but a public commitment to be "always ready." For Hahn, this defense is an act of witness rooted in the Lordship of Christ. It is not an exercise in intellectual aggression or "argument for argument's sake," but a humble and prepared response to those seeking the truth. Theological Commentary The Holy Spirit, through the Apostle Peter, employs the Greek term *apologia*. In the ancient world, this was not a "simple apology" or an expression of regret, but a formal, logical defense. This implies that the believer must be "prepared" through a lifetime of disciplined study and prayer. We are commanded to provide a "logical" accounting, yet we are reminded to maintain the character of Christ—delivering our defense with "gentleness and respect." Connection to Faith and Reason This mandate provides scriptural proof that faith is a distinct "way of knowing" that is defensible on rational grounds. If faith were merely a subjective emotion, a "logical defense"



would be impossible. By requiring us to "account" for our hope, Scripture affirms that religious truth is objective and accessible to the human mind. We do not ask seekers to ignore their reason; we ask them to use it to its fullest capacity.

### 3. The Covenantal Status of Children: Matthew 19:14

Verse Text (GNT): "Jesus said, 'Let the children come to me and do not stop them, because the Kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.'" Hahn's Apologetics Context Hahn draws from

his own intellectual journey to illustrate this truth. As a college freshman, he was challenged by friends who were thrilled with being "dunked for real"—arguing that their infant baptisms were invalid because they couldn't "remember" or "feel" them. They pointed to "apparent miracles" in their new churches, but Hahn realized he needed to move from emotional highs to "disciplined learning." He countered their skepticism by asking: is it biblical to exclude those whom Christ explicitly welcomes? Theological Commentary The phrase "such belongs the kingdom of heaven" is a divine indicator of inclusion within the covenantal inheritance. Hahn notes that for 2,000 years, God welcomed newborns into Israel through circumcision. If God intended to make a "radical change" in the New Covenant by excluding infants, He would have said so explicitly. Reason dictates that the Kingdom is a gift of grace, not a reward for intellectual or emotional maturity. Connection to Faith and Reason This verse challenges the "feeling-based" requirement for sacraments. "Right reason" acknowledges that if the Kingdom belongs to children, then baptism—the sign of the Kingdom's coming—cannot be withheld. To base a sacrament on a person's "testimony" or "memory" is to make the objective work of God dependent on the subjective state of man.

### 4. The Authoritative Directive: Matthew 28:18-19

Verse Text (AMP): "Jesus came up and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.'" Hahn's Apologetics Context Hahn argues that baptism is a "command," not a preference or a decision left to human sentiment. Because Christ possesses "all authority," His directives are binding. In the sacramental economy, Christ uses "the most common matter—water"—to convey supernatural grace, demonstrating that God communicates through the visible, natural order He created. Theological Commentary The "Great Commission" is the formal institution of a sacrament. It is an authoritative directive that ignores human "readiness" in favor of divine mandate. We see here the "inexorable" nature of God's laws; they do not fluctuate based on whether we feel inspired by them. They are fixed realities willed by God to be known and obeyed. Connection to Faith and Reason "Right reason" acknowledges that a Creator has the authority to set the terms of relationship with His creation. By grounding baptism in Christ's total authority rather than human emotion, this passage shows that the



sacraments are objective realities. Our reason recognizes the logic of a King issuing a decree for the benefit of His entire kingdom—"all the nations," without exception.

## 5. **The Perpetual Promise:** Acts 2:38-39

Verse Text (GNT): "Peter said to them, 'Each one of you must turn away from your sins and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven; and you will receive God's gift, the Holy Spirit. For God's promise was made to you and your children, and to all who are far away—all whom the Lord our God calls to himself.'" Hahn's Apologetics Context This serves as Hahn's primary biblical evidence for the continuity of the covenant. He illustrates a "heritage of reflection," where we check our personal hunches against the historical continuity of God's dealings with man. If the Old Covenant included the children of the faithful, the New Covenant—which is greater—surely does not offer less. Theological Commentary The explicit promise to "you and your children" mirrors the language of the Abrahamic covenant. Reason

recognizes that God's way of dealing with humanity has always been familial and communal. To exclude infants would be a departure from the entire biblical narrative of a God who calls families to Himself. Connection to Faith and Reason Reason protects the "force" of religious truth by ensuring it is consistent with history. A "faith" that suddenly changes the rules of the covenant after two millennia of practice would be a faith that fails the test of reason. Instead, the Perpetual Promise shows a logical, historical, and biblical continuity that satisfies the mind as much as it comforts the heart.

## 6. **The Intellectual Courage of the Gospel:** Romans 1:16

Verse Text (AMP): "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation, to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." Hahn's Apologetics Context Hahn identifies an "apologetics imperative" here: we must refuse to be ashamed of dogma. In a secular culture, dogma is often caricatured as "superstition" or "bigotry." For the secularist, dogma is the "antithesis of reason"—something they believe is "imposed with violence against the very nature of the mind." We must have the courage to take ownership of these gifts, knowing they are the power of God. Theological Commentary When dogma is slighted or dismissed, religion inevitably collapses into "generalized emotion" and "ethical intention." It loses the "force of its impulse." Dogmas are not chains on the mind; they are the structures that protect the truth. While the articles of the Creed "surpass the limits" of human reasoning power, they are never "unreasonable." Connection to Faith and Reason Reason acts as a guardian of the Gospel's "force." By showing that dogmas are compatible with reason, the apologist ensures that faith does not dissolve into mere sentimentality. Intellectual courage allows us to stand before a skeptical world and show that our "dogma" is actually the highest form of intellectual honesty—a recognition of truths that God Himself has willed to be known.



## 7. **Synthesis:** The Intellectual and Covenantal Case

As we weave these scriptural threads together, we find a "clear-eyed Catholic worldview" that utilizes logic, history, and scripture to engage the world without fear.

The Three Pillars of a Reasoned Faith

1. **The Command:** Our faith is not a subjective choice but a response to the "All Authority" of Jesus Christ. He provides objective directives that do not change based on our emotional state (Matthew 28:18-19).

2. **The Continuity:** The New Covenant is the logical and historical fulfillment of the Old. The promise to "you and your children" maintains the 2,000-year covenantal structure established by God (Acts 2:38-39; Matthew 19:14).

3. **The Credibility:** We are under a divine mandate to provide an apologia—a logical defense. This requires a "mystagogy" of sorts—a deeper entry into the mysteries through profound study, prayer, and the "disciplined learning" of the Church (1 Peter 3:15; Romans 1:16). Final Thought: The St. Justin Martyr Principle Following the example of the early apologists, we must embrace the principle of St. Justin Martyr: "Whatever is true is ours." Because God is the author of all reality, we do not fear science, philosophy, or logic. We view the best of human thought as "Seeds of the

Word" (Logos Spermatikos)—fragments of truth that find their ultimate home and fulfillment in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Use your reason to explore the world, and let your faith lead you to the Source of all truth.