

The Architecture of Rational Belief

A synthesis of Chapter 1 of Scott Hahn's Reasons to Believe

*“Faith is not a feeling;
it is a way of knowing.”*



The Danger of the Unexamined Foundation

THE CHALLENGE

A comfortable, inherited belief is suddenly stress-tested by a peer's simple question: "Where do you see infant baptism in the New Testament?"

THE VULNERABILITY

Blind faith is exposed as inadequate. Mere emotion cannot withstand genuine intellectual scrutiny.

THE TURNING POINT

The decision to "test every spirit." Moving from emotional reliance to acquiring knowledge and right reason — rebuilding the foundation.



Emotion vs. Foundation

	Feeling-Based Religion	Reasoned Faith
Stability	Fluctuates constantly. Unstable and temporary.	Enduring. Rests on fixed, objective truth.
Reaction to Crisis	Collapses when enthusiasm or emotion fades.	Holds firm. God's laws are knowable without strong emotions or miracles.
Primary Metric	Personal experience and subjective intention.	Logic, evidence, history, and reasoned investigation.



Faith Completes Reason

A Unified Mind

REASON

The human capacity for logical thinking, analysis, and judgment. It investigates and points toward ultimate, objective truth.

FAITH

An act of informed trust. It lets the mind firmly hold the truths that reason points toward but cannot fully grasp alone.

WARNING · FIDEISM

The Church explicitly rejects fideism — the error of relying on faith alone while discarding human reason.



WE ALREADY LIVE THIS WAY

The Continuum of Rational Trust

HISTORICAL TRUST

We trust scholars and records about historical events we never personally witnessed.

SCIENTIFIC TRUST

We trust physicians and experts about facts we cannot independently verify.

RELATIONAL TRUST

We trust loved ones completely, without demanding mathematical proof of their loyalty.

DIVINE TRUST

Faith in God follows the same rational pattern — informed trust built on signs, history, and credible testimony.



Dogma as Scaffolding, Not Restriction

DOGMA

Officially defined teachings of the Church, held as divinely revealed truth — not opinion, not preference, but definitive doctrine.

THE SECULAR VIEW

Sees dogma as violence against the mind — an artificial restriction imposed from the outside.

THE APOLOGETIC REALITY

Dogmas are the load-bearing walls of belief. Without them, religion degrades into vague intentions and soon collapses.



The Triad of Divine Disclosure

Unfathomable, yet eminently knowable — because God willed them to be known.

PILLAR I

Scripture

God deliberately revealing His nature and commands through the written Word.

PILLAR II

Creation

God's majestic self-disclosure, evident in the physical world — the "book of nature."

PILLAR III

Church Heritage

The unbroken historical continuity and deep theological reflection preserved by the Church.



The Scriptural Defense

MATTHEW 19:14

"Let the children come to me." The Kingdom of heaven explicitly belongs to children.

MATTHEW 28:18-19

The Great Commission establishes baptism not as a preference but an authoritative command to all nations.

ACTS 2:38-39

Peter's preaching includes children directly in the promise — "to you and your children."

THE RECONSTRUCTED FOUNDATION

Infant baptism is not an unbiblical tradition — it is the direct fulfillment of Christ's commands and Apostolic preaching.



The Continuity of the Covenant

FOR 2,000 YEARS

God formally welcomed newborns into Israel through circumcision. Divine provision was always made for the inclusion of infants.

THE FULFILLMENT

Jesus establishes the New Covenant. Baptism replaces circumcision as the definitive sign of entry and grace.

THE CORE HISTORICAL INSIGHT

Had God intended so radical a change as to suddenly exclude infants from His covenant, He would have said so explicitly. The absence of any exclusion command proves the unbroken continuity.



ALL TRUTH BELONGS TO GOD

The Universal Principle of Truth

THE PRINCIPLE

St. Justin Martyr's mandate: "Whatever is true is ours."

THE APPLICATION

Because God created the world and everything in it, Christians can fearlessly engage philosophy, science, and culture — all truth ultimately points back to God.

THE IMPERATIVE

Romans 1:16 — we must not be ashamed of the Gospel, even when culture caricatures faith as bigotry or superstition.



The Anatomy of an Apologist

Apologetics (from the Greek apologia): the theological art of explaining and defending the Christian faith.

What Apologetics Is Not

- Aggression, or arguing for argument's sake.
- Deploying snappy, memorized triggers.
- Merely apologizing for one's beliefs.

What Apologetics Is

- A good offense, rooted in deep preparation.
- Minds formed by profound study and reflection.
- Penance, prayer, humility, and generosity.



The Apologetics Equation

“Always be ready to give a logical defense to anyone who asks you to account for the hope that is in you — yet do it with gentleness and respect.”

1 PETER 3:15

INTELLECTUAL RIGOR

Our beliefs are fully defensible on rational grounds and historical evidence.

THE MOTIVATION

Not to win a debate or crush an opponent, but to bear joyful witness to the hope inside you.

THE DELIVERY

Persuasive power comes from humility and charity — never hostility or arrogance.



Blueprint for the Mind

STEP 01

Examine Rationally

Hold your beliefs up to reason — do not fear honest questions.

STEP 02

Separate from Feelings

Build on enduring truth, not on shifting emotional highs.

STEP 03

Pursue Truth by Study

Keep seeking — understanding is a lifelong ascent.

“Believing in God is not a sign of intellectual weakness, but of intellectual honesty.”

