

# **Manawatu Christian Apologetics Society**

**DEFENDING THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IN THE MANAWATU**

**We live in what may be the most anti-intellectual period in the history of Western civilization..... We must have passion -- indeed hearts of fire for the things of God. But that passion must resist with intensity the anti-intellectual spirit of the world.**

**R. C. Sproul**



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C.S. Lewis wrote: "To be simple and ignorant now – not to be able to meet the enemies on their own ground – would be to throw down our weapons, and to betray our uneducated brethren who have, under God, no defense but us against the intellectual attacks of the heathen. Good philosophy must exist, if for no other reason, because bad philosophy needs to be answered."



# Things to accomplish in the next ~60 minutes ;-)

- **Welcome & introduction**
- **How to find us on the web and email (2 minutes)**
- **A bit about each other (name/church/interests/goals) (5 minutes)**
- **The website (5 minutes)**
- **What is apologetics? Is apologetics needed? What is the task of apologetics? Does Apologetics have a Biblical mandate? ... (15 minutes)**
- **Your contribution to MCAS – individual + formal and informal meetings**
- **Suggested goals (5 minutes)**
- **Membership (5 minutes)**
- **Proposed doctrines (5 minutes)**
- **Finances (2 minutes)**
- **Questions & discussion (? minutes)**
- **Sign up dozens of new members to the Manawatu Christian Apologetics Society**

# Welcome & introduction

- Family
- Work
- Websites



- GBT DVD
- Interests
- Church

# A bit about each other

Very briefly:

- Your name
- Your church affiliation
- Your interests
- Your goals for MCAS

# How to find us on the web and em@il

**Website:**

**[www.christian-apologetics.org/mcas/](http://www.christian-apologetics.org/mcas/)**

**Email:**

**[manawatu@christian-apologetics.org](mailto:manawatu@christian-apologetics.org)**

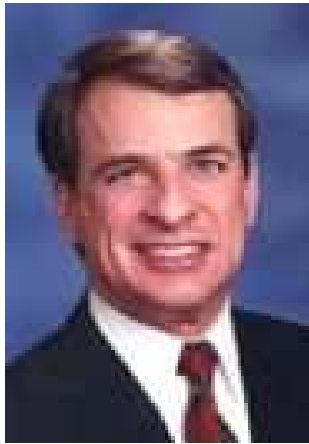
(Note: we are piggy-backing on the Wellington group who hold the domain [www.christian-apologetics.org](http://www.christian-apologetics.org))

***See WCAS 'Spong' journal, Da Vinci Code materials and much more online at [www.christian-apologetics.org](http://www.christian-apologetics.org)***

# The website

- Contains lots of useful info about MCAS, doctrines, meetings, contact points, goals, links...
- Lists resources available within the society
- Lists books in the Massey Library...
- As we begin to write and publish material, some or all of it can go on to the website

# What is apologetics?



*He [Christ] wants a child's heart,  
but a grown-up's head.*  
**C. S. LEWIS**

There are many definitions of *Christian Apologetics* given by many different people.  
One definition heard recently was:

**"Apologetics is the art and science of Christian persuasion".**

William Lane Craig in the introduction to his book *Reasonable Faith* offers the following definition of Apologetics:

**"Apologetics (from the Greek *apologia*: a defense) is that branch of Christian theology which seeks to provide a rational justification for the truth claims of the Christian faith."**

# What is apologetics?

Leading Christian apologist J. P. Moreland describes apologetics as:



**"... a New Testament ministry of helping people overcome intellectual obstacles that block them from coming to or growing in the faith by giving reasons why one should believe Christianity is true and by responding to the objections raised against it. Local church after local church should be raising up and training a group of people who serve as apologists for the entire congregation."**

# What is the task of apologetics?

In his book ***Defending Your Faith***, R. C. Sproul defines the task of apologetics as:

**"...helping Christians know what they believe and why they believe it." This is the work of apologetics. The task or science of Christian apologetics is primarily concerned with providing an intellectual defense of the truth claims of the faith. The term *apologetics* comes from the Greek word *apologia*, which literally means 'a reasoned statement or verbal defense'. To give an apology, then, unlike the more current definition of 'I'm sorry,' is to defend and argue for a particular point of view.**

# Does apologetics have a Biblical mandate?

R. C. Sproul goes on to describe the Biblical mandate for apologetics:

"The work of apologetics rests upon a biblical command. We find a mandate in Scripture to defend the faith, a mandate that every Christian must take seriously. In 1 Peter 3:14b-16, the apostle writes:

'Have no fear of them [those who would harm you], nor be troubled, but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, ***always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you;*** yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behaviour in Christ may be put to shame (emphasis added).'

# Is Apologetics Needed?

*Your great learning is driving you mad.  
Festus to the Apostle Paul, Acts 26:24 (NASB).*

**Christian apologist J. P. Moreland writes:**

**"It is important for the Christian community to engage in apologetics for at least four reasons.**

1. ... Scripture commands us to defend the faith and gives us several examples of such activity...
2. ... apologetics can help remove obstacles to faith and thus aid unbelievers in embracing the gospel...
3. ... apologetics can strengthen believers in at least two ways, For one thing, it gives them confidence that their faith is true and reasonable... Further, apologetics can actually encourage spiritual growth...
4. ... apologetics can contribute to health in the culture at large...

# Is Apologetics Needed?

Perhaps the greatest Christian apologist of the Twentieth Century, C. S. Lewis wrote:

**“To be ignorant and simple now -- not to be able to meet our enemies on their own ground -- would be to throw down our weapons, and to betray our uneducated brethren who have, under God, no defense but us against the intellectual attacks of the heathen. Good philosophy must exist, if for no other reason, because bad philosophy needs to be answered.”**

# Is Apologetics Needed?

**The great Princeton theologian J. Gresham Machen wrote:**

... False ideas are the greatest obstacles to the reception of the gospel. We may preach with all the fervour of a reformer and yet succeed only in winning a straggler here and there, if we permit the whole collective thought of a nation or of the world to be controlled by ideas which, by the resistless force of logic, prevent Christianity from being regarded as any more than a harmless delusion.

J. Gresham Machen

# Apologetics is Biblical, mandated and necessary, so...

## **How can we (as a group)**

- Learn apologetics?
- Develop apologetics?
- Practice apologetics?
- Use apologetics?
- Be effective apologists?

# Individual input...

## **You can:**

- Get involved in MCAS
- Start reading
- Prepare a book review or short presentation
- Prepare a formal presentation
- Pick a question you or your child struggle with and work through it, then present your research and conclusions at a meeting (and we can help you if necessary)

## **Or you can simply:**

- Just come to the meetings and learn and enjoy
- Help organize tea and biscuits, finances, advertising, website refinements.....

# Hold meetings – two types...

- Formal
- Informal



# Formal meetings

These meetings would be perhaps every four weeks and loosely-formal. You could prepare a serious talk and interact with your listeners during the question and answer period. The formal meetings could be as follows:

- Week 1 : **Formal public meeting**
- Week 3 : Home-group-style meeting
- Week 5 : **Formal public meeting**
- Week 7 : Home-group-style meeting

**Note: presentations would not be about placing the speaker in the lion's den but rather a time to encourage and explore the issues more fully!**



# Informal meetings (home-group-style)

These informal home-group-style meetings could be every four weeks and interspersed between the formal public meetings. You could prepare a book review, informal presentation, question and answer time, a DVD course, lecture or documentary (UMOL or similar) or various other things. The informal meetings could be as follows:

- Week 1 : Public Meeting
- Week 3 : **Informal home-group-style meeting**
- Week 5 : Public Meeting
- Week 7 : **Informal home-group-style meeting**

## **Study materials and topics**

- Ideas for study are always welcome. There are many materials available and generally we would work through some material prior to the meeting (e.g. homework) so we are familiar with the material being covered.

# Suggested goals for MCAS...

- To meet regularly with people with an interest in apologetics – help them – learn from them – encourage them.
- To encourage the preparation of short or long talks, book reviews or other items with the goal of learning and presenting them to others. This will encourage reading and studying of material with a definite goal in mind.
- To help each other better understand the world as a unified work of God and develop a solid reasoned coherent consistent Christian worldview.
- To help each other be more effective as evangelistic Christians.
- To encourage Christians to become thinkers and thinkers to become Christians.
- To help equip the next generation of Christian leaders to lead.
- To train Christians to enter the 'marketplace of ideas' with a clear Christian message.
- To initiate, promote and advertise meetings by those within the society and visiting speakers.
- To act as a hub for apologetics resources such as books, DVDs, journals, MP3s, websites and more. We have many resources available listed under *Recommended Resources* on the web site as well as non-listed materials.
- To challenge wider society to consider the Christian faith.
- Run prep-courses for college/university entrants?

# Membership

- **Early 2006 a formal membership system will be initiated.**
- **Membership means you are committed to our *Doctrinal Statement* and is required if you wish to have voting rights or to speak at any of the formal meetings.**
- **Members could receive other as-yet unknown privileges.**
- **A membership form will be put on the website in due course.**



# Suggested doctrines (~WCAS)

- The divine inspiration, infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible, as originally given, and its supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct. The Bible comprises the 39 books of the Old Testament and 27 books of the New Testament.
- The eternal, everlasting, self-existing nature of the Godhead, Who is Maker of the universe, which is separate from, but being finite is completely dependent on Him; Who is both transcendent of and immanent within His creation; Who is the great I AM and Immanuel of the Christian scriptures; Who is Creator and Saviour, Judge and Lover of humankind.
- The unity of the individual Persons of the Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the Godhead; and the full divinity and full humanity of the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.
- The universal sinfulness of human nature and the universal guilt of humankind since the Fall, rendering all subject to God's wrath and condemnation.
- Redemption from the guilt, penalty and power of sin only through the sacrificial death on the Cross (as our Representative, Substitute, Victor etc.) of the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God.
- The bodily (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:44) Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead understood as an actual event, subjectively experienced by Jesus Christ and presenting objective evidences open to observation and evaluation; as an event integral to God's saving and cosmic action in Jesus, revealing and completing the victory of the Cross.
- The necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing about God's purposes in Jesus Christ, which are: to bring salvation to people and to establish, sustain and perfect God's Kingdom.
- The indwelling and work of the Holy Spirit in the believer.
- The return of the Lord Jesus Christ, with His saints, to raise the dead, both the righteous and the unrighteous. The righteous shall enjoy everlasting life with God and the wicked shall endure everlasting, conscious punishment away from the presence of God's Glory.
- The completion of the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Note: this doctrinal statement is not meant to be exhaustive (e.g. a Westminster Confession of Faith or similar) but rather a broad collection sufficient to (i) include 'orthodox' evangelicals of all denominations and (ii) exclude cults, those who add to the canon, etc...**

# Finances

The following financial needs will have to be covered:

- Venue / projector
- Tea / coffee (unless someone is prepared to commit to organizing it)
- visiting speakers
- other?
- Suggestion : members AP \$1 per week into a MCAS bank account? Or perhaps annual membership of \$40 (working person)/\$20 (student)

# Questions and discussions

- Meeting day / time / location?
- Speakers?
- Topics? Evidential and presuppositional apologetics a good starter?
- Resources?
- Can I 'push my agenda' at MCAS?
- Questions/comments/criticisms welcome



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**THE END**



[www.christian-apologetics.org/mcas/](http://www.christian-apologetics.org/mcas/)

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[manawatu@christian-apologetics.org](mailto:manawatu@christian-apologetics.org)

# Is Apologetics Needed?

**Gary R. Habermas & Michael R. Licona in their book *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* write:**

Some of us like to read novels, whereas others enjoy the intellectual challenge of a philosophy book or a stimulating historical documentary on television. What about the non-Christians you meet? Some readily identify with the experiential evidence of what the gospel has done in changing a person's life. Others think "Bah, humbug on your experiences. Adherents of other religions claim religious experiences too. Give me evidence!" For some, evidence will not matter. For others, it is all they want. The Holy Spirit can use both sorts of conversations to speak salvation to different human hearts.

# How do we preach ‘apologetically’?

The apostle Paul adjusted his preaching to match his audience. When speaking to Jews, he appealed to the Jewish Scriptures, what we call the Old Testament (Acts 17:2). He shared this common ground with his Jewish countrymen. However, when standing before a non-Jewish audience, like the intellectuals of Athens in Acts 17, he did not appeal to the Scriptures (Acts 17:16-31). Instead he cited secular writers and poets known to his audience. The message of the gospel never changed. The method Paul used to present it did. You must determine how to relate to the person with whom you share your faith, for it is up to you to do the work of sharing. But it is up to God to do the heart work and we should rely on him to produce the fruit.

***Habermas and Licona***