

## The Vision and Strategy of the Apologetics Network

This session will provide participants with a basic overview of the European Apologetics Network. It will present the biblical basis for apologetics, briefly explore the pressing need for a strong apologetics movement in Europe, discuss the Forum's vision for creating and sustaining such a movement, and provide illustrations of how the Forum is currently working to make this vision a reality both at the annual Forum conference and throughout the year.

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### I. What is Apologetics?

#### A. The word:

1. *apologia*: a word back, 'defense', a response to an accusation (*kategoria*) by argument and evidence
2. from court of law to general use
3. branch of theology

#### B. The biblical basis

1. OT: God clearing his name over against an accusing world
  - a) prophets challenging idols and
2. NT: The Gospel challenging all authorities
  - a) kerygma (proclamation) goes with apologia (argument)
3. Modeled in the apostles (Acts)
  - a) Preaching to Jewish audience (Acts 6, )
  - b) Preaching to pagan audience (Acts 17)

c) Apologetic purpose in all NT writings

4. Peters exhortation: *“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...”* 1.Pet.3:15 (NIV)

C. Suggested definition (Lars Dahle 2001)

1. “the rational justification
2. of Christian truth claims
3. over against specific questions, objections, myths and alternatives,
4. in order to establish 'the epistemic permission' and 'the epistemic obligation' of the Christian faith
5. for both Christians and non-Christians.”

II. The Need for Apologetics in Europe

A. The challenge of the context: How do we describe our context? Western? Modern? Postmodern? Late modern? Secular? Post-Christian?

B. Three ways of analysis:

1. Theology
  - a) God is the same, Man is the same, Gods Word is the same;
  - b) The World has changed

2. Sociology of knowledge: Social processes shaping our world

c) Globalization

d) Pluralization

a) Secularization

b) Privatization

c) Sacralization

3. History of ideas: Prevalent worldviews shaping our world

a) Christian theism

b) Deism

c) Naturalism

d) Existentialism

e) Pantheism and neo paganism

f) Postmodernism

g) Islam

C. The challenge of the church:

1. Crisis of identity: assimilation or isolation

2. Crisis of communication: marketplace of worldviews
  - a) Internal, culturally captive
  - b) Imbalance “head, heart and hands”
  - c) Resistance to argument

### III. The Vision for Apologetics in Europe

- A. The importance of Apologetics for the Church
- B. The importance of Apologetics for Europe
- C. The importance of biblical models for apologetics
- D. The variety of different apologetic approaches

### IV. The Vision of the Forum

- A. The importance of networking (like ELF)
- B. Examples of what the Forum has been doing and our future vision.

***Some suggested further reading you might find helpful:***

- Cowan, Steven B. (ed.): *Five Views on Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000).
- Craig, William Lane: *Reasonable Faith. Christian Truth and Apologetics* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2008; 3. utgave).
- Cowan, Steven B: *Five Views on Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000)
- Kreeft, Peter, and Ronald K. Tacelli: *Handbook of Christian Apologetics* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1994).
- McGrath, Alister: *Bridge Building. Effective Christian Apologetics* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press 1992).
- Sire, James: *Why Good Arguments often Fail: Making a More Persuasive Case for Christ* (InterVarsity Press, Leicester 2006)

***Some helpful web resources:***

- [www.euroleadershipresources.org](http://www.euroleadershipresources.org)
- [www.bethinking.org](http://www.bethinking.org)
- [www.rzim.org](http://www.rzim.org)
- [www.reasonablefaith.org](http://www.reasonablefaith.org)
- [www.labri.org](http://www.labri.org)
- [www.garyhabermas.com](http://www.garyhabermas.com)
- [www.damaris.org](http://www.damaris.org)