



# The Role of Apologetics In Contemporary Ministry

*By Jeffrey Breshears*

Several years ago I received a call from the minister of education in a church where I was teaching a course. He was interested to know how things were going, and I responded that everything appeared to be fine – there seemed to be quite a lot of interest, we were having good discussions, etc. After a minute or so he mentioned that the church staff had heard several comments about the class, but one person in particular had caught their attention when she remarked, “Dr. Breshears talks to us like we’re intelligent!” The minister went on to say, “Now we [the staff] are all wondering what she meant by that. What’s that supposed to say about us?” I just smiled and casually changed the subject. It seemed rather imprudent to point out any obvious implications.

I find this ironic, of course, because the church should provide an environment conducive not only to spiritual and moral growth but also to the acquisition of knowledge and wisdom. After all, Jesus taught that we should love and honor God not only with all our heart, soul and strength, but with our mind as well.

In fact, Proverbs 19:2 warns us, “It is not good to have zeal without knowledge.” Elsewhere in Scripture, the apostle Paul instructs his young protege, Timothy, to study diligently in order to acquire the necessary knowledge and wisdom for effective ministry (II Tim. 2:15). And writing from prison near the end of his life, Paul informs the Christians in Philippi, “This

is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight... to the glory and praise of God” (Phil. 1:9ff). Does anyone seriously think that we can truly honor God while living mindlessly, or that we can practice wholistic discipleship without thinking deeply about our faith and relating it to every aspect of life?

Ours is a culture in crisis, and the problems are apparent in virtually every area of life from law and politics to business, education, the media, public behavior, private morality, and the arts and entertainment. Ours is also a culture that is appallingly (and even pridefully) anti-intellectual. What’s worse, though, is that this malaise of

### The Areopagus Calendar

**“C. S. Lewis: A Man of Many Geniuses”**

**by Jim Motter**

**Thursday, May 13, 7:30 PM at Mt. Bethel Community Center**

**Thursday, May 20, 7:30 PM at Perimeter Church**

The extraordinary mind of one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century’s most gifted and influential Christians by Areopagus Associate Director Jim Motter.

**– Lecture Tour of Poland –**

**Dr. Jeffrey Breshears**

**Lectures at the Warsaw Apologetics Conference and University Lecture Tour**

**May 29 - June 12**

**— Fall Seminar —**

**“A History of Christianity in America, Part II: From the American Revolution to 1900”**

**by Dr. Jeffrey Breshears**

**— Fall Forums —**

**“Addicted to Entertainment”**

**by Wes Widner**

**“Reflections on the Campus P.C. Battles: The Georgia Tech Case”**

**by Ruth Malhotra and Orit Sklar**

**“Compelling New Evidence For Intelligent Design”**

**by Bruce Phillips**

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(Continued)

intellectual laziness also characterizes the lives of many Christians. At the very time in our history when it is imperative that we be the most mentally alert and attuned to the state of our culture, too many Christians are either blithely unengaged or merely apathetic. The result is that we are losing the culture war by default.

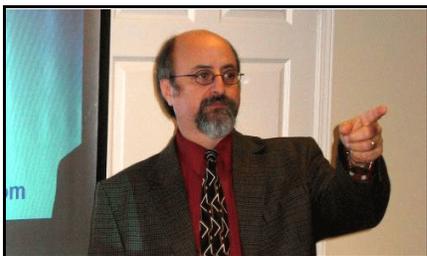
In our culture today, the forces of religious pluralism, militant secularism, political corruption, social degradation and unabashed moral decadence pose formidable threats not only to the Christian faith per se but also to the ideals of a free and decent civil society. Within the church, two equal-and-opposite heresies threaten to undermine the integrity of the Christian faith and destroy our public witness: theological liberalism (which is little more than secular humanism with a thin religious veneer) and the insidious “Word of Faith” movement (which is an egregious perversion of true Biblical faith.)

Never before in American history has our culture in general and the Christian faith in particular been more threatened, and never before has the need for substantive apologetics education been greater. As

committed disciples of Jesus Christ, we are called not only to be evangelists for our faith but defenders of it against those who threaten it both from without as well as within.

Many evangelical churches understand the need to educate Christians theologically in order to preserve the core doctrines that have defined authentic Christianity from the beginning. This is absolutely essential. But theology cannot be divorced from apologetics. Theology informs us of *what* we should believe, while apologetics addresses *why* we should believe – i.e., why the Christian faith is rational, factual and credible.

Churches that emphasize theology and encourage evangelism without granting apologetics a prominent place in their education ministry are doing their members a grave disservice. Furthermore, they are setting their people up for failure. In contemporary society, it is insufficient to merely tell people *what* they should believe without also explaining *why* these beliefs are... well, *believable*. That is the role of apologetics in contemporary Christian ministry, and that is why apologetics is emphasized in the ministry of the Areopagus.



Dr. Richard Howe of Southern Evangelical Seminary makes a cogent point in his critique of the “Prosperity Gospel” and the “Word of Faith” movement in our Areopagus Forum in April.

## The Areopagus Calendar

(Continued)

### — Recent Seminars —

**“A History of Christianity in America, Part I: From the Colonial Era to the American Revolution”**

Dr. Jeffrey Breshears

### — Recent Forums —

**“The Prosperity Gospel and the Word of Faith Movement: A Critical Assessment”**

Richard G. Howe

A Biblically-based critique of the theology and philosophy behind the popular “Word of Faith” movement.

**“Reflections on the Debate Wars”**

Dr. Mike Licona

Dr. Licona reflects on his debates with anti-Christian skeptics such as Bart Ehrman, Elaine Pagels, Shabir Ali, *et al.*

**“What’s Wrong With American Evangelical Christianity”**

Warren Cole Smith

A presentation based on Smith’s book, *A Lover’s Quarrel With the Evangelical Church*.

**“Faith Filters: The Biases and Hang-ups That Keep People from Accepting the Gospel”**

Glenn Pearson

A presentation based on Pearson’s book, *That’s a Great Question: What to Say When Your Faith Is Challenged*.

**“Darwin’s Dilemma”**

Bruce Phillips and Charles Thaxton

A discussion of the Discovery Institute’s DVD critiquing Darwinism by Areopagus Associate Director Bruce Phillips and Dr. Charles Thaxton, a “founding father” the Intelligent Design movement.