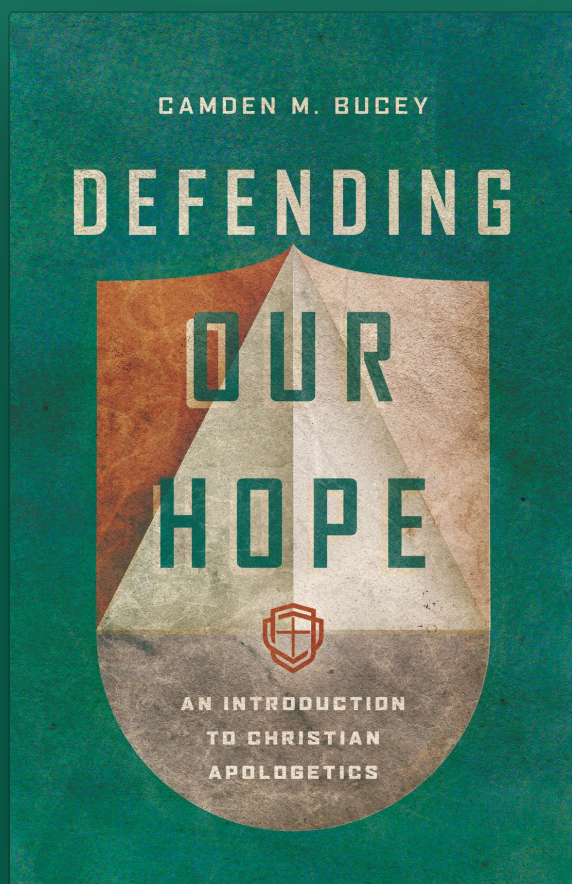




NEW FROM REFORMED FORUM

DEFENDING OUR HOPE

AN INTRODUCTION TO
CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS

CAMDEN M. BUCEY

Peter does not tell us to win the argument. He tells us to give a reason for our hope. And that hope is a living hope: Christ lived for us, died for us, and was raised for our salvation, and he is coming again to raise us with him. Apologetics begins there, and every Christian already has something to say.

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SECTION ONE

ABOUT THE BOOK

Most apologetics books teach you how to win an argument. Peter asked for something else, and this book takes him at his word: always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.

The distinction matters. Apologetics is not first about proving that God exists or that the Bible is reliable, though it has things to say about both. It is about a hope, and Peter tells us what kind: a living hope through the resurrection. Christ lived for us, died for us, and was raised for our salvation, and he will return to raise us also. A Christian who can say that, and say why it is his, is already doing apologetics.

That reframing lifts a burden. Many Christians feel intimidated by apologetics, assuming a proper defense belongs to scholars and debaters. Bucey's reassurance is that a sincere defense can be as simple as saying that Christ died and was raised for your salvation. A grandmother can tell how that hope sustained her through losing her husband; a teenager can say how it gives meaning beyond what he can see. The power lies not in our eloquence but in the truth of the message and the work of the Spirit.

The argument runs through doctrine rather than around it. Seven chapters work through the doctrine of God, revelation, the image of God, the covenant of works, the fall, the antithesis, and common grace before the book reaches method. Bucey's claim is that method should not be selected arbitrarily from a menu of options; it arises naturally from these doctrines when they are held consistently.

His aim is an apologetic faithful to Scripture and explicitly confessional, developed from within the Reformed tradition. Standing in the line of Cornelius Van Til and drawing on the redemptive-historical exegesis of Geerhardus Vos, he meets the unbeliever as a fellow image bearer, not an opponent to be defeated.

AT A GLANCE

FULL TITLE

Defending Our Hope: An Introduction to Christian Apologetics

AUTHOR

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EXTENT

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Interior, Jeanna Wiggins

SECTION TWO

WHY THIS BOOK, NOW

TABLE OF CONTENTS / PLUS PREFACE, CONCLUSION, AND TWO INDEXES

- | | | | |
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| 1 | Foundations of Hope: Understanding Apologetics | 7 | The Bridge: Finding a Connection Through Common Grace |
| 2 | Seeing Clearly: Shaping a Biblical Worldview | 8 | Starting Points: The Role of Presuppositions |
| 3 | The One We Defend: The Doctrine of God | 9 | The Implementation Plan: Developing an Apologetic Method |
| 4 | God Speaks: The Doctrine of Revelation | 10 | Standing Firm: Engaging in Spiritual Conflict |
| 5 | Bearers of His Image: The Doctrine of Man | 11 | Providing Testimony: The Role of Proof and Evidence |
| 6 | The Great Divide: Life In and Outside of Christ | | |

THE BOOK IN ONE PARAGRAPH

“Apologetics is not first about winning an argument, or even about proving that God exists. It is about defending a hope, and ours is a living hope through the resurrection. Jesus lived for me, died for me, and was raised for my salvation. He is coming again, and he will raise me too. If you can say that, you can do this.”

That is the burden lifted off the ordinary Christian, and it is the thread running through all eleven chapters.

Four things then distinguish *Defending Our Hope* from other books on apologetics.

HOPE, NOT PERSONAL VICTORY

The organizing idea. Peter asks for a reason for our hope, not for a win over the person in front of us. That single move puts apologetics back within reach of every member of the congregation.

WRITTEN FOR THE PEW

Thirteen years of teaching this material in the church shaped how it is written. A pastor's ear and a teacher's patience bring demanding theology within reach of readers from late high school through adult classes.

DOCTRINE BEFORE METHOD

Seven chapters of theology come before the chapter on method, because method is a consequence of doctrine rather than a matter of taste, worked out within the Reformed confessional tradition.

BUILT TO BE TAUGHT

Key takeaways and discussion questions in every chapter, two indexes, and a free companion video course with handouts and quizzes.

SECTION THREE

FOR YOUR AUDIENCE

THE COMPANION COURSE, FREE

The book is keyed lesson by lesson to a free video course at Reformed Academy: six hours of lecture, downloadable handouts in English and Spanish, quizzes, and a certificate of completion, with options available for ACSI continuing-education credit. For hosts whose listeners run small groups or Sunday school, this is the practical hook. A church can assign a chapter and a lecture in the same week at no cost beyond the book.

[REFORMEDFORUM.ORG/DEFENDINGOURHOPECOURSE](https://reformedforum.org/defendingourhopecourse)

WHO THE BOOK IS FOR

- **Church members** who have been asked a hard question and want a framework rather than a comeback.
 - **Pastors and elders** looking for an adult Sunday school or officer-training text that will not require a semester of prerequisites.
 - **Students and teachers** in Christian high schools, homeschools, and campus ministries. One endorser calls it the textbook he wishes he had.
 - **Readers curious about presuppositionalism** who have found Van Til difficult to read and want a clear way into his thought.
-

WHERE REASONABLE PEOPLE WILL PUSH BACK

Offered plainly, because hosts should know what they are getting. The book argues that Scripture presents a specific apologetic method, and that classical and evidentialist approaches make sense only within the fullness of God's revelation. Readers committed to natural theology or to classical-theistic prolegomena will want to contest that. Bucey welcomes the argument and does not need a friendly interviewer. As Jonathan Master puts it in his endorsement, whether you agree with it at every point or not, it will get you into your Bible.

SECTION FOUR

ENDORSEMENTS

“A vintage primer on presuppositional apologetics in the Reformed experiential tradition. Dr. Bucey shows that apologetics is for every believer in the pew, and he does so with the precision of a scholar and the sensitivity of a pastor.”

JOEL R. BEEKE / CHANCELLOR AND PROFESSOR OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY AND HOMILETICS, PURITAN REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY; PASTOR, HERITAGE REFORMED CONGREGATION, GRAND RAPIDS, MI

“When I taught apologetics many years ago in a Christian high school, I wish I had Camden Bucey’s work *Defending Our Hope* to use as my textbook. Bucey’s format for his work is superb! His volume delivers an ideal didactic service for a group study from late high school to adults. Bucey has given a fine introduction to Van Til’s apologetic interwoven with key aspects of the Vos-Gaffin exegetical work of historic covenantal revelation. Bucey has provided the Christian with a strong biblical basis for defending one’s faith as well as solidifying one’s own personal convictions in historic Reformed orthodoxy, a double benefit!”

WILLIAM D. DENNISON / PROFESSOR EMERITUS OF INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES, COVENANT COLLEGE; PASTOR, EMMANUEL ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, KENT, WA; INSTRUCTOR IN APOLOGETICS, MTIOPC

“One of the great challenges of our age is not merely finding Christians willing to speak the truth but finding those who know what to say and how to say it. This book is far more than a practical ‘how-to’ manual. It offers a rich theological framework that grounds apologetics in a robust understanding of Scripture and the gospel itself. *Defending Our Hope* is an excellent resource for churches, small groups, and individual Christians alike.”

JASON HELOPOULOS / SENIOR PASTOR, UNIVERSITY REFORMED CHURCH, EAST LANSING, MI

“Many apologetics texts are either unclear or unscriptural, certainly not for everyone. But this book is neither. It is readable and accessible, and it seeks to be thoroughly biblical in every part. If you are new to Christian apologetics, this is an excellent place to start. Whether you ultimately agree with it at every point or not, it is a book that will get you into your Bible, thinking about the nature of unbelief, and providing a framework for future study and evangelism.”

JONATHAN MASTER / PRESIDENT, GREENVILLE PRESBYTERIAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, GREENVILLE, SC

“Camden Bucey furnishes us with an outstanding and much needed introduction to apologetics from a clear presuppositional perspective. This is an approach that is truly *suaviter in modo* and engages the unbeliever fully as an image bearer with all the dignity that he deserves. Many in our circles have been all antithesis and little common grace, but the remedy is not the opposite. This work, even when contrasting Van Til’s transcendental approach with other methods, strikes all the right notes in a way that I can unreservedly recommend and only hope to emulate in all my teaching and interactions.”

ALAN STRANGE / PRESIDENT, MID-AMERICA REFORMED SEMINARY, DYER, IN

SECTION FIVE

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



CAMDEN M. BUCEY

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, REFORMED FORUM · HISTORIAN OF THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

PHD & MDIV, WESTMINSTER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

MBA, BRADLEY UNIVERSITY

MINISTER, OPC

Camden Bucey is executive director of Reformed Forum, which he co-founded in 2008 to make informed Reformed theological conversation freely available. He is also historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

He came to theology by an unusual road: a bachelor's degree in business computer systems and an MBA at Bradley University, then Caterpillar in Peoria, Illinois, before seminary. He earned the MDiv and a PhD in historical and theological studies from Westminster Theological Seminary, and was ordained as pastor of Hope Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Grayslake, Illinois, in 2013. When he moved to Reformed Forum full time as executive director in 2019, he transitioned to serve Hope as its evangelist. *Defending Our Hope* grew out of a Sunday school class he taught there.

He writes for both the academy and the church. His *Karl Rahner* appeared in P&R's Great Thinkers series in 2019, drawn from his dissertation, *The Triune Gift of Self: A Reformed Critique of Karl Rahner's Theology of Divine Self-Communication*. Crossway published his *Lamentations, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah: A 12-Week Study* in 2018, and a second Crossway volume, on the Psalms of Ascents, is forthcoming. He has taught as adjunct professor at Mid-America Reformed Seminary. He lives in the Chicago area with his wife and their three sons.

A PRACTICED INTERVIEW GUEST AND HOST

Bucey has spent more than seventeen years on the other side of the microphone. He hosts *Christ the Center*, Reformed Forum's flagship program, publishing since 2008, and co-hosts *History for a Pilgrim People* for the OPC Committee for the Historian. Practically, he arrives with broadcast-quality audio, keeps to a clock, and can pitch the material at whatever level the show needs, from a fifteen-minute lay-level segment to a two-hour technical conversation about transcendental argument.

SECTION SIX

INTERVIEW TOPICS

Eight angles into the book, each of which can carry a full episode on its own. Take whichever fits your audience.

1 · DEFENDING A HOPE, NOT WINNING A FIGHT

The heart of the book. Peter asks for a reason for our hope, and that hope is the resurrection. Why that reframing puts apologetics back within reach of every Christian.

2 · METHOD IS NOT A PREFERENCE

The book's central claim: hold the doctrines of God, revelation, and man consistently, and a method follows. Why so many Reformed Christians leave their theology at the door.

3 · VAN TIL FOR NORMAL PEOPLE

What presuppositionalism actually claims, stripped of the jargon and the tribal signaling. Also good as a segment for listeners who have found Van Til hard to access and want a way in.

4 · THE ANTITHESIS AND COMMON GRACE

How to hold both without collapsing into hostility or into neutrality. Bucey's answer to the charge that presuppositionalists are all antithesis.

5 · PROOF AND EVIDENCE

Does a presuppositionalist have any use for evidence and the classical proofs? Chapter eleven says yes, and explains where they fit.

6 · VOS AND APOLOGETICS

What redemptive-historical exegesis contributes to defending the faith. The connection most introductions never make.

7 · THE CHRISTIAN WHO FEELS DISQUALIFIED

For the listener who assumes apologetics is for other people. What is actually required, what is not, and why chapter ten frames this as spiritual conflict rather than debate club.

8 · TEACHING IT IN YOUR CHURCH

The practical episode: how to run this as adult Sunday school, officer training, or a homeschool course using the book and the free course together.

BEYOND THE BOOK

Bucey is also available to speak on biblical theology and redemptive-historical interpretation in the tradition of Geerhardus Vos, on Reformed Forum's eighteen-year experiment in free theological education, on the history of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and on Karl Rahner and modern Roman Catholic theology. If your audience would be better served by one of those, say so and the book can stay in the background.

SECTION SEVEN

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

Please feel free to use, adapt, or reorder any of these as suits your program. They are grouped by depth so you can shape a segment for your audience, and Camden is glad to follow wherever the conversation goes.

OPENERS, FOR ANY AUDIENCE

Accessible, no background assumed. Good for the first ten minutes.

- 1 The title is *Defending Our Hope*, not defending the faith or proving God. Why did you put hope at the center, and what changes when you do?
- 2 Peter calls it a living hope through the resurrection. What is that hope, exactly, and how would you say it to someone at work?
- 3 Many Christians assume apologetics is for other people, for the ones who like to argue. What would you say to someone who feels disqualified before they start?
- 4 When most people hear “apologetics” they picture a debate stage. What do they picture wrongly?
- 5 You write that success is not measured by how many people you convince. What is it measured by, and why does that distinction matter pastorally?
- 6 This started as a Sunday school class at Hope OPC and took thirteen years to become a book. What did teaching it to ordinary church members change about it?

THE HEART OF THE ARGUMENT

Where the book makes its distinctive case. This is the substantive middle of an interview.

- 1 You spend seven chapters on doctrine before you get to method. Why is that order not just a pedagogical choice but a theological one?
- 2 You write that confessionally Reformed theologians will hold to these doctrines and then “leave them at the door” when they enter an apologetic encounter. What does that look like in practice, and why do you think it happens?
- 3 How would you explain the antithesis to a listener who has never heard the term, and what does it not mean?
- 4 Common grace is your bridge. How do you build on it without conceding neutral ground?
- 5 Van Til’s approach is indirect. He does not treat the unbeliever as a competent judge of the evidence. Isn’t that a conversation-stopper? How do you keep it from becoming one?
- 6 How does the doctrine of the image of God inform how we approach apologetics, and where does it establish a point of contact with the unbeliever?
- 7 Chapter ten frames this as spiritual conflict. How should that change what a Christian expects from a hard conversation?

IF YOU DISAGREE

Offered sincerely. A host who works from a classical or evidentialist method should feel free to press hard. These are the questions worth asking.

- 1 You argue that Scripture presents a specific apologetic method. Many Reformed theologians who share your confession deny that. What is your best evidence, and what would count against your view?
- 2 Where does natural theology fit, if anywhere? Are Aquinas and the classical proofs simply mistaken, or misordered?
- 3 Critics say the transcendental argument proves too much or proves nothing, that it either begs the question or reduces to an evidential case in disguise. Which version of that objection do you find strongest?
- 4 Some argue Van Til's system is neither biblical nor Reformed, and that particular interpretation has been gaining ground. What has it gotten right, and where do you think it fails?
- 5 You grant real value to the classical proofs and to historical evidence. If that is so, how much actually separates you from a careful evidentialist in a real conversation?
- 6 How would you answer the charge that presuppositional apologetics has produced more in-house boundary-marking than actual evangelism?

CLOSERS

- 1 A listener has never read a book on this subject and is not sure they want to. Why this one?
- 2 An elder wants to teach this in Sunday school next quarter. What does that look like?
- 3 What do you hope a reader is able to do after finishing that they could not do before?
- 4 Last word to the listener who is about to have this conversation tomorrow. What is the one thing to remember?

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