



Reasons to Believe: How to Understand, Explain, and Defend the Catholic Faith

Scott Hahn

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This book unravels mysteries, corrects misunderstandings, and offers thoughtful, straightforward responses to common objections about the Catholic faith.

Bestselling author Scott Hahn, a convert to Catholicism, has experienced the doubts that so often drive discussions about God and the Church. In the years before his conversion, he was first a nonbeliever and then an anti-Catholic clergyman.

In 'Reasons to Believe', he explains the "how and why" of the Catholic faith - drawing from Scripture, his own struggles and those of other converts, as well as from everyday life and even natural science. Hahn shows that reason and revelation, nature and the supernatural, are not opposed to one another; rather they offer complementary evidence that God exists.

But He doesn't merely exist. He is someone, and He has a personality, a personal style, that is discernible and knowable. Hahn leads readers to see that God created the universe with a purpose and a form - a form that can be found in the Book of Genesis and that is there when we view the natural world through a microscope, through a telescope, or through our contact lenses.

At the heart of the book is Hahn's examination of the ten "keys to the kingdom"—the characteristics of the Church clearly evident in the Scriptures. As the story of creation discloses, the world is a house that has a Father, a palace where the king is really present. God created the cosmos to be a kingdom, and that kingdom is the universal Church, fully revealed by Jesus Christ.

Reasons to Believe: How to Understand, Explain, and Defend the Catholic Faith Details

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From Reader Review Reasons to Believe: How to Understand, Explain, and Defend the Catholic Faith for online ebook

Ashley Tambunga Ratcliff says

This is more of a book that relates some basic Christian/Catholic beliefs to someone who might not know ANYTHING about the Christian faith. Scott Hahn uses great parallelism in relating things that are unknown (or perhaps maybe things the reader hasn't researched enough) to bite-size morsels that are easier to digest. A large chunk is dedicated to explaining why believers have faith in God's existence; the rest of it is finding things about the Catholic faith that is hard to swallow or often thrown to misconception.

As a Christian, I learned how to better communicate my specific world views after reading this, mostly to someone who isn't really familiar with the faith. As a Catholic, I'm encouraged to research my beliefs even further to give more explanation as to why I believe what I believe. I'm looking forward to reading more from Scott Hahn on a level that enriches my Catholic views.

Scott says

I read this as I was going through RCIA and entering the Catholic faith in 2007. Hahn explains things in excellent detail... A good read for the new Catholic and for the life-long Catholic wanting to re-understand what he/she practices and why.

Cody Ray says

As the book is broken into three parts, so be my review.

1. Natural Reasons- describes why you should believe in God (from atheist to Christian)
2. Biblical Reasons- describes why you should believe in the Catholic Church (from Christian to Catholic)
3. Royal Reasons- describes why you should believe that Jesus fulfills the Old Testament covenant with David (not sure why this belongs here)

The first part of the book attempts to provide logical reasons to believe in the existence of (the Christian) God. It took a while to get through this book so I can't remember his specific arguments now, but I remember thinking repeatedly, "that's a terrible attempt at logic." Hahn definitely tries to shoe-horn his predispositions into a logical framework and does not do it successfully. The title of this section, "Natural Reasons," is a good descriptor of the quality of the arguments he made, as if the reasons are all so obvious they don't need any rigorous explanation. Although I didn't like most of his arguments here, I don't find the concept of God (as in a higher power or consciousness, not the Christian God) challenging, so I just moved on.

Part 2 of the book was by far my favorite. In this part, Hahn essentially says, "if you now believe in the Christian God, then you should now believe in the Catholic faith" and gives reasons why it is so. This is where Hahn leans heavily on Scripture to show how Jesus established the Catholic Church as his legacy, to carry on his mission. Coming from a Protestant background, I actually thought he did a solid job of explaining why Catholics believe that Catholicism is the universal church, continuing the continuous

succession that Jesus started with the Apostle Peter.

In addition to establishing the Catholic Church as Jesus body, Part 2 also tried to establish the Catholic's belief in transubstantiation (that the bread and wine is changed into the body and blood of Jesus during Holy Communion while receiving the Eucharist. On this part, I felt that Hahn's attempt at logic based on the premise of the truth of the Holy Bible was flawed. Even if I accepted the premise that the Holy Bible (including its translations) is 100% truth and perfect, I still couldn't follow his line of reasoning for claiming the literal interpretation of transubstantiation. But it did help me understand why Protestants aren't allowed to partake in the Eucharist during Catholic Mass (which has always irked me since Protestants also keep Holy Communion).

The quality of the third and final section of the book falls somewhere between the first two. I'm still not entirely sure what message the author was trying to convey. I believe Hahn might have been trying to reinforce the Catholic Church's claim as Jesus' religious line of succession by connecting it with (and using it to fulfill) God's covenant with David from the Old Testament. The argument essentially says that God promised to David that his Kingdom would be everlasting and that his sons would rule the earth; since the Bible has the genealogy tracing Jesus as a descendent of David, the Kingdom of which Jesus spoke must be the same everlasting Kingdom of David. Again, although apparently a common argument nowadays, this argument was new and interesting to me.

However, Hahn himself wrote that the Babylonians (if I recall) rounded up and slaughtered all the descendants of David. No explanation is given how "all the descendants" excluded the ancestors which eventually birthed Jesus. It also describes all the "false claims" of being a descendant of David, such as King Herod the Great, but essentially wipes them away by saying "then Jesus was born, the true Son of David". Again, no real logic here, just relying heavily on Scripture as truth.

In summary, while this book was interesting from a historical and theological perspective, it failed to deliver on its promise of reasons to believe based on logic and "even natural science" (from the book's dust cover). Its also useful to note that this book wasn't intended to convert non-believers, but to be read by believers to strengthen their arguments. In reading, it becomes clear that Hahn is writing this to train an audience that are beginners in the field of apologetics. So I was definitely not the target audience either.

David says

I have wanted to read something by Scott Hahn for a while. For most of his life he was a Presbyterian, even serving as a pastor, before converting to Roman Catholicism. Since then he has written many books on Roman Catholic Christianity. This book is Catholic apologetics and while I am not convinced (and thus, won't be converting), I found this book very helpful. I would recommend this book to Catholics, and non-Catholics, to help understand the Catholic faith and the Biblical arguments for it. Many Catholics (and Protestants) are biblically illiterate and it can only help all of us to read the works of people like Hahn, whether we agree or not.

This book is divided into three parts. The first section is a basic overview of some apologetic arguments for the Christian faith in general. It is not too deep, so it would be approachable for any Christian. What is missing is a real argument for Christianity. The arguments focus on the God's existence, universal morality and the limits of reason but there is nothing saying why all of this leads to the particular Christian faith as opposed to some other religion. Of course, there are many books on such topics. Yet the move in section two

into a defense of Roman Catholic distinctives may leave the reader wanting something more.

Section two argues for the biblical basis of veneration of the Saints and Mary, the papal office and the mass. Overall it was thought-provoking and helpful. Yet the debate would be whether the biblical passages cited actually do, in their context, support such practices. Or did the practices come about and then a search was made for biblical support?

The third section was the best, and in my opinion should have come second. Here Hahn takes us through the Biblical story, focusing on the covenant between God and king David and how this connects to the person and work of Jesus Christ. Hahn uses this story to argue once again for Roman Catholic Christianity. But this is strong biblical theology for any Christian.

Overall, this would be a good book for Catholics to better understand their faith. Also, it would be a helpful read for other Christians seeking to understand the Catholic faith, especially the biblical arguments used to support it.

♥ Ibrahim ♥ says

The more I read anything by Scott Hahn, the further distant I was pushed away from Catholic Church. He writes as if he has waterproof that Catholicism is the ultimate and if you don't then you have missed it big time. Such is arrogance produced by all those who are into apologetics, be they Catholic or Evangelicals. Faith is not proven, Mr. Hahn. Ironically, the more I read spiritual, mystical works of Catholicism, the more deeply I got attracted to it. There is something about American Catholics, especially those Evangelicals who convert to Catholicism here in the States, that continues to push me away from anything that is Catholic. There are so religious. I can't ever be religious. Spiritual? Yes, indeed, as I always hunger and thirst after righteousness.

Julie says

3.5 stars. I found this book a little hard to get into. The first part, 'Natural Reasons,' deals with a few principles of logic and raises points to use in discussion with atheists. Although I doubt this part will convince any atheists to change their minds, it gives some points to allow for the reasonableness of faith in God. As Hahn states, these are "merely invitations to belief and not formal reasons for assenting to faith" (38).

The second part, 'Biblical Reasons' addresses how Catholic doctrines and practices are in fact biblically based and covers some of the common points of contention between Catholics and Protestants/Evangelicals. The usual issues are addressed, but I've seen each particular issue explained better elsewhere. Granted, this is a tiny book and isn't meant to cover any of these topics in depth.

I enjoyed the third and final section, 'Royal Reasons,' the most. This part goes into how the new covenant relates to the old, particularly in regards to David and his promised kingdom. It sheds light on some of the stories in the Old Testament and how they fit into salvation history. There was some good stuff in this part that I haven't really come across elsewhere...yet, but which made me interested to find out more.

Matthew Dambro says

Dr. Hahn is a late life convert to Roman Catholicism after spending much of his life as a Presbyterian and a minister. His approach is accessible and at the same time scholarly. His style is admirable for a theologian and writer of apologetics. It is a wonderful book for "newbies" and cradle Catholics. He is thought provoking and comforting; a rare mix these days. After reading a number of the prior reviews by self proclaimed atheists, I wondered if we read the same volume. Faith is said to be a gift, an unearned grace offered to all and accepted by some. It was curious to read the barely concealed rage in some of the reviews. I suppose that should be expected. Standards of "proof" are as variable as the individual requiring it. If your frame of reference blinds you to the possibilities that exist in the universe. Then this is not the book for you.

Michael Laflamme says

This is how apologetics is done. This book is well written, thought provoking, and exciting in its insights. The Catholic faith is defended, explained, and supported, and all of it is done without antagonism, without belittling Catholicism detractors, and without the inflammatory attitude encountered in so many Internet "apologists". Hahn unmistakably loves the Church, loves Christ, and loves those to whom he is reaching out; believer and non believer alike.

Hahn showed me aspects of my faith I never before encountered. I've looked for a book like this for a long time. In addition to the usual apologetic topics one often encounters Hahn spent a lot of pages drawing parallels between the Davidic kingdom and the Catholic Church, showing how Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church fulfill ancient prophecy laid down throughout Jewish history. Parts of Hahn's narrative left me breathless with new discovery; not that the material was new, just that Hahn takes the time to map out the work laid down by earlier theologians in a clear and understandable way.

Kit says

I'm an atheist, daughter to two devout Catholics. My parents fear for my soul and my mother asked me to read this. Since I don't believe in the divinity of the Bible, I couldn't get through parts 2 and 3 other than the very final Chapter. Those sections are like reading fan commentary about the Lord of the Rings, Star Wars, Star Trek, or many of the other topics of passionate leisure discourse. If you haven't gotten lost in the mystery, you don't get anything out of it.

I thought it was a very poor piece of work. Scott Hahn did not provide any unique additions to the already poor arguments for faith. He did not do any non-religious source research for any of his assertions. This is important because he claims it's empirically verifiable. "[T]he cosmos seems to have been designed so that it might be perceived by humankind." In actuality, most are based on downright myths.

Much like Mere Christianity, he appealed to the emotion of the faithful. But unlike CS Lewis, he appears to actually believe he has a substantive argument for faith based on empirical evidence. Most were laughable attempts based on arguments previously made by men smarter than he, which weren't successful either.

For example, is his argument that atheism is a new concept (p31). Actually Buddhism is an atheist belief system. The majority of Buddhists do not believe in a deity. There are some small sects that believe that

Buddha was a diety, but most do not. Buddhism dates back to between 6th and 4th century BCE.

This book confirmed to me that religion is the opium of the people. It doesn't take much for a religious book to inspire the faithful. Anything that makes us think we are better in the eyes of our gods. No need to think critically when the writer is clearly inspired by our god. If it makes us feel righteous, it must be divinely inspired.

As a side note: I get very angry about the faithfulls' attempts to alter the definition of law. They mention the law of gravity and believe then can then take 'law' in a scientific context and apply it to morality as a law that god gave them.

A law, in science, started out as a hypothesis published to the world after significant experimentation and work. It then progresses to a theory and later to a law as thousands of scientists perform experiments designed to DISPROVE the hypothesis/theory. After centuries of experiments testing Newton's Law of Universal Gravitation, we are unable to disprove it within it's boundaries of applicability. This means that we can safely conclude that Newton's law of universal gravitation is not disobeyable which makes it a LAW. Unlike believers' 'natural law,' you can't choose to break these laws. They aren't punishable, because they aren't even breakable. Really try to comprehend that. And stop trying to hijack and mutilate the terms of science to serve your recruitment needs.

Chad Judice says

Any Bible Christian that believes all the nonsense and misconception about the Church Jesus Christ established should sit down with there Bible and take a historical and theological journey with Scott Hahn. He used to have those same misconceptions - as a Cradle Catholic it is awesome to rediscover the beauty of the faith through the eyes of someone who made his journey Home.

Eric Overkamp says

Another good book by author and convert Dr. Scott Hahn. The book title and description are perhaps a tad bit misleading. For folks wishing a reference guide for apologetic arguments answering the most frequently asked about questions regarding our faith and the belief in God - This book is not it. I believe Scott Hahn started the book with that in mind, but he quickly got caught on tangents and the book became more a work of typology looking at the prophesies in the Old Testament regarding the Messiah and how Jesus fulfilled them. The beginning section on whether God exists or not, does give reference to some of the best philosophers and their arguments. Unfortunately, the reader must then reference those works for deeper understanding. I'd give the book 4 stars, but ended up giving 3 stars as the book is not published by Doubleday (who always do a good job), but by Darton+Longman+Todd. The print is not that great quality. The book is extremely heavy for such a short book, and the overall quality seems to be lacking. A notice in the front says it's been printed and bound in Turkey.

Derrick Gibson says

Reason's to Believe: How to Understand, Explain, and Defend the Catholic Faith by Scott Hahn is an outstanding book that I read before and during my 3 year voyage to becoming accepted into the church. One year for studying and deciding and two years of formal catechism classes. I did much prayer in that time as well and God always gave me the go feeling that I was finally finding the right religion to belong to. I like the Catholic faith do to there strong use of the personal logic and psyche instead of the cold chills down the spine feeling that ends abruptly after a protestant service. Now I get that feeling when praying the rosary at times or just praying along with the Saints already in heaven and Mother Mary! Mother of God because she was the Mother of Jesus. Sorry about such a long review but I am a natural Catholic apologist as well as Mr. Haun and sometimes get on my soapbox from time to time.

Derrick Gibson

Kaleena Menke says

Phew! Finally finished! My mother gave this to me years ago in an attempt to try to bring me back to the fold. I promised her I would read it and after 20+ false starts and forcing myself to read it in 5-10 pages chunks, I finally finished the darn book.

Scott Hahn thinks that God in general and Catholicism specifically can be reasoned through apologetics. He only spends one chapter on the existence of God and then the subsequent chapters on why Catholicism is more correct than other non-Catholic, Christian religions. The majority of the book was spent on the "all Christians has bits of the truth, Catholics just have the most bits" notion.

The book is really intended for Catholic believers to be "armed" to defend their faith against non-Catholic questioners. (aka. My mom should be the one reading it in preparation for conversations with me.)

****edit**** I gave it 2 stars but I'm going to downgrade it more. It was hard to read too.

Ryan says

The book offers to give a defense and clear some misconceptions about Roman Catholicism; but in my case, it just confirmed what I already know.

The first part of the book provides a summary of key Roman Catholic doctrines such as the relationship of reason with faith, Scripture and ecclesiological authority, papal infallibility and apostolic succession, the preeminence of Mary and the redemptive offices of the heavenly saints, the purgatory, and lastly, the Mass.

The last chapters of the book are the ones that caught my attention—it's a treatment of prominent Roman Catholic doctrines under the lens of biblical theology. Taking away the spotlight that the Abrahamic covenant enjoys in the Reformed tradition, he banked more on the significance of the Davidic covenant vis-a-vis the New Covenant in understanding the nature of God's church. To summarize, there are two layers in God's promise to David: the Davidic identity of Jesus Christ and the Church He established on earth. The former touched on how Christ fulfilled the types and promises in that covenant while the latter pursued the path of identifying the role of the Queen Mother, the prime minister, and the sacrifice of thanksgiving

"foreshadowed" in the Davidic epoch, that are fulfilled by Mary, Peter (or the Pope), and the Mass, respectively. Finally, the promised kingdom is manifested visibly as the Roman Catholic Church.

It does not come as a surprise that the quadriga, a method of interpretation, is employed all throughout the book.

All in all, I admired Hahn's simplicity and warmth; a Roman Catholic reader will find the book worth of his time. As someone who's in a different tradition, I would encourage my friends to pick up this book and read it (or other materials concerning such subject) and to exercise scholarship and charity with regard to views that are different from ours. It's always good to have healthy dialogues of informed arguments that are seasoned with gentleness and respect.

Aaron says

Scott Hahn continues to use his vast knowledge of scripture to explain reasons the Catholic Church is the church founded by Jesus and how best to be an apologist.

"The Bible leads us to the Church. For the Bible does not create the Church or justify the Church or serve as the Church's constitution. The Bible presupposes the Church and depends upon the Church for its own authentication"

"The Church preceded the Scriptures. Indeed, all the New Testament books, except for the Gospels, are primarily occupied with describing a community already well established, with distinctive policies, practices, and patterns of devotion-with its own structures of authority and methods of decision making"

"It was until the fourth or fifth century that the institutional Church fixed the New Testament in the form we know it today"

"The Mass is saturated with the Bible. The Bible is saturated with the Mass."
