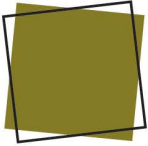
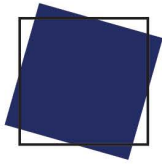
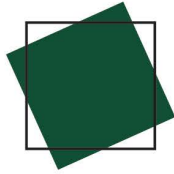


Show Me Why



Thoughts from
Missouri Baptists
on Defending the
Christian Faith

Dr. Jeanie Crain, General Editor
Foreword by Dr. John Yeats

SHOW ME WHY

THOUGHTS FROM MISSOURI BAPTISTS
ON DEFENDING THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

General Editor
DR. JEANIE CRAIN

MISSOURI BAPTIST CONVENTION

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General editor: Jeanie Crain

Cover design: Laura Schembre

Layout: Brianna Boes

Production management: Jim Thorne

Proofreading: Christie Dowell, Nancy Phillips

This book is made possible by the generous support of Missouri Baptists through the Cooperative Program. To learn more about the Missouri Baptist Convention and the way its 1,800 churches cooperate voluntarily, visit mobaptist.org.

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FOREWORD

The Christian faith is under attack — from angry *New Atheists* who light up social media and crank out best-selling books; syncretists who love to say that all paths lead to God; and Islamists who kill Christians or reduce them to second-class *dhimmis* if they refuse to convert. But this is nothing new. Jesus made it clear that if the world hates him, it will hate his followers as well (John 15:18).

Thankfully, many non-Christians are open to civil discourse and enjoy engaging in conversations about matters of faith. That's true right here in Missouri, where more than a dozen Missouri Baptist apologetists help equip other Christians to defend their faith. These pastors and lay leaders form the core of the Missouri Baptist Apologetics Network (MBAN), and you'll get to know them in the pages that follow.

Don't let the word "apologetics" scare you. Christian apologetics is the field of study concerned with the systematic defense of the Christian faith. The term *apologetics* comes from the Greek noun *apologia* and means "a defense." *Apologia* and its verb form *apologeomai* appear nearly twenty times in the New Testament, often in a classic legal sense, but more importantly to describe the call of God to all believers to defend the Christian faith.

The Missouri Baptist Apologetics Network was formed several

years ago to encourage the members of our 1,800 churches to be faithful to the apostle Peter's charge: "But in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, ready at any time to give a defense (*apologia*) to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. Yet do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that when you are accused, those who disparage your good conduct in Christ will be put to shame" (1 Peter 3:15–16). You read that correctly. All Christians are, in effect, apologists — defenders of the core doctrines that define historic Christianity. Further, we are to share our faith in a humble and winsome manner.

Some people are especially gifted in this area, and I want you to benefit from their expertise. So, the MBC invited each member of MBAN to provide a chapter for this book along with his or her biographical information. Read their work. Hear their heartbeat for the Word of God. And then invite them to speak at your church.

For more information, visit mobaptist.org/apologetics.

Missouri Baptists are privileged to be one of the few state conventions with an active apologetics ministry. So, let's work together to advance the gospel in our state by knowing what we believe, why we believe it, and how to share it graciously with the estimated three million lost people in the Show Me State.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Yeats", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr. John Yeats
Executive Director — Treasurer
Missouri Baptist Convention

PART I

DEFENDING THE FAITH

CHAPTER 1: THE BIBLICAL CASE FOR APOLOGETICS

BRUCE CLARK

INTRODUCTION

“You cannot argue people into heaven.”
“All you need to do is preach the gospel.”

Such statements have been heard in many local churches regarding apologetics. Throughout its history, the church has resisted apologetics in varying degrees.¹ While the reasons for such resistance differ, they all share a concern that apologetics is unbiblical and does not reflect appropriate dependence upon the gospel and the Holy Spirit to bring individuals to conversion. That said, the practice of apologetics seems to be experiencing a renaissance of sorts in the contemporary western church. This seems due, in part, to the influence of Christian thinkers such as C.S. Lewis, Francis Schaeffer, William Lane Craig, Lee Strobel, and many others who have focused on building a compelling apologetic for Christianity. While this growing interest is by no means universal, it is notable and, in many ways, significant.²

A growing interest, however, does not mean this renaissance is necessarily good. Before apologetics can be considered appropriate for the church, any legitimate concern should be addressed. We must answer the key question, namely, is it biblical? Some in the church believe that answer to be “no.” So, before engaging in the study and

practice of apologetics, the Christian is obligated to determine the biblical case for it.

The aim of this chapter, therefore, is to examine the biblical position on apologetics. Is it biblical? The approach taken here restricts the scope to the Bible itself rather than theology, philosophy, and church history. It is not that these areas of investigation are irrelevant or inappropriate; in fact, to give a full and complete assessment of the appropriateness of apologetics for the church, these other areas should be considered. Here, however, we are addressing the question, “Is apologetics *biblical*?” Often implied in that question is a suspicion that theology, philosophy, or perhaps church tradition has somehow skewed our understanding of scripture on this topic. Furthermore, this concern is often accompanied by a distrust regarding disciplines outside “pure” biblical study. Therefore, to avoid undermining the objective of our effort, it seems wise to focus the scope of inquiry on the scriptures alone.

Fortunately, to answer the question, the scriptures seem to offer an inherent structure that will serve well to guide our approach. First, this chapter examines whether the term *apologetics* exists within scripture. It next reviews scriptural references providing examples of apologetics. Finally, it examines specific commands that may exist regarding apologetics. These three categories cover many of the pertinent biblical texts related to the topic. The chapter ends by urging the reader to consider apologetics prayerfully.

DEFINING TERMS

Does the term *apologetics* occur in scripture? In many cases of Christian doctrine, a specific term may not be found in scripture, but rather, the concept is found or deduced from other concepts and teachings. One example is the doctrine of the Trinity. The actual term *trinity* is not found in scripture; rather, the term was created to describe the concept of the triune nature of God as revealed in the Bible. Is this the same with *apologetics*, or is the term itself found in the Bible?

First, consider the *English Oxford Living Dictionary*'s definition of

the English term apologetics, describing it as “reasoned arguments or writings in justification of something, typically a theory or religious doctrine.” This is a reasonably concise and functional definition capturing the main elements of how Christians use the English term today. This definition will help determine how specific Hebrew or Greek terms from biblical texts align with the English.

No word in the Old Testament translates directly to the English word *apologetics*. The closest term in the Hebrew text is probably *ʾanah*, which is typically translated as “answer” or “testify.”³ While *ʾanah* is used some 320 times in its verb form, it is used mostly in ways that are not related directly to apologetics. For example, *ʾanah* is used simply to indicate someone answered another person or responded to God or that God answered a human question, as in Job.

Genesis 30:33 uses *apologetics* in a general sense when Jacob says his righteousness will *answer* for him in relation to any potential issue of future wages with Laban. In this passage, Jacob is saying his righteousness will serve as a justification for his wages. This usage certainly aligns with the meaning of the English term *apologetics*, but Jacob is not using the term in the context of doctrinal apologetics.

In Micah 6:3, on the other hand, the Hebrew *ʾanah* is used in a specifically doctrinal or religious apologetics sense. The context in Micah 6:1 is that God challenges his people to plead their case against him, and in the process, God lays out his case against the people. In 6:3, God asks the rhetorical question, “O my people, what have I done to you?”⁴ Then he challenges them to “testify against me.” The Hebrew term for “testify” is *ʾanah* used in the context of apologetics. Here God is challenging the people to make a case (an apologetic) for their disobedient and heretical beliefs and behavior. They cannot, of course, but God can make a powerful apologetic, providing ample justification for the judgment they deserve. There are other examples of this term used similarly in the general sense of answering in order to justify. But another Old Testament Hebrew term should be considered as well.

The Hebrew term *rib* is used seventy times as a verb and sixty times as a noun in the Old Testament, meaning “to plead, strive, conduct a legal case, [or] make a charge.”⁵ In the same Micah 6:1–8 passage in which *ʾanah* is used, the term *rib* is used to indicate God’s

making the case against Judah. Similarly, in Isaiah 3:13, God stands up to judge and “plead” against the people, making a case against them. In both instances, *rib* is used consistently with the meaning of the English term *apologetics* where God makes a case against his people. Therefore, while no single Old Testament Hebrew term translates directly to the English word *apologetics*, at least two terms carry the general meaning represented by the English term.

What about the New Testament? The issue in the New Testament is more straightforward than in the Old Testament. In fact, the English term *apologetics* derives directly from the Greek New Testament word *apologia* meaning, “a plea, answer, or defense of one’s self,” and the word is used eight times in its noun form.⁶ The classic passage using this term is 1 Peter 3:15: “... and always be ready to give a *defense* [italics added] to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.” Several other passages in the New Testament employ this exact term in a specifically apologetic context. We will consider some of those examples later in this chapter. But for now, we note the English term *apologetics* is a direct translation of the New Testament Greek word *apologia*.

REFERENCES AND EXAMPLES

Two events in the Old Testament illustrate significant examples of apologetics. The first event is the Exodus of Israel (Ex. 3:1–4:17) when God commissioned Moses at the burning bush to lead his people out of Egypt. Moses responded with trepidation and doubt about his ability to carry out the mission effectively. God’s response was very instructive regarding apologetics. In Exodus 3:12, God explained to Moses that he, God himself, would be with Moses and would give him a sign to demonstrate that God had sent him. The sign would be the success in delivering the people, and they would worship God on that very mountain where Moses was standing. But Moses was still unsure and suggested the people would want proof verifying who had really sent him. In Exodus 3:13–15, God answered and told Moses to tell them that “I AM” had sent him. But Moses continued to be frightened and unsure, saying in Exodus 4:1, “But suppose they will

not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, “The Lord has not appeared to you.” Moses anticipated the people would doubt and not believe his message. God did not reprimand Moses for this concern but rather gave Moses a way to convince them with supernatural signs in Exodus 4:2–9 and specifically said the signs would serve to convince the people in Exodus 4:5, 8–9. This event is an example of God giving Moses an apologetic which he was to use in conjunction with his message to convince the people. Then in Exodus 4:29–14:31, Moses apologetically employed all that God had given him. Exodus 14:31 says, “Thus Israel saw the great work which the LORD had done in Egypt; so the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD and His servant Moses.” The apologetic of signs and wonders worked. The second event to consider is Elijah's encounter with the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18:18–40. In this event, Elijah set up a test between himself and the prophets of Baal in order to demonstrate who was truly God in verse 24. The idea was that the real God would answer the request of his respective prophets and send fire to consume the sacrifice on the altar, providing proof of his existence and power. We know this event was intended to offer a sign as proof to convince the people because Elijah had questioned them in verse 21 about their wavering opinion. He challenged them to follow the Lord if, in fact, the Lord was the true God, rather than wavering between Baal and the Lord. The test would confirm to the people the identity of the real God. The Lord answered and demonstrated his existence and power, and the people immediately believed, confessing the Lord as the true God in verse 39. As we saw with the Exodus, this event gives a clear example of using reason and signs to demonstrate the truth of the message and convince the hearers and witnesses using an apologetic of signs and wonders.

In the New Testament, finding relevant passages is again a bit more straightforward than with the Old Testament. In Acts 1:1–3, the author explains that he had formally documented what Jesus had begun to do and to teach until the time he was taken back to heaven after giving many commands to the apostles. He then explains in 1:3 that Jesus employed apologetics with the apostles “... to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible

proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” The verse references the interval between Jesus’s resurrection and ascension in which he appeared multiple times. The appearances themselves could certainly be considered an apologetic in that they must have been quite convincing as to Jesus’s resurrection. This passage in Acts, however, indicates that Jesus also offered “many infallible proofs” to the apostles during these appearances, such as showing Thomas his scars as recorded in John 20:24–28, the road to Emmaus event recorded in Luke 24:14–25, or the instance where Jesus ate fish by the sea recorded in John 21:1–14. There could have been many other instances as well that were not recorded. This passage in Acts explains these instances were meant to be proofs to convince. But we know from Matthew 28:17 that even after Jesus appeared post-resurrection to his disciples, many still doubted. So it seems from Acts 1:1–3 that Jesus intentionally engaged in apologetics by way of these “many infallible proofs” to, at least in part, overcome the doubts remaining in some of his followers.

Another reference concerns one of Paul’s missionary journeys in which he traveled to Thessalonica. The author of Acts explains Paul’s customary method of doing missions — he employed apologetics. Acts 17:2–5 explains, “Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, ‘This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.’ And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas. But the Jews who were not persuaded ...” Here, we have a reference to Paul’s use of apologetics, and we’re told it was his customary practice as he entered a new area. He engaged the Jews and God-fearers in the local synagogue, making a case for Jesus as the Christ. His clear intent is to persuade — and many were persuaded — but some were not. This is a perfect reference to a situation in which apologetics was used in the course of preaching the gospel and conducting missionary work.

Acts also records examples of Paul’s use of apologetics. The classic

passage preserving an example of Paul in action is Acts 17:16–34. Here, Paul interacts in the marketplace with Jews and Greeks and, eventually, with the philosophers of the day in the famous Areopagus. This passage in Acts presents Paul’s debate. Verse 17 explains that Paul “reasoned” daily with them and that some of the philosophers disagreed and disputed with him specifically in regard to the resurrection (verse 18; see also verse 32). So, they brought Paul into the Areopagus for a more formal debate. Paul’s initial presentation created quite the stir, and they determined to bring him back for further debate. This is an excellent example of apologetics in action.

Acts, however, is not the only place where Paul employs apologetics. Another classic example of Pauline apologetics is 1 Corinthians 15:1–11. Here, Paul writes to correct a misunderstanding and false teaching regarding the resurrection. He employs what many scholars believe to be one of the earliest gospel formulations from early church preaching.⁷ In verse 2, he exhorts them to hold fast to the true gospel and then restates the gospel with the proof formula, “according to the scriptures,” after each main statement of the gospel message. This statement functions as an apologetic technique reminding the Corinthians of the gospel claims that had been predicted by the scriptures. Then, Paul emphasizes the resurrection of Christ specifically and provides a powerful apologetic proof of the resurrection, namely the many eyewitnesses. In verse 6, he even makes a point of noting that most of the large group (more than five hundred), who had seen the risen Jesus at the same time, were still alive. It seems likely Paul intended this to have an apologetic function, to provide an evidential basis for the Corinthians to believe Jesus had truly risen.⁸ In this one passage, we almost certainly have an example of early church apologetics and Pauline apologetics combined in one instance.

COMMANDS REGARDING APOLOGETICS

The classic passage to consider regarding apologetics is 1 Peter 3:15. Here Peter instructs the church to always be prepared to give a defense, and he uses the term *apologia*. This command is given to the

church in the context of suffering and persecution. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume the individual Christians comprising this church had been experiencing attacks on their faith in various forms. It is instructive to see that Peter did not tell them to “stay under the radar.” Nor did he say something like, “Don’t debate them. Just tell them about Jesus.” Rather, he instructed them to always be prepared to give a defense, a reason, for their faith in Christ. And surely this defense might sometimes create more friction and persecution. So, this passage is a powerful and clear exhortation to respond to persecution and a polemic environment with apologetics.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has focused on some salient references and examples of apologetics. We have seen that two terms from the Old Testament carry meanings that align quite well with the English term *apologetics*. In the New Testament, the term *apologia* provides a direct translation to the English term *apologetics*. These biblical terms, combined with the references and examples of apologetics and a direct command to engage in apologetics in 1 Peter 3:15, provide a strong case that the practice of apologetics is indeed biblical. In fact, a case could be made that the gospels and Acts are specifically intended to be an apologetic for Jesus as the Christ.

So, if apologetics is biblical, are we not obligated to understand it and be engaged in it? Are we not called to submit to the Word of God in all areas — his Word that includes the specific term *apologetics* in the New Testament, references to God and his people doing apologetics, actual examples of apologetics, and even a direct command to engage in apologetics? It seems clear the answer is a resounding yes.

BRUCE CLARK



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Clark received a BA degree in Biblical Studies and Philosophy from Missouri Baptist University in 1984 and an MDiv-c from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1988. Bruce and his wife, Terri, have three daughters and currently reside with their youngest daughter near De Soto, Missouri.

CHAPTER 2: SHOW ME WHY WOMEN SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN APOLOGETICS

JULIE LOOS

Three years ago, my friends — Kris, Janet, and Judy — and I sent our boys off to college for their freshman year. These young men walked onto campus being what we considered “strong” Christians. But according to research, odds were, when they came home for turkey and dressing, three of the four would utter some words that would be hard for us moms to swallow: “Mom, I don't believe in God anymore.”¹ Was there anything we could do so that all of them beat the odds? What about your own children and grandchildren? How can we help them beat the odds?

MY WHY

In my boys' middle school years, knowing they would encounter more challenges to their faith, I began exploring how to explain to them that Christianity is true despite what our pluralistic society believes. That's when I discovered Christian apologetics — how to defend our convictions with logic, reason, and evidence. I gained confidence and understanding that the truth of Christianity is grounded in evidence, not just experience. I began to learn answers to the tough questions of faith and to not shrink back in fear or ignorance when challenged. I now had the means to train my children

to stand firm in their beliefs in a world hostile to their convictions, a world in which the top reasons for youth leaving the faith are: overprotectiveness, shallow teaching, antagonism to science, judgmental and simplistic attitudes about sexuality, exclusiveness, and not being able to express doubts.² Where had this form of discipleship been all *my* life, and why wasn't the church doing a better job of teaching this?

Then came a defining moment when I heard Dr. Frank Turek's "Intellectual Predators: How Professors Prey on Christian Students and What You Can Do About It."³ No longer was my concern just personal; it was missional. I was now compelled to share the need for apologetics training with other moms, to make them aware of the dangers awaiting our children on campus, and to give them the tools that had helped me. What I learned also changed the way I led other college moms to pray for our college campuses through my role with Moms in Prayer as their college groups' liaison. It later led me to join the staff of Ratio Christi, a campus apologetics ministry, as their director of prayer and community outreach and involvement. This campus ministry is part of the solution to the youth exodus issue.

What's more, as I studied my Bible, familiar scriptural principles took on more urgency than before. A couple of these principles that stood out to me were to love God with our *minds* from Matt. 22:37 and to always be ready to give a defense for our hope with gentleness and respect from 1 Peter 3:15.

My experience in apologetics, prayer, and campus ministry has convicted me that we have a biblical mandate as moms to teach ourselves and then train our children in apologetics with the goal of transforming the culture for Christ.

IT IS FAITH AFFIRMING

From personal study and teaching others, I agree with what Mary Jo Sharp (the Southern Baptist Convention's first major female presence in apologetics) says about the ABCs of apologetics — it answers doubts, builds confidence, and changes lives. If you want to send your child out into the world (and especially to the college

campus), be prepared to defend against attacks on his or her faith, and not just survive but thrive, then I invite you to join me in teaching ourselves, training our kids, and transforming the world by giving our kids the tools to advance truth and Christianity at the university and beyond. Let's do what we can so that when they do come home from college at Thanksgiving, the only thing hard to swallow will be their pile of dirty laundry.

IT IS IN OUR DNA

The field of apologetics has traditionally been populated by men — whether teaching, speaking, leading ministries, or general interest. But that has changed greatly in the dozen years since I started out on my apologetics quest. And thank God — literally. More and more women are gaining not only *interest* in apologetics, but they are gaining *ground*. There is an explosion of women earning master's degrees in apologetics and using their training in public and private ministry. But hear me loud and clear: you do not need a formal education in apologetics to learn it or teach it to your children. You don't have to have a degree to learn a "degree" of faith defense. In fact, we are *all* called to defend the faith (1 Peter 3:15–16), contend for the faith (Jude 3), and love God with our minds and not just our emotions (Matt. 22:37). Biblically, we have no excuse. Practically and positionally, we have no excuse because of our role as mothers.

Let me explain. Despite feminism and the changing role of parents in modern society, it is probably safe to say that moms are still the primary caretakers of kids on a day-to-day basis, especially in the role of the stay-at-home mom. We are usually the ones making playdates, scheduling extracurricular activities, helping with homework, screening friends, and going over Awana verses. And positionally, as the typically more nurturing parent, the one more normally attuned to our child's struggles and needs, we are in a place to recognize what they are encountering and struggling with. We can be a sounding board for them when they walk in the door from school. (Hats off to the dads out there who do this as well.)

While I am not at all discounting the important role of fatherhood

or the spiritual leadership desired, needed, and provided by men, we women are typically the primary influencers of our child's spiritual development. I recommend Stephen W. Cable's book, *Cultural Captives: The Beliefs and Behavior of American Young Adults*, and his overview and interpretation of very important research on the youth exodus from faith. Of born-again young adults, over 65% said that a family member had the greatest influence on their religious beliefs. And of those, over 70% said that family member was their mother/grandmother, meaning that *the female side of the family has a greater influence in passing down religious beliefs*.⁴

Plus, women are relational. In my work in apologetics, I find women are often drawn to apologetics out of concern for a person or a need that exists in a relationship, be it family member, friend, or child. Apologetics has a reputation for being geared only towards intellectuals. But joining the intellectual side of our faith (loving God with our minds) with the relational side makes it much more appealing to those with whom we are sharing. We women are created to combine the heart and the head when it comes to training our children (and our friends for that matter) in the reasons for the faith.

WE CAN RELATE TO “THE THREE LITTLE PIGS”

As we help build our child's faith foundation, we need to consider seriously what we are basing it on. Believe it or not, there is a lesson for us from “The Three Little Pigs.”

Are we building this foundation on our own “personal truth” (what we feel is true or what works for us)? That's called relativism; it's not biblical. It's like the straw the first little pig used. That foundation can burn up or blow away in an instant, and unfortunately, it's what many young people build on today. Feelings don't define truth; reality does because truth is what corresponds to reality. That's why you hear so many youth talk about their own “personal truth” and why they don't believe in objective truth. Without objective truth, why is *your* God the only way? Feelings are fickle; hearts are deceptive. Do we really want our children to build their faith on such lightweight material?

Or are we like the second pig, using the fragile sticks of tradition so they believe simply because it's what they've always been taught? While it might be an okay way to start, we shouldn't allow them to stay there. Our kids don't need hand-me-down faith; they will outgrow it. Our kids can't ride on the coattails of our beliefs. Can you imagine what will happen when they go to college and their first philosophy professor tells them God does not exist and there is no proof he does, and their only answer is, "But my parents say he does"? Are we telling them to believe without having them check out the credentials of the authority? That stick will break the second it's put under the pressure of peers, professors, or doubt.

I propose we help build our kids' faith using a solid material like the third little pig, a material that can stand up to the forces that will rail against it. I'm talking about the brick and mortar of evidential faith, fact, reason, and logic that is laid down in apologetics training through learning the philosophical, scientific, and historical reasons for our convictions.

When asked what the greatest commandment was, Jesus said in Matthew 22:37 that we are to love him with all our heart, soul, and mind (intellect). Not including our minds in the way we love him is like sitting on a three-legged stool with one leg missing. If our kids lose their balance, they could fall away from the faith and not get back up. Not only may they not get back up, but they likely will not return to church once married with their own children like past generations.

So, while apologetics may not be a magic bullet, it is definitely a tool we moms (and dads) should add to our toolbelt for helping kids build a firm foundation of faith.

We cannot start too young. Gone are the days when late high school was good for introducing apologetics to our kids as a faith "booster shot" before being infected by the germs of other worldviews in college. Many ministries and churches are now seeing the need to start in middle school, if not sooner. When you consider that, on average, children's morals are set by age nine, and their worldviews and salvation experiences are set by age thirteen, you can see the need to train early and train often.⁵

YOUR KIDS NEED ANSWERS; YOU NEED GRACE

So where do you start?

Here's what I've learned from studying and doing this with my own kids:

- Give your kids permission to ask hard questions. No question is dumb or off limits. Cultivate a home where dialogue is encouraged. Most kids walk away from the faith due to intellectual doubt and a lack of answers for the hard questions of faith. Let's not add to the problem.
- When they ask you the hard questions that you don't know the answers to (yet), give yourself permission to say, "I don't know. But I'll find out for you, or we can find out together." And then do it. (Hey, you already have a great tool in your hands — the other chapters of this book.)
- You do not have to learn this all at once, and in fact, you can't. This will be a lifelong pursuit. (See Phil. 3:12–14 for some encouragement to press on toward the prize.)
- Do not feel like you must know it all before you can begin teaching and sharing with them. Just get off the bench and get in the game.
- Be intentional and engaging; treat it like a treasure hunt, a discovery. Take advantage of all the new resources available to help.
- Encourage others to join you. Study apologetics with others. Find some moms and study one of the great new apologetics books aimed at parents (resources below).
- Don't force it, but don't neglect it. Just like the "sex talk," get over being uncomfortable about it.
- Tell them it's okay to have doubts. God won't get mad at them and neither will you.
- Be an ambassador for apologetics. Talk to your women's ministry and church leadership about the need for this sort of training in your own church. Use the MBC Apologetics Network speakers to help. (Just as you champion for causes

in your school with teachers and principals, champion for spiritual education as well.) Consider having your church become a Ratio Christi College Prep affiliate to incorporate apologetics and worldview training naturally into your youth group.

- Support ministries that do this work — locally and nationally.
- Start doing your homework. There will be an exam; it may come sooner than later. This is a test all parents should help their children study for.

OUR KIDS NEED TO TRUST THE BIBLE AND US

While you can start by becoming familiar with any of the topics in this book, I have a personal bias and reason for what I believe the “first apologetic” we teach our children should be. I base it on an overwhelming statistic. In Mike Nappa’s book, *The Jesus Survey*, he interviewed “cream of the crop” Christian youth. Over sixty percent were either uncertain or unsettled and confused about whether the Bible can be trusted. Seventy percent expressed persistent, measurable doubts and disbelief that what the Bible says about Jesus is true.⁶ Coupled with the rest of his research, he drew the following conclusion, with which I concur, that the best thing we can do for our teens is to help them grow confident in the trustworthiness of scripture.⁷

This is one of the most interesting defenses of our faith to teach our children and one of the simplest to learn. For example, teach them these two astounding facts: 1) the Bible is the most accurately translated book of antiquity and 2) the “errors” people refer to in the Bible to try to refute its accuracy are just basically misspellings and “variants” — none of which significantly changes or impacts the meaning or the message.⁸ Building their knowledge of facts like this will increase their confidence in scripture.

WE ARE RESOURCEFUL

There are wonderful resources to help you, many of them free. My passion is to connect moms to them. Here are a few of my favorites:

Books aimed at parents and kids: See authors Natasha Crain and J. Warner Wallace

Apologetics camps: Summit Ministries, Faith Ascent Base Camp (right here in Missouri), Impact 360

Campus ministry: Ratio Christi

Youth group training: Ratio Christi College Prep, Maven Truth

Podcast and website *especially for moms/women*: Mama Bear Apologetics

Conferences: Women in Apologetics, Stand to Reason, reTHINK Apologetics Student Conference

Online/TV shows: *Truth Matters* on YouTube and NRB TV — the episodes aired on DirecTV are aimed more at teens, college students, and parents; see <https://ratiochristi.org/truthmatters> for all the ways to watch it and available topics

Bibles: *Apologetics Study Bible* for teens and adults

Curriculum for kids/teens: Thomas J. Griffin's *Apologetics for Tweens*, Elizabeth Urbanowicz's *Foundation Comparative Worldview Curriculum* and also *Deep Roots Bible Curriculum for Defendable Faith*

Apologetics Bible studies for women: See LifeWay studies by Mary Jo Sharp

CONCLUSION

For the sake of our own faith, our kids' faith surviving culture, and the church impacting culture, we women need to embrace loving God with our minds through apologetics. As the founders of the Women in Apologetics ministry say, "It's not just that women need apologetics, but that apologetics needs women." I challenge you to show me why you shouldn't start now.

JULIE LOOS



Julie Loos is a writer and speaker with a passion for prayer for college campuses and apologetics training for our youth. She's also an activist for stemming the tide of the youth exodus from the faith.

She worked for five years on the national staff for the campus apologetics ministry Ratio Christi. She is part of the writing team for Mama Bear Apologetics and a Spring 2019 release *Mama Bear Apologetics: 11 Cultural Lies (and How to Keep Your Kids from Swallowing Them)*.

Julie is in her seventeenth year with Moms in Prayer International and currently serves as their College Groups Liaison, equipping thousands of moms monthly in how to pray strategically for the college campus using her apologetics training and insight. Watch for her forthcoming website on WordPress.org.

CHAPTER 3: THE IMPORTANCE OF PREACHING THE FIRST-LEVEL DOCTRINES OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

DAVE VAN BEBBER JR.

John 17:17

*Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.*¹

John 17:17 is foundational to the discipline of apologetics. Apologist Adam Cochrun contends that, in practice, Matthew 28:19–20 provides the weightiest explanation for why one engages in apologetics.² Apologetics starts with the High Priestly Prayer and the Great Commission, *both works* presupposing that God has spoken. He has spoken in a way that is authoritative, clear, necessary, sufficient, and inerrant.³ Without God's having spoken, one cannot know anything.⁴

Christ's prayer in John 17 is a cache of theological depth;⁵ he prays that his followers will be sanctified in the truth, God's Word. The objective standard for all that is true is the Bible itself. Every pastor gets his authority not from himself or his calling but from the Word of God and his accurate handling of it.⁶ God's words, spoken in ordinary human language, are understandable.⁷

Wayne Grudem notes, "All words in Scripture are God's words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God."⁸ One's very understanding of reality must be framed in such a way that God's Word is the ultimate standard for

what one knows as true.⁹ Every pastor's worldview must be grounded in revelational epistemology.¹⁰ Everything is meaningless if God has not spoken, but he has.¹¹

The apostle Paul writes, "All Scripture is breathed out by God..." (2 Tim. 3:16). "[A pastor] must hold firm to the trustworthy word ... so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine ... rebuk[ing] those who contradict" (Titus 1:9). Pastors must be students of scripture to correct false doctrine.¹² There is a correct and incorrect understanding of scripture. Everything is not up to one's interpretation.¹³ Mark Dever notes, "Christian preachers today have authority to speak from God only so long as they speak his message and unfold his words."¹⁴

How does a pastor refute false teaching? He preaches.¹⁵ Jared Wilson states, "The seeding of the gospel into the life of the church begins in the pulpit ..."¹⁶ One must be grounded in the doctrines that define the Christian faith. What a pastor says behind the pulpit is where apologetics begins.

Pastors must embrace their role as defenders of the Christian faith. Pastors are apologists, as are all Christians.¹⁷ Titus 1:9 charges every pastor to be an apologist. If one is recognized as a pastor, he is ordained to shepherd the flock and is called to "instruct in sound doctrine."

Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Muslims, and all "who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth" (Rom. 1:18) twist the clear teaching of scripture. The best way to destroy faulty arguments is to use God's Word as a *sword* defending the faith (Eph. 6:17). Pastors must demonstrate that God has given them all they need to proclaim the message of Jesus and every reason to stand in defense of the hope that he gave and continues to give.¹⁸ More than ever, the message of the cross is seen as "folly to those who are perishing ..." (1 Cor. 1:18). It is difficult in this cultural malaise even to ascertain the meaning of holding fast to or "contend[ing] for the faith that was once for all delivered to the Saints" (Jude 3). This is a culture so influenced by the naturalistic worldview that truth itself is a concept often rejected.¹⁹

STATE OF AMERICAN THEOLOGY, 2016

Why contend that the state of American theology is in shambles? One needs to go no further than a study from *Ligonier Ministries* and *LifeWay Research*.²⁰ One finds ample evidence of confusion in the results. The study, conducted to “measure the current theological awareness of adult Americans,”²¹ surveyed 3,000 American adults on topics such as beliefs about God, goodness, sin, salvation, religious text, hell, the church, and authority. This article examines each topic to get a sense of the findings.

Great confusion exists about the doctrine of God. More than a fourth of Americans do not accept the doctrine of the Trinity.²² Almost half of Americans have no comprehension of Christology.²³ Americans adopt the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ view of Christ as the first creation of Jehovah²⁴ and affirm the Witnesses’ view of the Holy Spirit.²⁵ Concerning beliefs about goodness and sin, Americans believe good deeds will get them to heaven.²⁶ The majority feel they can will their salvation.²⁷ Most believe man is “good by nature.”²⁸

Things are no better regarding beliefs about salvation and religious text. Nearly half of Americans reject the Bible as God’s Word.²⁹ The majority believe the Bible to be mythical³⁰ and without objective meaning.³¹ Over three-fourths of Americans reject salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.³²

Americans’ beliefs about heaven and hell, the church, and authority are also non-biblical. Most Americans believe heaven a place to which all people go³³ and hell as not eternal judgment.³⁴ Many reject the importance of worship attendance,³⁵ preaching from the Bible,³⁶ and accepting the Bible as having “the authority to tell us what we must do.”³⁷

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

What can one glean from these findings? One observes a society continually moving to the position that God has not spoken and individuals are the ultimate standard. How does one address this cultural shift that is invading our churches and denominations? The

solution is simple; Peter calls believers to defend the teachings of Christ (1 Peter 3:15).

But how do pastors enact this? They preach first-level doctrines that allow one to recognize heretical teachings. First-level doctrines inform Christians that not every group or person saying they are Christian are, in fact, Christian.

Preaching grounded in the first-level doctrines of the Christian faith is crucial to one's apologetic. Pastors must constantly articulate the first-level doctrines because eternal consequences follow from not doing so; this is ultimately a gospel issue. Too many who occupy pulpits refuse to preach first-level doctrines. Instead, many proclaim a narcissistic feel-goodery that cannot be called preaching the gospel.

One could walk into many churches and find individuals who are unable to articulate first-level doctrines. Why is this? Over the last seventy years, the American church has not taken seriously the historic confessions or creedal statements.³⁸ Too many cowardly pastors do not want to preach the fullness of God's Word because they are afraid of the word *doctrine* or they want to preach about self-esteem. The Christian faith is an intellectually rigorous faith.³⁹ Every pastor should be able to defend the first-level doctrines that define orthodoxy.

WHAT ARE THE FIRST-LEVEL DOCTRINES OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH?

Albert Mohler notes, "First-level theological issues would include those doctrines most central and essential to the Christian faith."⁴⁰ Unfortunately, in most churches, the study of church history is non-existent. Names like Origen, Tertullian, Athanasius, or Augustine are unknown. These individuals clarify the standards that define Christendom and first-level doctrines: God is triune; Jesus is truly God and truly man;⁴¹ salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone; finally, the Bible is the Word of God.⁴²

GOD IS TRIUNE

The error often made about the Trinity is that the concept was

created in the Middle Ages. Ignatius of Antioch as early as 107 A.D. wrote, “For our God, Jesus the Christ, was conceived by Mary according to the dispensation of God, from the seed of David, yes, but of the Holy Spirit as well” (Eph. 18).⁴³ Ignatius notes Jesus’s deity, God the Father’s power, and the Holy Spirit’s work in the incarnation all within eighty years of Christ’s death.

Ignatius is not alone in recognizing the Trinity.⁴⁴ Examples occur in the recorded statements and writings of Polycarp,⁴⁵ Melito of Sardis,⁴⁶ and from many ante-Nicene fathers. The Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. arose from a Trinitarian controversy.⁴⁷ Arius proposed that Christ was the first creation of the Father. The Council of Nicaea put that false teaching to rest by penning the Nicene Creed.⁴⁸

Scripture teaches the doctrine of the Trinity, and pastors should be knowledgeable about this. In Genesis 1:26, Yahweh says, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” The plural “us” in this sentence shows the one being of God shared in persons.⁴⁹ This plurality is also found in Isaiah 6:8 when Jehovah says, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”

The doctrine of the Trinity is best defined as one God existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All persons are coequal and coeternal.⁵⁰ The Shema exemplifies the oneness of God in the historic confession of Israel: “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one” (Deut. 6:4). This *oneness* makes the definitive difference between those who follow Yahweh and all other religions.⁵¹

Jesus states, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). The words denote the coequality of Christ and the Father.⁵² Peter calls the Holy Spirit God, accusing Ananias of lying, saying, “You have not lied to man but to God” (Acts 5: 4), implying that the Holy Spirit has coequality with the Father and the Son.⁵³ Jesus sending out the disciples makes the coequality of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit evident, telling them to baptize “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). *The Didache* from 95 A.D. demonstrates the tenacity of this baptismal formula.⁵⁴

Preaching should be filled with ample appeals to Trinitarian concepts. Why? As James White notes, “A true and accurate knowledge of the Trinity is a blessing in and of itself. The Trinity is the

highest Revelation God has made of himself to his people.”⁵⁵ Preaching the Trinity makes pastors apologists every Sunday.

JESUS IS TRULY GOD AND TRULY MAN

Another primary doctrine that defines the Christian faith is that Jesus is truly God and truly man. R.C. Sproul writes, “Faith in the deity of Christ is necessary to be a Christian. It is an essential part of the New Testament gospel of Christ.”⁵⁶ Thomas, following the resurrection and seeing the risen Christ for the first time, proclaims, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28). Thomas believed Jesus was God, and Jesus did not correct this acknowledgement.⁵⁷

Sproul continues:

At the Council of Nicaea ... in opposition to the Arian heresy, [the church] declared that Jesus is begotten, not made, and that his divine nature is of the same essence (*homoousios*) with the father ... The second person of the Trinity is one in essence with God the father. That is, the “being” of Christ is the being of God; he is not merely similar to deity, but he is deity.⁵⁸

The Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.) affirmed Christ was truly man and truly God.⁵⁹ Jesus’s two natures, divine and human, did not mix, were not confused, and were not separated or divided. Neither the person nor the being of Christ is changed by the incarnation; it is an action in time.⁶⁰

The apostle Paul, quoting a hymn of the early church, states, “Though [Jesus] was in the form of God, [he] did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:6–8). Jesus lived historically (John 1:14). He died (Luke 23:46). Jesus rose bodily (Matt. 28:5–8). He will return literally to judge the living and the dead (Acts 17:31).

Anyone claiming to be Christian must understand that Jesus is truly God and truly man, as scripture states. Preaching must be filled with this truth spelled out directly. Scripture draws a line in the sand.

The Hypostatic Union is central to the claim of what Christ accomplished in his life and death.⁶¹ It is central to one's defense against the false claims of this world that one knows Jesus was creator God, yet truly man, and condescended to put on human flesh to save his people. Jesus was the unique God-man. Preaching this truth combats false doctrines men have made to lead others astray.

CHRIST ALONE

Salvation comes by grace alone, through faith alone, and in Christ alone (Eph. 2:8–9). Salvation is not a human doing; it is God's action.⁶² John Frame comments, "Paul also recognizes that sin makes us totally unable to please God through our works (Rom. 3:10–18; 6:23; 8:8). Only God's grace in Christ is able to produce good works in us (Eph. 2:8–10)."⁶³ Salvation is a gift of God given to humanity through the work of Jesus Christ. Salvation is a gift that one cannot achieve through meritorious works or personal righteousness.⁶⁴ Salvation is found when one repents and believes that Jesus Christ came and died to earn one's salvation, imputing his righteousness onto the believer.

Pastors are charged to preach the completed work of Christ. They must appeal to Christ's righteousness, not the righteousness of man. Christ's work and righteousness should be preached with conviction every Sunday.

GOD'S WORD

The Bible is the Word of God. God has spoken. Humanity knows God because they are image bearers.⁶⁵ The Bible is God's revelation of himself to humanity. He has condescended to communicate through human words.⁶⁶ God's Word proclaims the truth.⁶⁷

The sixty-six books of the Bible we use today first appeared in list form in Athanasius's festal letter written in 367 A.D.⁶⁸ It was agreed on at the Council of Carthage in 397 A.D.⁶⁹ Jesus affirmed the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament.⁷⁰ They were the sacred scriptures of the Jews in the time of Christ.⁷¹ The New Testament canon is established

through apostolicity, orthodoxy, and universality.⁷² Pastors must know the test for canonicity. They must preach the truth revealed in the sixty-six books, confidently knowing they are God's Word.

CONCLUSION

God is triune; Jesus is truly God and truly man; salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone; the Bible is God's Word. Every Christian should know these first-level truths. It is the job of every pastor to preach these first-level truths. They are the dividing lines for Christianity. Rob Phillips, who leads the Missouri Baptist Apologetics Network, stated:

We need to be able to distinguish between the non-negotiables and the secondary and tertiary issues... The non-negotiables should divide us. If you don't agree with the deity of Christ or the deity and full humanity of Christ, if you don't agree that God is triune, if you don't agree with justification by faith, if you don't agree that the Bible is the inspired, infallible, sufficient Word of God, then you're not really by definition a Christian.⁷³

The state of American theology is desperate because pastors do not preach the first-level doctrines or point them out nearly often enough. Many pastors do not take seriously their call to be apologists. Most sermons lack doctrinal depth and therefore do not equip the saints with the ability to refute false doctrines. Pastors must know these doctrines and preach these doctrines. They are apologists. Their sermons are the standard-bearers for the truth that is found in Christ. If the pastor does not preach the above truths, then who will (Rom. 10:14)?

DAVID GUY VAN BEBBER JR.



David Guy Van Bebber Jr. was saved by grace through faith at the age of six, called to ministry at nine, and called to preach at fifteen. David is married to Valerie. He is the father of John, Evie, Violet, and Elisha.

David is pastor at Buffalo First Baptist Church in Buffalo, Missouri. He was a member of the Southwest Baptist University Speech and Debate team throughout his undergraduate years.

Pastor Dave holds degrees from Southwest Baptist University, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Missouri State University. He loves God's Word and believes it is true with all his heart.

CHAPTER 4: ARMCHAIR APOLOGIST: IMAGINATIVE APOLOGETICS

DENNIS D. JACKSON

Understanding and Using Imaginative Apologetics

When you think of apologetics, you understand what it is — a defense of Christianity. And you understand that it is something each Christian is called to be ready to do. But what does that look like? Maybe the first picture that comes to your head is a formal debate — two people, thoroughly prepared, confident in their positions, making heady arguments back and forth, until the defender of Christianity catches his opponent in a logical misstep and delivers a conclusion that makes Christianity irrefutable. And with that picture in your head, you laugh as you recognize that is something you will surely never do. So, you think again and imagine a scholarly professor, hunched over a computer keyboard, surrounded by large volumes, typing out a book that will certainly put the critics of Christianity to rest. Again, this picture is one that will never include you. That is quite simply not where your talents lie. If that is what it means to be an apologist for the gospel, how can you fulfill that calling?

Fortunately, those doctoral level approaches are not the only ways of defending the gospel. While we are all called to be apologists, we are certainly not all called to be debaters or scholarly writers. There is another area of apologetics that, although you are familiar with it, you

may not think of in that way. It goes by the name “imaginative apologetics,” and far from being trivial, it is a much needed means of defending Christianity in our current world. With a better understanding of what it is, why it is so vitally important, and how you can implement it, you may find a way of doing apologetics that fits someone who is perhaps a little more couch potato than bookworm.

WHAT IS IMAGINATIVE APOLOGETICS?

Imaginative apologetics is engaging a person's imagination through the arts to give fuller meaning to or to correct or defend Christian concepts. It can be used to give meaning to meaningless or misconceived words and ideas, but it differs from propositional apologetics which gives statements of facts and builds logical arguments.

The arts are a powerful, but somewhat less direct, way of getting the message across. But that does not mean it is a dishonest method. One could certainly stir strong feelings of patriotism by writing a dissertation on the Bill of Rights. At the same time, there are many who feel goosebumps when listening to the national anthem.

WHY IS IMAGINATIVE APOLOGETICS IMPORTANT?

Imaginative apologetics has been somewhat neglected while “superstars” of propositional apologetics have risen. But it is an area that is vitally important because of the incredible power of the arts.

Ravi Zacharias, a noted Christian apologist, describes this power exuding from the hands of artists past and present:

... as a Christian philosopher, I have nevertheless maintained that the most philosophically powerful institution in a nation is really not the academicians, as powerful as they may be, but for the younger generation particularly, the philosophy is provided by the world of the arts. It is Jean-Paul Sartre the French existentialist who did most of his philosophizing through drama. So also the Algerian,

Albert Camus. And it was Andrew Fletcher who once said, “Let me write the songs of a nation. I really don’t care who writes its laws.” So, the motors of the youthful imagination are really the artists of our time.¹

The secular world recognizes this power within the arts as well. In an interview, actor Alan Rickman remarked, “Actors are agents of change. A film, a piece of theatre, a piece of music, or a book can make a difference. It can change the world.”²

To see the power of the arts at work, consider the example of the cultural acceptance of homosexuality. Forty-five years ago, homosexuality was a taboo subject considered by most to be a perversion and an atrocity. But most people also did not know anyone who was a homosexual, or at least not someone who would admit to it. Then, in 1977, television audiences were introduced to a show called *Three’s Company*, about a man and two women looking to share an apartment together to split the rent. But the landlord would not allow unmarried men and women to live together in his apartments, so the man pretended to be gay. The show was a huge success, thanks in great part to John Ritter’s comedic talents. So, even without having a homosexual person on the show, people were introduced to the idea of talking about homosexuality much more than they had before. People liked Ritter’s character and perhaps would have liked the character even if he truly were gay. Later that year, another show premiered — a comedy called *Soap*. This show *did* introduce one of television’s first recurring, openly homosexual characters, played by an immense comedic talent, Billy Crystal. And people liked Crystal’s character, even though he was gay.

Fast forward twenty years, and a show called *Ellen* brings its title character out as being gay. Just before that episode airs, the star of the show, Ellen DeGeneres, announces that, like her character, she is gay. Again, people liked the character and the actress. The fact that they just found out both were gay made people think, “What’s changed? I still like Ellen.” As the number of gay characters on America’s television screens was escalating, the U.S. Supreme Court did an about-face with its *Lawrence v. Texas* decision in 2003 and struck

down laws against same-sex sexual conduct, including Georgia's anti-sodomy law it had upheld in a 1986 decision.

There are certainly other examples that could be brought out to emphasize the power of the arts on culture and society. But this overview of homosexuality's acceptance is more than sufficient to make the point. The arts are capable of bringing about great change. If Christians are to continue in the early church's tradition of "turning the world upside down," we will need to be involved in the arts.

HOW CAN ONE IMPLEMENT IMAGINATIVE APOLOGETICS?

With all of the arts to work with, someone can implement imaginative apologetics in two main ways. The first is to do it creatively. Creative imaginative apologetics is the active personal utilization of an art form to bring people to a better understanding of the truth of Christianity. In other words, you create something that helps a person understand a truth they might not otherwise grasp, or you help them comprehend a previously misunderstood truth. Trying to describe something like the beauty of a bride, the sumptuousness of a meal, or the thrill of an amusement park in simple, factual statements would be wholly inadequate. And so it is with Christianity, especially in explaining it to nonbelievers.

One example of this type of apologetics is the work of C.S. Lewis. In his *Chronicles of Narnia* series, the character Aslan is quite obviously a representation of Christ. And in Aslan's substitutionary death for Edmund and subsequent return to life, we see a picture of Jesus's substitutionary death on the cross and subsequent resurrection. The comparison is not particularly deeply hidden, and it was not meant to be. Lewis created it to help children understand what Jesus did in a world they might relate to more easily, using their imaginations.

Not only did Lewis use creative imaginative apologetics — it's how he came to salvation. Holly Ordway, in her book *Apologetics and the Christian Imagination*, describes Lewis's conversion to Christianity. As an adult, he had come to understand the facts of Christianity but struggled with what they meant. He just couldn't fully make sense of

Christ's sacrifice until one day he was discussing the matter with friends Hugo Dyson and J.R.R. Tolkien. They knew of Lewis's love of myth and had him consider his reaction to the idea of sacrifice within a mythical story. Lewis recognized that he would appreciate and even be moved by the idea of sacrifice in a myth. Tolkien and Dyson then pointed out that Jesus's sacrifice on the cross can be understood and can impact us the same way, except that Jesus's sacrifice really happened. "When Lewis realized that he could connect his imaginative response to the story, to the factual reality of the Christian claim about the Crucifixion and Resurrection, the final barrier to belief fell."³

Literature is not the only way to employ creative imaginative apologetics. With a song like "In the Garden," both the lyrics and the music communicate the possibility of an intimate relationship with God. When Handel finished writing the "Hallelujah Chorus" from his signature masterpiece *Messiah*, it is reported that he said, "I did think I did see all heaven before me and the great God Himself." A painting can remind us of things like hope, or it can represent danger in following a certain path. Theatre — whether the stage is a physical one, a television screen, a movie screen, or even a puppet stage — can be used to tell a story in a different way than literature. Dance, sculpture, poetry, architecture — all of these art forms can touch the imagination with an understanding of God and Christian truth that reaches people in a way that a logical treatise does not. Christians ought to be preeminent in the arts. The best artistic expressions should be those that most reflect the divine aspects of God. And who better to know, understand, feel, and express those divine aspects than true Christians?

"But wait," you say, "You've already pointed out that I am no scholar. How in the world could I write a book, even a piece of fiction?" You may not think of yourself as the creative type any more than you are the scholarly type. There is another way to implement imaginative apologetics — critically. Keep in mind that "critical" is not necessarily a negative word. It doesn't have to mean "finding fault" or "tending to judge harshly," but can mean simply "using careful and accurate judgment." Critical imaginative apologetics involves evaluating those art expressions that have been created by others for

either how they might enhance a person's understanding of Christianity, how they might serve as a blockade, or more likely, how they might be an alternative worldview to Christianity.

On the positive side of critical imaginative apologetics, one can easily look to the current trend of superheroes. In general, any superhero story can be a reminder that evil is real and there is a need to fight and defeat it. In a world that wants to pretend that right and wrong are not all that clear, superheroes can bring to light the truth that still haunts us.

Much has already been made of the similarities between Superman and Jesus. Even non-Christians will refer to Superman as “savior” or “messiah.” The latest reboot of the Superman origin story, *Man of Steel*, does not hide those similarities, but as a significant part of Superman's three-quarters-of-a-century history, makes efforts to display them prominently. From his unusual arrival on earth as a baby to his taking the mantle of public service in his early thirties, the comparisons to Jesus are obvious. The Man of Steel is even willing to die for humanity. The 2017 movie *Wonder Woman* likewise offers many comparisons to Jesus, along with some other Christian ideas such as Ares, a Greek god, as a Satan character. This character demonstrates how Satan is real, but humans cannot attribute all their evil to Satan, for even without Satan, humans still have evil that must be fought.

While there are great examples, even when unintentional, of Christian themes and messages in the various art expressions of our culture, there are also attempts to convey a very different worldview than Christianity. These must be exposed and countered, which brings us to the negative side of critical imaginative apologetics.

Several years ago, Dan Brown wrote a book called *The Da Vinci Code*, which later became a movie starring Tom Hanks. The book is a work of fiction, but the main premise of the book — that Jesus was not divine but instead married with children; that Christianity was an invention; and its true history was known and hidden by the Catholic Church for centuries — is a concept that is taken seriously by many and is in fact promoted by the author as the result of his actual research in writing the book. Apologists had to step forward and point out the lack of credibility of the sources Brown used.

Shortly after the release of C.S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* onto the big screen, a somewhat similar movie came out called *The Golden Compass*. While Lewis's story paints the picture of Christ's atoning sacrifice, *The Golden Compass* rejects an almighty God, communicating that heaven is merely the here and now. Certainly, Christians and Christian groups came out against the movie, an action most necessary considering the power of the movie to entrench an atheistic worldview in the minds of children. Having those who watch out for ways that the arts are being used to mislead people, and especially children, away from the ideas of God and Christianity is vital. It is necessary to have those who can explain what is wrong with these types of productions, explain how Christianity is the right direction, and not come off like a Chicken Little screaming about the sky falling when the problem is an acorn.

Critical or creative, imaginative apologetics are open to any follower of Jesus. It is taking the culture we live in — television, movies, music — and turning it into a discussion about Christianity, just as Paul did when he passed the statues of pagan worship in Athens in Acts 17. This is apologetics you can do from your armchair, your easel, or wherever you can create or analyze.

DENNIS D. JACKSON



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CHAPTER 5: EVANGELISM. THEREFORE, APOLOGETICS

ADAM COCHRUN

FALSE DICHOTOMIES

We live in a reality where false dichotomies run rampant. Among many things, think about the myths that only two political parties can win elections¹ or that agreement/approval is love and disagreement/disapproval is hate, which is the fruit of the “tolerance” movement.² Sadly, this sort of attitude has seeped into the place where all should be able to seek sanctuary from the blowing winds of false doctrine.

From my experience, the clearly defined Christian Church has become obsolete, replaced by “churchianity”³ — a generally and relatively defined *phenomenon* where churches define themselves when they should be defined by scripture alone. This has shifted evangelism from a set-apart, holy evangelism defined by scripture alone, to a worldly, philosophical hermeneutic of winning the world by being like the world and appealing to the delusion of the autonomous mind of man.⁴ Leaders have shifted from being called and spiritually gifted to being credentialed, corporate motivational speakers, and under-shepherds have followed suit, being produced by a leadership program versus the Holy Spirit.⁵ Adding to that, the movement of the Holy Spirit has been seemingly redefined as a charismatic force⁶ that

produces positive feelings, versus an authoritative person who has been sent into the world to convict and comfort those he wills.⁷

As an apologist with a “prophetic” heart, I am compelled by my conscience, with the Holy Spirit through scripture as my guide, to defend a true dichotomy spoken by Jesus — either you are for him or against him (Matt. 12:30, Lk. 11:23, Jn. 2:19).⁸ This is understood not just as a theological idea, but a fact with implications.⁹ That being said, we who have been baptized into Christ’s death and life (Rom. 6:4), who come to his table to profess him until he comes (1 Cor. 11:23–26), must not lean on our own understanding; rather, with full confidence, we must take God at his word (1 Tim. 3:16–17) because only he can make our paths straight (Prov. 3:5). We must stop answering the fool according to his folly, becoming like fools, and begin demonstrating how people are not acting wisely in denouncing the gospel we proclaim (Prov. 26:4–5). This can only be done when we derive our definitions, message, philosophy, and approach for proclaiming and defending the faith from the Bible alone, God’s written, self-attesting revelation of himself and his reality.¹⁰

False dichotomies from the world have seeped into the church. An example of this is pastoral training. Voddie Baucham Jr. states that because of a culture of mediocrity in the church, one may be seen to have a great passion for and knowledge of scripture, systematic theology, and church history, and because of these qualities, be set apart for pastoral training. I agree with Baucham that the above description “sounds like a Christian, right?” Then he continues by stating that the average American church does not seem to think this way.¹¹ Yes, pastors should have a knowledge of and a passion for the scriptures, theology, and the history of Christ’s bride. But should not all who profess the Lordship of Jesus have this same knowledge and passion? Though God bestows various gifts on his children, a longing for and possession of knowledge and a passionate zeal are marks of a disciple. In Ephesians 3:17–19, this is what the Apostle Paul prays for. He prays that the church “... being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with the fullness of God.”

THE DIAMOND

Rob Phillips, in his most recent book, *What Every Christian Should Know About Salvation*, develops an understanding of soteriology using the metaphor of a diamond with its facets. He states, “When you view a diamond, you see how each facet plays an integral role in revealing the beauty, complexity, and value of the gem. Further, each facet complements the others so that marring one diminishes them all.”¹² The *facets*, in this case, are twelve biblical terms, each with a plethora of biblical support providing context and definition that makes the whole of the soteriological diamond shimmer.

In Ephesians 3, Paul states that he has been given a ministry of “preaching the gospel to the Gentiles” about “the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God,” and here’s my interpolation: “so that through the church the *manifold* wisdom of God might now be made known...” Most English translations (I especially like the new CSB) render the Greek *polupoikilos*¹³ as *multi-faceted*.

Paul preached the *multifaceted* wisdom of God. One can conclude, therefore, that studying the wisdom of God found in scripture is like examining a diamond’s individual cuts for its shape and size with a jeweler loupe or stepping back, moving it into the light to focus on each individual sparkle, and getting the full effect by taking in the whole diamond. So, if Paul preached God’s multifaceted wisdom would be made known through the church, he did not preach a one-dimensional God and revelation. What is being made known, likewise, is not one-dimensional.

This multifacidity is also found in the thought of Cornelius Van Til, a past Westminster Professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics, when it comes to an understanding of the analogous relationship between God and man.¹⁴ In his analysis of the thought of Cornelius Van Til, John Frame coins a term for Van Til’s system as *multiperspectival*. Frame states that this term is “a good description of Van Til’s typical way of relating various aspects of his system to one another or to the whole, when, upon reflection, it is seen to include the other, or even to include the whole. Since many elements of the

system have this characteristic, the whole can be seen from various perspectives.”¹⁵

The current majority view of evangelism and apologetics has fallen into a false dichotomy due to a tendency to categorize and then focus only on the details of one facet without considering the whole. James White demonstrates this tendency when he asserts that one’s theology will determine one’s apologetic.¹⁶ He said this in light of apologist William Lane Craig’s implication that theology is separate from apologetics.¹⁷

Paul’s statement in 2 Corinthians 10:5 renders Craig’s position shaky: “We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,” who Paul describes in Colossians 2:2–3 as the one “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” Additionally, Jesus is the “Word” who “became flesh and dwelt among us;” “his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace;” he is “the only God who is at the Father’s side,” who has made God, the only God, known (John 1:1–18). Jesus then is the ultimate apologetic of the Father in this fallen world, who himself is full of theological content.¹⁸ Christians should heed Paul’s exhortation when he bids them imitate him as he does Christ (1 Cor. 11:1).

THE COIN

Most apologetics begin with the command from 1 Peter 3:15. Pastor David Van Bebber, however, insists that the principle of apologetics starts from the implications of Jesus’s prayer in John 17.¹⁹ Regarding the practice or action of engaging in apologetics, we should then start at Matthew 28:18–20, where Jesus asserts that he has all authority in heaven and on earth; because of this, he tells the disciples to go make disciples, baptizing and teaching them to obey the same commands he taught them. The implication is that we are disciples who are continuing in this great commission.

Next, in Acts, Luke states that in his first work, he only dealt with what Jesus *began* to do and teach, and then we see Jesus’s promise come about — the Holy Spirit, the “Spirit of Christ” in other passages,

fell on the disciples, and they proclaimed the gospel. Peter then preached the gospel, which was very apologetic in nature, and more disciples were added. In Acts 7 and 8, we see how God works all things for the good of those who love him by using the horrible death of Stephen and Saul's zeal to *begin* the spreading of the Good News and the making of disciples across the first century world. Two thousand years later — by the grace of God — it is still happening. With that said, we see God has chosen that his people, Christ's disciples, are a means of participating in his plan of redeeming a people to himself, as Paul clearly states in Romans 10:14. So, we should see that Jesus's Lordship is central to our evangelism.²⁰

In Acts, every time the apostles or disciples proclaim the gospel, some believe and some do not. This parallels the reaction Jesus received. Why is that? Does not Paul teach in Romans that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation? We need to understand that Paul also teaches, "For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life ..." (2 Cor. 2:15–16). Paul also asserts, "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18).

On the *Christianity Today* website, Eric Hovind responded to a question raised by one who thinks that believing in a talking snake is "seriously disturbing." Hovind writes, "Now, to answer your question regarding a talking snake, yes, I do believe that a snake actually talked. I can understand how this sounds bizarre from the perspective that the natural world is all that exists."²¹ We, like Hovind, must understand that we sound crazy to those who are not of us. The Bible teaches that we should expect to be called fools from the outside (2 Cor. 11:1). The first-century Jews had a problem with the idea of a suffering Savior; how much more will a post-enlightenment and post-modern world have a problem with us? If the world thinks we are crazy, they will ask us questions, just as those in the first century did.

Many people paraphrase 1 Peter 3:15 as, "Always be ready to make a defense for the hope that lies within you." Yes, that is true, but there's more. What people miss is that it also states that Jesus must be

honored, revered, and set apart as holy and as Lord in our hearts.²² I have to give a big Baptist second to Presbyterian K. Scott Oliphint, who asserts, “It is the clear and steadfast conviction that Christ, and Christ alone, is Lord; that has to motivate our Christian defense.”²³ This defense lies at the heart of the Great Commission.

We are commanded to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ in this world, which is evangelism. At the same time, we are commanded to give a reasoned defense for the hope that lies within us. Thus, in the metaphor of “the coin of going,” the coin is our “going,” with heads being our proclamation and tails our defense.²⁴ The full context of 1 Peter 3:15, within the entire epistle, should be understood as making the case that Christians should always be ready to give a reasoned defense.

Paul says in Ephesians 4, “Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers.” Is there an apologist in this list? No, there is not. Is there anywhere else in the scriptures where the official title of *apologist* is given as a gift to certain individuals? Again, that would be a negative. Peter’s first letter is written to “elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1 Peter. 1:1), which he also calls “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” (1 Peter 2:9). As revealed in this letter, these people were suffering, and Peter exhorts them to endure; then he says, “Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed.” (3:13–14). This then sets up the context for the obligatory apologetics passage.

Academic categorization and focus have come up with the concept of a professional apologist. All Christians, however, should be described as apologists.²⁵ Peter exhorts, “Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation” (1 Peter 2:2). This spiritual milk is the Word of God and its implications; and as Jesus stated as he stood in defense against Satan, we are not to “live on bread alone, but by every word from God’s mouth” (Matt. 4:4). It is in our living that we learn (theology),

proclaim (evangelism), and give reasons for the hope (apologetics) that lies within us.

ADAM K. COCHRUN



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Soli Deo Gloria!

CHAPTER 6: CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS IN THE AFTERMATH OF POSTMODERNISM

JEANIE CRAIN

Christian apologists believe they have been given a biblical mandate to defend the Christian faith against objections, and they justify the practice using 1 Peter 3:15: “... but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence” (NASV).

Emphasizing the last half of this verse, namely “an account” [frequently transliterated as *reason* or *answer*], some apologists have leaned heavily on logic, evidence, and historical facts in the face of intellectual attacks on specific Christian truths. This understanding should be challenged on two fronts. First, emphasis should be placed on “sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord,” and then on “the hope that is in you.” Second, the methodology some think the second part of the verse suggests has lost much of its power to convict. Set within its original context, the writer of 1 Peter wants Christians under persecution to be bold in confessing their gospel hope.

While science, reason, and empirical methods promised enlightenment in the 17th–19th centuries, these gradually gave way to the postmodernist critique of objectivity and truth in all forms, especially absolute, ultimate, or exclusive truths. Postmodernists chose to define truth as humanly constructed and relative. In the aftermath

of this challenge to absolute truth and the subsequent suspicion of claims about God, revelation, and the authority of the Bible, apologetics defined as a religious discipline defending religious doctrines through systematic argument must be rethought.

Postmodernism has effectively called attention to the limits of scientific inquiry, revealed the complexity and ambiguity of language, and laid bare cultural biases and prejudices. It has demonstrated how epistemologies all dead-end in the extreme limits of reason. Science and proofs command respect, and they will continue to hold privilege and sway in truth-seeking; they must not, however, edge out other approaches to knowing.

A revised reading of 1 Peter 3:15 offers apologists a way out of continuing a set of debates about religion and theology; gives a renewed credence for thinking within the language of the law, the prophets, and the writings; and embraces, not the metanarrative of postmodernism, but the *heilsgeschichte*, the story of the Bible and God's redemptive work in history.

SETTING THE MIND UPON DIVINE THINGS

Christians have not discounted the first part of Peter's admonition. Indeed, faith in its earliest expression confesses Christ as Lord, but a full understanding of the writer's call to action requires putting it within its social construct.

The author, identifying himself as "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ," delivers this sermon (*kerygma*) "to those who reside as aliens" (1 Pet. 1:1). Because the superscription uses "Peter" and not "Simon Peter," it assigns him the official authority of an apostle, similar to letters ascribed to Paul. And because the writer uses syntactically fluent Greek as well as mature Christian theology throughout this work, some historicists think that a later writer assumes the name of the legendary Peter. Those "who reside as aliens" would refer to the diaspora and the experience of living in exile, a theme continued in 5:13 with Peter speaking in Babylonia, the place where the prophet Jeremiah prophesied.

If the writer is Peter, then he is the disciple who objected to having

his feet washed by Jesus, clearly, at that time, not recognizing Jesus as one who “had come forth from God and was going back to God” (John 13:3). This Peter of the Gospels hesitated in believing Jesus to be the messianic fulfillment except in the sense of a restored Davidic kingdom, and he was memorably rebuked by Jesus, “Get behind me, Satan” (Matt. 16:23; Mark 8:33). Both Gospel accounts explain the rationale for the reprimand: “for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.”

The Peter of this sermon seems to need no justification other than the name itself. This Peter has come to know Christ as the “Chief Shepherd,” who will redeem suffering believers and give them “the unfading crown of glory” (1 Pet. 5:4). The writer’s choice of “sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord” suggests an allusion to Isaiah’s “Sanctify the Lord of hosts” (Isa. 8:13), implicitly evoking the revelation of the divine name (Isa. 6:3). Sitting in the court of the Temple, Isaiah sees “the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple” (Isa. 6:1). Isaiah envisions the King of Kings who clothes himself with light as a garment (Ex. 33:22). It seems reasonable to conclude that the writer of 1 Peter is a man who has become convicted of the truth of the incarnation, cross, and resurrection. These events within Peter’s lifetime have led him to his confession, one which must be made by all who can rightly call themselves Christians.

In the immediate and preceding chapter to the verse under discussion, Peter has chosen his words carefully to show that the events surrounding Jesus as the messianic fulfillment have brought a radical change to the whole Jewish religious system: Jesus has become “the very corner stone” which, rejected, has become “a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense” (1 Pet. 2:7–8). Contextually, within the greater story of Jewish thinking, and particularly, within the background of Isaiah (Isa. 28:16; 29:3–4), the author of 1 Peter anchors his address in the hope arising from the messianic fulfillment.

In Mark’s Gospel, Jesus asks his disciples the decisive question, “Who do you say that I am?” (Mark 8:29), and the answer Peter gives is the right one: “You are the Christ,” meaning the anointed one, the Messiah, God. This recognition and confession of Christ as Lord and

rightful King creates a pivotal and irreversible separation between believers and unbelievers. Peter speaks to those who have joined the new Israel, and in 1 Peter 3:15, he is encouraging these new Christians, currently facing threats of suffering and persecution, to “sanctify Christ as Lord,” reminding them of the authority, power, and holiness of the Messiah.

A MATTER OF HEART AND PERSON

The basis for Christian hope is always the work of the Holy Spirit. Those who have rejected reason in its classical and reformed traditions; turned from Enlightenment faith in self, reason, and science; and who profess to have abandoned any search for truth, particularly religious truth, will not be easily persuaded by mental acrobatics, carefully constructed polemics, or credulous appeals to the Spirit, the authority of the Bible, or faith. The apologist today has the demanding responsibility of wrestling with the full critique of the limits and possibilities of knowledge, involving both head and heart.

Peter tells his addressees to sanctify Christ as Lord in their hearts. The heart of which Peter speaks represents more than a physical organ; within the framework in which Peter uses the word heart, it refers to the innermost, center part of one’s being. When Peter says, “sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord,” he talks about the heart as a sanctuary.

With language and meaning at the core of anything said or written, the word *sanctify* associates richly with *holiness* and *hallowed*, permitting Peter’s words to carry forward Isaiah’s *awe* and *fear* of God (Isa. 8:18; 29:23). Peter adds “in your hearts” to focus these new Christians on the heart as a place set apart and consecrated as a dwelling place for God. “Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them” (Ex. 25:8). For Peter, the difficult matters of life, death, and the possibilities for human freedom come to rest, not in some abstract, objective reality, but in the indwelling person of Christ.

The consequence of “sanctify[ing] in your hearts Christ as Lord” leads into Christian apology: “always being ready to make a defense

[*apologia*] to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you.” Peter stresses *hope* over both *defense* and *account*, making clear its exact nature: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet. 1:3). The Book of Acts has Peter proclaiming: “God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it” (Acts 2:29). This hope generally extends to all believers: “Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (1 Pet. 1:8–9).

Postmodernism’s critique of the rational prepares the way for Christian apologetics to move beyond any mislaid confidence in classical and evidentiary defenses, the taking of refuge in reformed traditions, or any retreat into overly simplistic faith formulas. In many ways, the aftermath of postmodernism gives new impetus for confessing the limitations of intellect, while returning to the older, culturally rich wisdom of *knowing* God in the heart — the intimacy of relationship. When Adam knew Eve, she became pregnant. God knew Abraham by name. The Psalmist is amazed that God knows his existence intimately. And in the New Testament, knowing Christ is knowing God (John 14:7). The important distinction here lies in the difference between knowing *something* (as delineated by the postmodernist critique) and knowing *someone* (God in the story of the Bible).

Returning to the importance of language, it helps to understand that *knowing* in the New Testament connects with *logos* and suggests logic and persuasive techniques. In its Semitic context, it takes on the special meaning of relationship and the making of a covenant. *Logos* itself has a long history, with most thinking that Heraclitus, four or five hundred years before the Johannine Gospel, used it to refer to the cosmos. It then went through several reiterations, in which it gradually became the thought of God expressing himself in the universe, a kind of author-to-created-work relationship. When John uses the term, however, he connects it to a person: “In the beginning was the Word,

and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God” (John 1: 1–2).

In Genesis, Adam and Eve, although not explicitly identified as having a covenant relationship, were to be faithful as husband and wife. The prophet Malachi makes this association explicit: “Because the Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant” (Mal. 2:14). In speaking of Abraham, the NASB translates *known* as *chosen* to express God’s relationship with Abraham: “For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him” (Gen. 18:19). King David understood himself as known by the God who had appointed him to the throne (Ps. 139). Jesus tells Philip directly: “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

Any apology arising out of 1 Peter 3:15 should be about much more than proclaiming postmodernism’s self-defeat in making truth claims, while simultaneously denying the possibility of objective truth. Such is the strategy of logical games. Peter’s apology and reason carry the deeper, ancient wisdom of Proverbs, where “fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Prov. 9:10).

The historical turn to the subjective and internal creates a pivotal moment to reintroduce people to Peter’s admonition to “sanctify Christ in the heart.” Apologists have an opportunity to redirect attention to the heart and its vital roles in feeling, willing, and knowing. Peter, of course, uses language metaphorically when he describes the heart as a sanctuary, but he also substitutes Christ for Isaiah’s “Lord of hosts.” This substitution stresses an old wisdom that moves well beyond a simple dependency upon ideals, universals, concepts, and systems of ideas. All of these are dependent on a human mind, of course, but ontologically, a mind that belongs to the body as a whole.

The point to be made remains simple: while almost everyone has a mental model of God, the God of the Bible cannot be reduced to

conceptualization. Of course, apologists must engage in argument and persuasion within conceptual models, theologies, and doctrines. The point again, however, is that *heilsgeschichte* reveals God's redemptive work in history in the incarnation, the cross, and the resurrection. The pivotal truth about incarnation is the overcoming of the distance between God and human beings such that no "ugly broad ditch" (Lessing) any longer exists between the infinite and finite, eternal and mortal, the divine and human.

Conceptually, we search to understand the mystery of God as well as the living hope within our hearts as God's sanctuary, and when we seek to defend our faith and account for this hope, we are to remember Peter's admonition to do so "with gentleness and reverence." He reminds Christians everywhere that the prophets themselves made careful searches and inquiries into God's historical work as it was revealed to them, remembering "that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven — things into which angels long to look" (1 Pet. 1:10–12).

JEANIE CRAIN



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PART II

UNDERSTANDING GOD AND HIS WORK

CHAPTER 7: THE QUESTION OF GOD’S EXISTENCE IN THE PRACTICE OF APOLOGETICS

JONATHAN HAYASHI

Approaching the question of how one can know God exists has been made difficult through movies and clips seeking to provide proof and evidence. Even if God’s existence could be demonstrated, it would not necessarily lead to salvific truth. Someone who proves there is a “god” can be as lost as anyone else.

In his biographical book, *Surprised by Joy*, C.S. Lewis explains that he was absolutely lost until he found “joy” in Christ through his conversion experience; Lewis learned that even if people could be brought to the realization that there is a god, they would still be utterly lost without Christ.¹

Rational arguments concerning God’s existence begin with assumptions about creation. For example, an assumption of a universe that came into being through unguided, fatalistic processes leads to nihilism, while the assumption that all reality — physical and immaterial — came from something or from someone results in a possibility for meaning and a belief in an infinite, personal God.

CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS MEANS “GIVING A DEFENSE”

Apologetics is the study of the “defense of faith.” A defense of faith

seeks to help individuals find reasons for believing in God's existence as well as in salvific truth claims.

Ravi Zacharias said it well: "The goal in most conflicts is to destroy your opponent. The goal in apologetics is to win your opponent."²

Readers may come to this chapter wanting to be equipped to share salvific truth with family, friends, neighbors, or colleagues who do not know Christ. In my own case, for example, I began learning about salvific truth at a time when my father was not a believer.

My father was a brilliant man. By the time he became a scientist, he had earned two doctorates. One was a Doctor of Science from a university in Japan comparable to an American Ivy League school, and the second was a Ph.D. in Geochemistry from the University of Alberta. I thought, "If I can give him reasons or enough evidence, then I can convince him to be saved." My love for my father led me into my study of apologetics.

DEFENDING THE FAITH

People from all walks of life will often ask one or more of the following metaphysical questions:

- Why should I believe the Bible?
- Is there salvation outside of Christianity?
- How do we know God exists?
- Given evil, how can one justify God?
- Are the miracles in the Bible just made up?
- Why should I believe in Jesus?

This chapter speaks primarily to the question of God's existence.

ARGUMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

A classical argument that emphasizes reason and rationality can be seen in the writings of Thomas Aquinas and C.S. Lewis. This approach can be further classified into cosmological, teleological, anthropological, and ontological arguments. Cosmological arguments

begin with “God’s being first cause” and laws of logic. Teleology has to do with “God’s designing intellect” (from the Greek word τέλος — where we get the word *telescope*) and concerns the product. In the anthropological argument, the address is to God’s personality, deity, and being in humankind, *Imago Dei*. Ontology speaks of “the perfection of God” (from the Greek word ὄντως — which refers to perfection and order).

There are additional arguments, such as the moral argument, as presented in C.S. Lewis’s *Mere Christianity*.³ The evidentialist argument addresses the factual and asks questions such as how one can really know something is sweet; the approach is rational and factual and emphasizes truth and realism. Widely read Christian apologists who advocate this approach include Lee Strobel⁴ and Josh McDowell. The Scientific Enlightenment period (1700s) practiced this approach. Miracles were called into question, and believers launched a defense from naturalistic arguments.

Presuppositional arguments insist that “only God can make God known”⁵ and that God enables any conversation about God. This approach encourages intellectual and epistemological understanding and uses natural constructions in people’s coming to a valid knowledge of God. This approach relies upon scripture and the presupposition that God exists and is revealed in Christ, and the arguments are often transcendental.⁶

Fideism, or the faith argument, asks what it means to know God and what God’s suffering means (Philippians 4). It asks what is meant by “knowledge of God.” What is “truth?” Does knowing mean simple *data*? John says, “I came to make him KNOWN” (John 6:15). For John, knowing God is a more intimate experience of God. God is a personal being rather than an impersonal being. One of the early church fathers, Anselm of Canterbury, gives faith priority in understanding the existence of God: *Fides Quaerens Intellectum* translated from Latin means, “Faith seeking understanding.”⁷

A middle line can be drawn between these approaches to God’s existence. Philosophy and Arminian tradition evolve from the classical and evidential, while presuppositional and fideist arguments become the basis for a reformed theology based on revelation and faith.

THE ARGUMENT FOR A PRAGMATIC KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S EXISTENCE

A pragmatic approach to faith is made by J.I. Packer in *Knowing God*, where he raises two fundamental questions: “Who is God?” and “Who is man?”⁸

Jonathan Edwards, a Protestant pastor and perhaps the greatest theologian America has ever produced, directed individuals to the experience of faith. He advanced his pragmatic theology in the 18th century, a time when enlightenment thinking contributed to false teaching but also led to a time of great revival.

Edwards makes the point, based on Psalm 34:8, that knowing God *empirically* differs from knowing God *experientially*:

I can show you honey. You can observe and see the beautiful golden hue, the way the light bounces off parts and penetrates parts and radiates a beautiful glow. And I can tell you that it is sweet. And you can believe that it is sweet when I tell you it is. However, unless you have tasted it, you don't truly know it is sweet. You can believe it is sweet because I told you, but believing honey is sweet doesn't mean you really know it is sweet. You only truly know honey is sweet when you have tasted it.⁹

For Edwards, it is not observing, stating, or believing but tasting which leads to knowing God.

By Edwards's standards, Charles Chauncy (1705–1787), a liberal clergyman during the Great Awakening, was wrong in directing individuals to follow the theological experts in opposition to knowing God as an incarnate being. Without knowing and experiencing Christ, the idea of the existence of God will remain incomprehensible. Knowing God comes fundamentally through the regenerative work in bringing together mind and heart.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR AUDIENCE

“Unbelief” can take many forms. The letter of 1 John is written to

believers facing the internal church problem of false teachers — specifically Gnostics. The term “Gnosticism” is derived from *gnōsis*, the Greek word for “knowledge” or “insight.” These teachers claimed to know something about the existence of God. “Agnosticism,” also using the root *gnōsis*, usually means a belief in the idea of coming from nothing (not knowing) and leads to a form of atheism.

Atheism denies that God exists. The etymological root for the word *atheism* originated before the 5th century B.C.E; it comes from the ancient Greek ἄθεος (*atheos*), meaning “without god(s).” Those who say they are atheists often have a surprising variety of perspectives for why they do not believe in God’s existence. The term can generally be used to mean those who are not in Christ.

Thomas Jefferson was a deist; his form of deism denied the Christian concepts of miracles and the Trinity. This form of atheism rejects the doctrine that Jesus was the promised Messiah and the incarnate Son of God. By basing their beliefs on rational arguments, these non-believers risk being lost and dead in their trespasses and sins.

The logic of some atheists seems to be, “I don’t believe in God. Therefore, God doesn’t exist.” This is a broken, self-defeating statement. It’s almost like God saying, “God doesn’t believe in atheists; therefore, atheists do not exist.” In this argument, the lack of belief in God has been confused as evidence against the existence of God.

SO, WHO IS A “BELIEVER” AND WHO IS AN “UNBELIEVER”?

The Council of Trent, held between 1545 and 1563 in northern Italy, acted as a Catholic Counter-Reformation to the Protestant Reformation. At issue were doctrines considered fundamental to Protestant believers. These believers have met many times since the early days of the church to determine key elements of the Christian faith and to stand against heresy. The following core doctrines have evolved as principles about which they cannot disagree: ¹⁰

- The virgin birth and deity of Christ (Nicene Creed, 325 A.D.; against Philanthropism)

- Hypostatic union in the incarnation of Christ (fully God, fully human; against Arianism)
- The doctrine of the Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit; against Modalism)
- The depravity of humans (doctrine of hamartiology; against Spiritualism)
- The Five Solas (justification by faith; against Roman Catholicism)
- Inerrancy of scripture (higher criticism; against Liberalism)

THE PRACTICE OF APOLOGETICS

In practicing apologetics, the church must not withhold from the world nor must it confuse and conceal the fact that God is knowable through grace, and only in *Sola Gratia* are people able to experience and know. For this reason, apologists must acknowledge the limits of all arguments, including natural theology with its doctrine of another kind of knowability of God. An infinite God cannot be deduced from a finite world. Faith in God can neither be rationally certain nor empirically evident; revelation is paradoxical and requires a leap of faith.

If, in fact, God created the universe and everything else that exists, and he did so *ex nihilo* (out of nothing), then God exists objectively beyond all arguments based on analogies or cause-and-effect relationships in nature. *Creator* means one who alone exists, and everything else exists only as the work of his will and word. It would be absurd to prove the existence of one who is present.

Argument apart from the work of the Holy Spirit will not convince people of God's existence. That would be like a child asking for a reason to trust her mother. The best way to learn to trust someone is to get to know that person.

On the matter of the Bible, unbelievers may say, "Well, I don't believe in the Bible because it is inconsistent. I heard all the stories about Jesus as a child in Vacation Bible School. I took a college class about how the Gospels were not actually written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John."

Apologetists can encourage these people to read the Bible to get to know God's love through the person of Jesus. By analogy, one does not perform source criticism on a love letter. One writes a love letter to someone to get to know her better, and it would be a simple mockery to try to prove a loved one's existence through the letter. Rather, one gets to know a wife through a relationship with her. This does not mean, finally, that believers should not ask the hard questions about how we got the Bible and about its sources.

Human freedom consists of the ability to choose good over evil in spiritual matters. People have the power either to cooperate with God's Spirit and be regenerated, or to resist God's grace and perish. The lost sinner needs the Spirit's assistance, but faith is God's gift.

The grace of God does not merely reconcile us to God; it enables us to know God.

APOLOGETICS AS THE WORK OF FAITH

By the grace of God, in October 2011, my father came to know and experience the saving grace of God, and I praise God for this great milestone. People think, "So you convinced him?"

No! My father's salvation came from the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. In God's grace, only in *sola gratia*, are people able to experience God, know God exists, and know who God is. The confession of faith must begin in the experience of Christ followed by any *account* given of it.

Learning to account for our faith in the presence of unbelievers, and sometimes in the presence of believers who hold different opinions about matters of faith, should not be practiced as a science or even as an art. Natural theology with its doctrine of another kind of knowability of God must be resisted.

The book of James demonstrates the complex truth of apologetics as the work of faith. James gives Abraham as an example of an individual whose "faith was working together with his works, and by works, faith was made perfect" (James 2:22). It is through the quality of doing that the incarnation of God's son, Jesus Christ, is known.

JONATHAN HAYASHI



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CHAPTER 8: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE?

TIMOTHY FABER

Genesis 1:27 states, “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”¹ The Genesis account also states in 2:7, “Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” Just what it means to be created in the image of God, and to possess the “breath of life,” has been a matter of debate among theologians for centuries. Perhaps the biggest challenge in such debates and discussions has been to look at what man² was like at creation before sin and its effects marred the image of God.

All humans are bearers of the image of God. Yet, because this image is greatly distorted by sin, each person's expression of God's image to others is also distorted. The damaged image of God in man continues to express itself in ways contrary to God's intent. This serves only to compound the problem rather than resolve it. Evidence of this is seen in numerous ways: relationships being less than God intended; artistic expressions glorifying man rather than God; and worship of the creature rather than the Creator. Additionally, people must individually reckon with the corrupted image of God in their own lives. God Himself provides the means of restoring His image within man through the work of Jesus Christ, who alone makes it possible

through His redeeming work, and the Holy Spirit who provides the means, bringing about the actual restoration.

How sin affects the image of God, how man attempts to compensate for sin's damage, and how a person expresses the image of God because of sin lies outside the scope of this chapter. It is, however, important to note that Jesus came to reconcile man to God, and in the process to "make all things new," thus restoring the image of God in man — or at least making it possible so far as can be attained in this earthly life. This restoration process, as well as the aforementioned issues, receive attention in this author's doctoral thesis (<https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/131/>). The discussion in this chapter focuses on the original, pre-sin condition of man being made in God's image — the image of God in its pristine, created state as the crown of the Lord's creation.

The idea of being created in the image of God involves several factors. The Hebrew word for image in Genesis 1:27 is *tselem*, which means phantom, illusion, resemblance; hence a representative figure, especially an idol.³ As a creature who bears the image of God, man is to be an imitator of the divine and is to reveal God to the rest of creation. Just as an architect is known by his buildings and an artist is known by his paintings, so man, by bearing the image of God, reveals Him to one another as well as to the rest of creation. This role of imitating the divine is addressed numerous times in scripture as people are instructed and admonished to "be holy, for I am holy." The believers of 1st century Antioch understood this and sought to live a life of holiness in imitation of Christ, which is why they earned the nickname Christian (Acts 11:26). As a person more faithfully bears the image of God, His work of mercy, love, grace, and patience is more clearly seen. Jesus described it thus: "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). It is for this reason that we are to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29).

The image of God has seven distinct characteristics, with each paralleling a characteristic of God or being necessary for the full expression of one of the other characteristics. These seven

characteristics, in no order, are cognition, conscience, culpability, creativity, community, composition, and corporeality.

COGNITION

Cognition refers to the mental processes of attention, remembering, producing and understanding language, solving problems, and making decisions.⁴ For this discussion, cognition will be limited to logical mental processes, or the ability to think in concrete terms, as opposed to the abstract which will be considered later, along with matters relating to language. Processing facts, drawing conclusions, and understanding how things relate and function are all a part of man's cognitive abilities. Science, technology, and medicine are just a few of the results of man's being made in the image of God with cognitive abilities.

Scripture reveals humanity as a special, intentional, and purposeful creation of God; even evolutionists admit that man is unique from other creatures. Ken Richardson writes that archeological and evolutionary evidence creates a picture which "starkly portrays the great quantitative and qualitative leap in intelligence that occurred in human evolution, striking a great gulf between us and our closest biological relatives."⁵ While most evolutionists fail to look beyond biological factors, Michael Tomasello writes with this conclusion: "One reasonable hypothesis, then, is that the amazing suite of cognitive skills and products displayed by modern humans is the result of some sort of species-unique mode or modes of cultural transmission."⁶

While only God is omniscient, man has the ability to accumulate knowledge and anticipate the future to a limited degree. It is this ability, primarily cognitive but also interacting with community and creativity, that has enabled man to achieve so much in the development of culture.

The whole concept of education is at the root of all culture. Sometimes called cumulative knowledge, the ability to accumulate knowledge from others, even across generations and cultures, process it, and combine it with other knowledge to form new ideas or

products has a direct effect on science, industry, and technology. It also has a bearing on the relationships between individuals, families, and even nations.

Another part of the cognitive abilities of man is the ability to understand and interact with time. While time is of no consequence to God, He has chosen to relate to man within the confines of time. The memory of past events and how those events fit into the broader scope of time sequentially is a part of the ability to understand time. Also, the ability to make future appointments and plan events uses the concrete thinking abilities of cognition but also the abstract abilities of creativity as one considers what is yet to be and makes provision for it. While some animals may instinctively prepare for the changing of seasons, no part of creation has the ability to plan ahead or consider time in the same manner as man.

CONSCIENCE

Ecclesiastes 7:29 says that “God made men upright, but they have sought out many devices.” Being made upright requires being made with a conscience. The term “upright” used in this verse is a translation of the Hebrew word *yashar*, meaning straight, right, or upright⁷ and as such speaks of a moral character. Thus, when God made Adam, God gave him a conscience that was undefiled and a moral character that was free from sin. In that created state, the conscience was a pure and accurate guide of right and wrong. It was a created endowment of the human spirit whereby the difference between what God commands and what God condemns was perceived. Endowed with the image of God, every person has a conscience. And free from the effects of sin, that conscience was the basis of man’s free will.

Conscience has also been defined as “the faculty of recognizing the distinction between right and wrong in regard to one’s conduct coupled with a sense that one should act accordingly.”⁸ Another definition says, “The conscience is that part of every person which, willingly or unwillingly, responds to a universal moral law — in fact, to God’s moral law.”⁹

The conscience is also the ability to understand and comprehend

the rightness and wrongness of a situation before becoming engaged in it. When one understands that even God's command not to eat of the tree in the midst of the garden is, in fact, a law from God, it must be concluded that the conscience exists even apart from God's earliest instructions to man. Thus, all people have a conscience — a faculty about them unique in creation that God has granted to enable them to serve the Lord by choice, knowing it is right.

CULPABILITY

Related to man's conscience is culpability, or responsibility. When God instructed Adam to cultivate the Garden, to not eat of the tree, and to name the animals, He was revealing that man is culpable. Since the dictionary defines culpable as "deserving blame, guilty,"¹⁰ culpability would not be a part of man's created state; however, the capacity to be guilty, or stated another way, accountability, is a very clear part of human nature. For this discussion, then, "culpable" will refer to man's ability to receive and follow instructions and the right to be punished or rewarded accordingly.

The term responsibility can be said to refer to man's ability to respond. Due in large part to both cognition and conscience, every individual must make choices many times every day. These choices are made on the basis of past experience, the expectation of results, and other factors, but they are not based on instinct. Man's supposed freedom to make such choices also makes him responsible for the choices he makes. He can be held accountable for his decisions and actions. In fact, to deny accountability for wrong is to deny that person's humanity. Those who attempt to blame society or other factors for a person's misdeeds are, in a subtle way, assigning to that person a less than human status.

CREATIVITY

Creativity is the ability to contemplate what has never before existed.¹¹ God is the ultimate Creator who contemplated all things before they existed; indeed, all imagination originated with God. Man

also has the ability to think abstractly, to process non-concrete ideas, to imagine a future, and to imagine options and outcomes that are not based on logic.

This ability to be creative is expressed through the fine arts and other aesthetic endeavors, in the work of inventors and philosophers, and in the thoughts of anyone who thinks “outside the box.” “The way we serve a Creator God is by being creative with the talents and gifts God has given us. We could even say that we are called to continue God’s own creative work.”¹² The creative nature of God is seen in man both in tangible and intangible ways. Though the major portion of God’s creative work is that which is recorded in Genesis, He continues to create with each child that is conceived. Men and women partner with God in this creative process through the sexual relationship, in order to bring about new life.

COMMUNITY

An additional aspect of the image of God in man involves community. God has eternally existed in community with Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. When the Lord said, “Let Us make man in Our image,” He was communicating with Himself. Communication is, by its very nature, inherently necessary for community.

Communication has been defined as “the exchange of thoughts, messages, or information, as by speech, signals, or writing.”¹³ Furthermore, “communicate” is defined as, to make known, impart, display, or manifest.¹⁴ It is here that cognition and community are interdependent. Because God desires to be in community with man, He gives him the ability to communicate with Him, and the ability to receive and comprehend that communication, and thus be in relationship with God. The very act of communicating creates a relationship where none may previously have existed. And for community to continue to exist, there must also be continuing communication.

While some creatures can exist in a relatively solitary manner, humans were created to live in community. Though the Lord

communicated with man, and was thus in community with Him, He also designed and instructed man to be in community with his fellow man. Thus, God's design is that every relationship reflects the Almighty.

After making Adam, God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him" (Gen. 2:18). Furthermore, the Bible states that no other part of creation could meet man's need for community: "The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him" (Gen. 2:20). Consequently, God created woman. Woman was created in the image of God, just as man was, but she was also created to be in intimate (spiritually, emotionally, and physically) relationship with man. The marriage relationship and family constitutes the first human community. Neither man nor woman can exist in a healthy manner without the other.

Selecting a life partner with whom one can share intimately over a long period of time is an innate part of the human psyche and a key element in the image of God. "A high priority in this stage concerns finding a 'significant other' — one who will share life's joys and sorrows — for better or worse."¹⁵ A significant minority of the adult population remains single, to be sure, but even these individuals seek relationships in which they can share deeply of their joys and struggles. In fact, many married individuals have deep friendships with others of the same gender with whom they can grow and share. These deepening relationships require love, trust, commitment, and forgiveness — all attributes of the God who created man in His image. To the degree that people develop a relationship with the Lord and weave these characteristics into their lives, to that same degree they will find fulfilling community with others.

Even in a child's earliest years, the greatest need is for community. Infants enter this world absolutely helpless. They cannot protect themselves, nourish themselves, clean themselves, or even move from one place to another on their own. Thus, if children are to have any hope of health and survival, there must be a relationship with someone who is both capable and willing to provide for their needs.

But community goes beyond the family and egocentrism of early childhood. The first instructions of God to the human couple (Gen. 1:28) involved multiplying and subduing. Nancy Pearcey states that this means to “develop the social world” and to “harness the natural world.” She goes on to make the bold statement that “this passage is sometimes called the Cultural Mandate because it tells us that our original purpose was to create cultures, build civilizations — nothing less.”¹⁶ Cultures are to reflect the image of God in human interactions.

Mankind’s ability to create cultures and build civilizations rests upon this ability to communicate — not just with others in close proximity at a given moment, but even across time and distance. This goes beyond the nominal ability of language, which itself is quite amazing and effective at transmitting cognitive and creative fruit to others. Putting such fruit into tangible messages that can be displayed, manifested, or transferred to others is a unique quality of being made in God’s image.

COMPOSITION

It is fitting that composition is a synonym for work of art.¹⁷ As one considers the makeup of an individual and the sevenfold image of God that each person bears, one cannot but wonder at the work of art God has wrought in the pinnacle of His creation. Not only is the human race unique among and distinct from the rest of creation, but each individual person is unique within the race as well.

Man was created as a living soul. Genesis 2:7 says that after God created man, He breathed into him the breath of life, and man *became* a living being. The Hebrew word translated in the NASB as “living being” is *nephesh* and is translated in the KJV as “living soul.” The various aspects of soul, spirit, mind, body, psyche, emotions, and will can all be summed up in the term *nephesh*.¹⁸ Thus, the biblical text indicates that man does not merely possess a soul, but he is a soul.

Man is not only composed of body, soul, and spirit, but the composition of both the soul and the body are also unique to each person. Any entity possessing multiple aspects is likely to have different ones of those aspects dominant or recessive in each

manifestation. Even the Lord God is seen as possessing a variety of personality traits and emotions though never changing in the essence of His being. In manifestations to Joshua as the captain of the host of the Lord, to the Judeans of the first century A.D., and the later revelation of Himself to the Apostle John, God shows differing aspects of His being.

In the same way, then, the soul of man is the same in essence, while each person also manifests different aspects, even changing over time. Sometimes this is called a personality, or temperament, which in addition to cognitive and creative abilities, consists of the will, emotions, desires, abilities, and more. The blend of these characteristics and the prominence of some over others is unique in every single person.

One person may be quiet and reserved; another may be talkative and flamboyant. One person may be tenacious, while another may give up more easily. One may be more cognitive, while another is more creative. A multitude of traits and characteristics exist within the human personality, and a myriad of combinations form these traits. Each person is a truly unique creation of God. Each personality, free from sin, has a perfect capability to reflect the nature of God; thus, the composition of each individual is a vital part of being created in His image.

CORPOREALITY

The body is the visible form of the self in its specific individuality. There is, then, a relationship between soul and body.¹⁹ As with the personality, the uniqueness of each person is also seen in his or her respective body. DNA determines everything from height to weight to skin color, eye color, and hair color, along with a host of other subtle differences. Other characteristics of a person's body may reflect self-expression or the choices that a person has made. Weightlifting or overeating will have an impact on one's physique, for instance. Injuries and disease will also affect the body.

Apart from the uniqueness of each body, however, one must consider the fact that man exists in a bodily form. Since God is Spirit

and does not typically manifest Himself in a body (the thirty-three years of the incarnation excepted), it may seem incongruent for man, having been created in the image of God, to have a body. Even the incarnation of Christ is understood as God became man rather than the physical nature of man being understood as man's being like God. So, how is the corporeality of man related to the image of God?

The connection is admittedly secondary rather than primary. It is the soul of man that possesses the cognitive, creative, community, culpable, and conscience aspects of the image of God. These, however, could not be adequately or faithfully expressed without a body. The body is required to give voice to the song of praise and speech to communication. The body is required to write, paint, build, sculpt, and play that which the image of God creates. The community expressions of love, encouragement, appreciation, and more necessitate a means of conveyance such as a hug, a pat on the back, a handshake, and so forth.

The culpability, that is, responsibility and accountability, of man requires that man be able to cultivate the garden and exercise dominion over the rest of creation. This is best accomplished with a physical body. Man's responsibility also includes giving glory to God, to worship Him, and this is fulfilled most completely when one uses the physical body to see and observe all that God has created and hears, tastes, touches, and smells the beauty and magnificence of the Lord. When one looks at the majesty of the Grand Tetons or the Alps, the majesty of God is reflected. When one tastes the variety of fruits and vegetables God has created, there is a recognition of His goodness and provision. Indeed, Romans 1:20 says, "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse." Since God intends to reveal Himself to man through what He has made, it is necessary that what has been made tangible be experienced in a tangible way.

IT WAS VERY GOOD

Genesis 1:31 says, "God saw all that He had made, and behold, it

was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.” In seeing that all was very good, a few conclusions can be drawn. First, everything was exactly as the Lord intended it to be. Second, and closely related to that, the Lord’s sovereign will was fully satisfied; nothing was out of order. Furthermore, because God is good, everything He made was also good. This is not limited to, but certainly includes, mankind and the sevenfold image of God in which he was created.

TIMOTHY FABER



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During his years in pastoral ministry, Dr. Faber has found that helping people understand who they were created to be is the basis of guiding them into a closer relationship with Christ.

He and his wife Teresa have four children and two grandchildren.

CHAPTER 9: HISTORY, BIAS, AND THE CASE AGAINST THE GOSPELS

BILL VICTOR

Whenever I encounter questions or doubts about God or the Bible, I usually retreat to Jesus and his resurrection. I view everything in light of that. If Jesus truly rose from the dead and is now ruling at the right hand of the Father, then he is worthy of my trust and my obedience. And if this is true, then that helps me evaluate the truth of the story to which he was central: God's deliverance of a people enslaved by their sin as told in the Bible (and specifically the Hebrew Bible). But what about the reports of the resurrection? Can they be trusted? If they are the center of my belief in Jesus and the whole biblical narrative, shouldn't they be held up to deep scrutiny? Do skeptics of these events have valid reasons for doubting their historicity? The Gospels are, for the most part, the source of the accounts of Jesus's resurrection. If they can be evaluated as historically reliable, then we have a center for our trust in the entire Bible.

One of the barriers to the Christian claim that Jesus rose from the dead is the supernatural claim of such an event. Many historians (and skeptics) have difficulty validating such claims because they do not presuppose that God can intervene in the world. There must be some other way to explain the rise of the Christian movement. Traditional Christian conclusions then are not an option for natural or secular historians.¹

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of these profound, supernatural events that naturalistic historians and skeptics cannot accept. And yet, this event is *the* foundational event for Christianity. Should we as Christians acquiesce to these skeptics and affirm that the resurrection of Jesus has no real historical value but is only a matter of faith? Or should we follow the evidence and see where it takes us? The Bible does not ask for blind faith, but it does call for a reasoned faith, a faith that looks at the evidence.²

This may mean we may not be able to use the Holy Spirit as an answer to the preservation of the words of Jesus and the memories of the apostles. But can we look at the Gospels as historical documents and products of their day to give us insight into the claims of early Christianity?

When it comes to supernatural claims, I believe the burden of proof is on the believer. I agree with the skeptics that we all should pursue the evidence as far as it takes us. I think this will benefit the follower of Jesus. N.T. Wright wrote, “I see the historical task ... as part of the appropriate activity of knowledge and love, to get to know even better the one who we claim to know and follow ... I regard the continuing historical quest for Jesus as a necessary part of ongoing Christian discipleship.”³

DO DISCREPANCIES TAINT THE HISTORICAL CLAIMS OF THE GOSPELS?

The passion narratives and accounts of the resurrection are often targets of skeptics. Philosophy professor and skeptic Matthew McCormick wrote, “The sources we have differ on every important detail about the resurrection. The order of events, the events themselves, the people present, and the supernatural events diverge in every account.”⁴ New Testament professor and popular author Bart Ehrman wrote, “The Gospels are so problematic for historians who want to know what really happened. This is especially true for the Gospel accounts of Jesus’s resurrection ... they are filled with discrepancies, some of which cannot be reconciled. In fact, the Gospels disagree on nearly every detail in their resurrection narratives.”⁵

Maybe they have a point. Perhaps the passion and resurrection accounts are “hopelessly contradictory,” as I have heard Dr. Ehrman claim in debates about the historicity of the Gospels.⁶ Let’s examine some of those contradictions:

Did Jesus die after the Passover (Matthew/Mark/Luke) or before (John 18:28)?

Did the veil of the temple rip before Jesus’s death (Luke) or after (Matthew/Mark)?

Did both robbers mock Jesus (Matthew/Mark) or did one defend him (Luke)?

Who went to the tomb: two Marys (Matthew), two Marys and Salome (Mark), two Marys, Joanna, and other women (Luke), or Mary Magdalene alone (John)?

Did the disciples go to the tomb (John) or not (Matthew/Mark/Luke)?

Was there an angel (Matthew), a young man (Mark), two men (Luke), or no men at first, then two angels who appeared after Peter and John left (John)?

Were they told to go to Galilee (Matthew/Mark) or not (Luke/John)?

Are these discrepancies “hopelessly contradictory”?

Ehrman claims “that some of these differences can scarcely be reconciled unless you want to do a lot of imaginative interpretive gymnastics, of the kind fundamentalists love to do, when reading the texts.”⁷ It’s true that the accounts of Easter do not fit snugly together. Surface discrepancies, however, do not mean that nothing remarkable happened. It is commonplace in court trials and police reports that eyewitnesses disagree on some of the details, but that doesn’t mean nothing happened. (We have a film recording of JFK’s assassination, and yet there are many competing versions of what happened.) Let’s set aside for a moment the supernatural claims of the Bible and the claims of God’s inspiration. If this were an ancient incident in the life of a historical figure, how would you read these events?

Even though there may seem to be some discrepancies among the

resurrection accounts, we still see a lot of agreement: Four of the Gospels have a woman named Mary Magdalene appearing at the tomb on the morning of the first day of the week. Three Gospels have another woman named Mary with her. All four Gospels record that the stone was rolled away. All four Gospels give record that there were angels present (Matthew and Mark mention one; Luke and John mention two). Two Gospels mention that Jesus met these women. Three of these Gospels record Jesus giving the instruction for the apostles to meet him in Galilee. And three of the Gospels mention that the news of Jesus's resurrection was met with some sort of skepticism.

Most scholars believe that there was some degree of interrelation between the Synoptic Gospels. It is commonly believed that Mark was the first Gospel written and that Matthew and Luke used Mark as an outline or template for their own gospels. There is some suggestion that Matthew and Luke then utilized another common source, a document of Jesus's teachings called "Q." Then Matthew and Luke filled out their Gospels with their own source material. We can see the interrelation between the three Gospels when we look at the narrative comments in the episode of the healing of a paralytic (Matt. 9:6/Mark 2:10–11/Luke 5:24); or the similar language used in a quotation from the Old Testament (Matt. 3:3/Mark 1:2–3/Luke 3:4).⁸ This could explain why the resurrection accounts of the Synoptic Gospels have such "inconsistencies." For the resurrection account, these writers were relying on their own different sources instead of following Mark's primary account. In spite of the evidence of reliance between these Gospels, there is unique material as well. This could point to material that each Gospel writer possessed, which perhaps the other writers did not. That could mean there were (at least) three different accounts of the resurrection. When we figure that ninety percent of John's Gospel is unique to his Gospel, that adds at least one more account of the resurrection. Then we must figure in another unique account of the resurrection appearances of Jesus: those found in Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth.

Paul mentions Jesus's death, burial, resurrection, and six post-resurrection appearances to others, several of whom were personally acquainted with Paul. Paul's account of the resurrection most likely

predates the Gospel accounts by at least ten years, according to the most conservative estimates. That means we have at least five separate accounts of the resurrection.

For some skeptics, any difference in these accounts must mean that these are unresolvable discrepancies, especially when we try to hold ancient historical accounts to the same scrutiny with which we hold modern historical accounts. Yet, there are different accounts of the same events from ancient history.⁹ We need to put ourselves in the shoes of someone evaluating ancient history. What would a historian do if he/she had five accounts of an event like this from ancient history? They wouldn't necessarily write off these differing accounts as unhistorical or unverifiable. They would attempt to harmonize these events.

We can agree there are some differences in these accounts of the resurrection, but are they really discrepancies? We have differing perspectives by different authors on the same event, perhaps even relying on several different eyewitness accounts. Gilbert J. Garraghan wrote a book on historical method and stated, "almost any critical history that discusses the evidence for important statements will furnish examples of discrepant or contradictory accounts and the attempts which are made to reconcile them."¹⁰ That means that a historian will try to harmonize similar or different accounts of the same event. That is what historians do. N.T. Wright put it this way: "I am, after all, suggesting no more than that Jesus be studied like any other figure of the ancient past. Nobody grumbles at a book on Alexander the Great if, in telling the story, the author 'harmonizes' two or three sources; that is his or her job, to advance hypotheses which draw together the data into a coherent framework rather than leaving it scattered."¹¹

It may be legitimate to try to harmonize differing accounts of the same event, but the Gospels are documents with a real agenda and bias. Does an author with an agenda or bias poison the truthfulness of historical accounts?

IS BIAS ANTITHETICAL TO THE HISTORICAL PROCESS?

How can we trust documents written by writers who had such a bias or theological agenda? Doesn't that disqualify these accounts as being able to teach us anything about real events? When we examine the historical process we have today, accusations of bias or differences in accounts tend to sow doubts as to the historical veracity of an event. Dr. McCormick wrote, "Here is a remarkable irony: even if Jesus had come back from the dead and had visited these people and they subsequently spread the story, from our position, we would not be able to accept the story because of the various considerations that erode the witnesses' reliability. Even if they were telling the truth, we should not believe them."¹² McCormick makes his case against the reliability of the historicity of gospel events because of the bias of the early church. Later he writes:

Given what we do know about the history of the information itself, we can safely infer that the principles of sound evidence search were not satisfied during the early acquisition and transmission of information about Jesus. Excited, enthusiastic, and passionate converts in an Iron Age culture (with all the limitations that it would impose on their minds) were actively trying to suppress doubts and get people to believe. And many of these same people were responsible for the composition, editing, and propagation of the written manuscripts that were essential to their movement. Their purposes would have been fundamentally at odds with the counterevidence principle whether or not they were aware of it and even if they harbored no ill intent.¹³

This attitude betrays the presuppositions about what is accurate history that we've inherited from the nineteenth century. "Modern historians critically assess their sources, mine them for facts, and report in a detached and objective manner. At least this is their goal and claim."¹⁴ What we know now is that the objectives of ancient

historians differed from their modern counterparts. Even though these objectives may be different, they are not necessarily inferior.¹⁵

Let's look at how the Gospels are classified and see if this is similar to other ancient accounts. A growing majority of scholars regard the Gospels as Greco-Roman biographies.¹⁶ Biography (*bios*, or "life") was a common literary genre in antiquity. Biography was the most obvious general category for an ancient audience approaching a volume about a single individual. Public "lives" of important historical individuals include the lives of sages. Surviving Greek examples focus on philosophers, honoring founders of philosophic schools and preserving their teachings. We have numerous examples of surviving biographies from within a few decades after the Gospels and others much earlier.¹⁷

One of the things the modern person has to understand is that biography and history are written much differently today than during the first century Greco-Roman world. A biography during the time of Jesus was usually less exhaustive than what we consider a proper biography today. Biographies focused on a significant figure and wanted to convey the model of character this subject provided. A question of bias can come up when someone today would evaluate these Gospels as biographies. How can we trust the accuracy of someone in the Christian community to produce an unbiased account of the life of such a central figure? Much of what we learn from the great figures of the past comes from those writers who were close to the subject. Bias did not make biographies into fiction. We take bias into account, but a good biography (or any ancient historical writing) was still rooted in historical fact. This was true of other great figures. Why wouldn't it be true of Jesus as well?¹⁸ The Gospel writers obviously had an agenda. The fact that they chose to adapt Greco-Roman biographical conventions to tell the story of Jesus indicates they were centrally concerned about communicating what they thought really happened.¹⁹ When biographies involved deliberate falsification of events, they departed from the expected conventions of biography and became something else. When these falsifications were found out, other historians and biographers called them out.²⁰

It is nearly impossible to escape the charge of bias or agenda when

evaluating most of the historical accounts in antiquity. Craig Keener makes a good point when he writes:

We respect Thucydides, Polybius and ... Josephus as contemporaries of much of what they report (regardless of some rhetorical embellishments). We depend heavily on writers of the early empire like Tacitus and Suetonius, who report relatively recent events (of the past century to century and a half, with accuracy increasing in the later period). Despite their biases, they provide an invaluable source for understanding the early empire ... Barring convincing evidence to the contrary ... we should evaluate the Gospels analogously.²¹

In examining the Gospels as ancient biographies, we can see that the writers employed sources at least as conservatively as other ancient historians and biographers. Some of these sources presumably represent written sources belonging to the first generation following Jesus's ministry. Most scholars date Mark within four decades of Jesus's death and resurrection, and many date the potential source, "Q," to roughly two decades after the bulk of events and sayings it reports. By the standards we use for determining events in antiquity, such written sources are remarkably early. Also, during most of this period, Jesus's closest disciples remained the movement's leading teachers. Were we trying to reconstruct the public activity and teachings of another teacher from this period and had sources from the first generation of his followers, we would be relatively confident that these sources preserved reliable material. If the teacher founded a school, we would normally assume that those interested in and trusted for writing about the teacher in the first generation were either disciples or would have derived information preserved by the disciples.²²

HISTORY AND FAITH

One of the difficulties in discussing biblical events like the resurrection is that we try to defend those events from a faith perspective. We acknowledge these accounts are inspired, even inerrant. But those are categories that skeptics cannot affirm. In fact, it

can hinder Christians when trying to make a case for the historicity of biblical events. When we listen to skeptics like Ehrman, they make unreasonable expectations on the events recorded in scripture and the expectation that those events would be preserved in a pristine manner. Ehrman writes:

“I came to realize that it would have been no more difficult for God to preserve the words of scripture than it would have been for him to inspire them in the first place.” If he wanted his people to have his words, surely he would have given them to (his people) ... The fact that we don't have the words surely must show, I reasoned, that he did not preserve them for us. And if he didn't perform that miracle, there seemed to be no reason to think that he performed the earlier miracle of inspiring those words.²³

However, if Ehrman had his way, and we had five accounts of the resurrection that were in complete agreement without the possibility of any discrepancy, we would no longer have a historical document. If this is what we had, this would take the Gospels out of the realm of historical inquiry and cause us to have many more questions about the origins of these texts. We have to find a middle ground between a very strict harmonization that erases or tries to explain away any apparent contradictions or discrepancies and one that is very dishonest when applying historical method to the scriptures because one has a worldview that cannot accept any supernatural accounts. We must avoid making the Bible something it is not, a supernaturally produced book that was dropped down from heaven in an uncorrupted edition or produced via a verbatim dictation from God to its authors. And specifically, when it comes to the Gospel accounts and the book of Acts, we need to pursue the evidence and evaluate these documents using the methods with which we evaluate ancient histories and biographies. As Christians who have placed our faith in the risen Jesus, we can trust the Holy Spirit to perform his role of testifying to the truth.

In a way, the challenge of Ehrman, McCormick, and other skeptics can have some positive benefits.

[I]n some ways (Ehrman) has done all of us a favor. He has focused discussion on topics to which everyday Christians and pastors have given inadequate attention for too long. In highlighting these issues for the masses, Ehrman opens the door for new conversations to arise over the historicity and reliability of the Bible. Church leaders and teachers must rise to the occasion and be prepared to serve as tour guides through these issues. Christians have nothing to fear by taking a close look at the evidence, and unbelieving seekers are not required to take a blind leap of faith.²⁴

Much of what the Gospels claim about Jesus does pass historical scrutiny.²⁵ We can know a lot about the early Christian movement from the New Testament texts, and the rise of the church can be explained well if we have the worldview of a God who is concerned and involved with humanity. And if that is the case, then events like the resurrection make sense. After putting the Gospels under historical scrutiny, we need to ask, “What did they report?” They reported that Jesus of Nazareth was crucified by Roman soldiers, placed in a tomb, and several days later, found to be alive.

In light of our review of the historicity of the resurrection accounts, we can explain how this tiny offshoot of Judaism subsequently went on to change the world. The resurrection of Jesus explains how a movement of 120 people in the Upper Room on the eve of Pentecost spread to almost half of the Roman Empire (or 32 million people at some estimates) within 300 years.²⁶

BILL VICTOR



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PART III

COUNTERING COUNTERFEIT CHRISTIANITY

CHAPTER 10: IS MISSOURI THE HOLY LAND?

WIL HOFFMAN

A Study of the Second Coming of Christ within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

As of 2015, over six million people call the state of Missouri home. I am one of those people who was born and raised in this great state. I am a Missouri boy through and through, and as a child, I would joke and tell people that God made Missouri special and that it was as close to heaven as one could get. As my knowledge of the Lord, as well as heaven, grew, I no longer equated heaven with Missouri. I am still extremely fond of this state, but I know one day I will trade my earthly home for my eternal home, and there will be no comparison between the two.

What if I were to tell you that a group of people believe that Missouri *is* the Holy Land? That this group believes Missouri is an important part of biblical history? This group believes that Missouri was the location for the Garden of Eden, that it will be the location of the second coming of Christ, and that it is the location of the Holy City of Zion/New Jerusalem. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS or Mormons) believes all the above statements.

People have different views about the second coming of Christ concerning how or when it will happen. It is an issue that can differ

from one denomination to the next, or even from person to person within a church. The precise location of the return of Jesus has been debated, but the location has never pointed to the Americas. Across denominational lines and throughout history, Christians have never pointed to North America as a location for the return of Christ. The LDS Church, however, has North America as a key location within its history and doctrine.

This chapter looks at what the LDS Church believes about the second coming of Jesus, where the Holy City of Zion/New Jerusalem will be, and how that compares to the words of scripture.

GOING TO MISSOURI

As members of the LDS Church concluded their conference on June 6, 1831, in Kirtland, Ohio, a revelation (Doctrine and Covenants 52) was given by Joseph Smith that spoke of missionaries being called to Missouri. It also said that the next conference was to be held in Missouri. But this declaration was more than just looking at Missouri and holding a conference within the state. Joseph Smith also stated that God had told him Missouri would be the “Land that I will consecrate unto my people, which are a remnant of Jacob, and those who are heirs according to the covenant” (D&C 52:2).

Before they could officially settle, Mormons first had to send missionaries to seek out the land and to reach the community with the teachings of Joseph Smith and the newly formed LDS Church. All of this was to be done to prepare the way for when Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon would arrive in present-day Independence, Missouri. This was to be the home for the members of the church, the place where the Temple would be built, and where Jesus would return to sit on his throne.

Members of the church knew about Jackson County, Missouri, from reading the books of 3 Nephi and Ether in the Book of Mormon, as well as from hearing Joseph Smith teach that New Jerusalem was to be founded in America and that it was to be erected by the members of the LDS Church. So, as they traveled to a land to call their own, the people felt the excitement of having the Promised Land.

LDS VIEW ON THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

“Hearken, O ye elders of my church, saith the Lord your God, who have assembled yourselves together, according to my commandments, in this land, which is the land of Missouri, which is the land which I have appointed and consecrated for the gathering of the saints. Wherefore, this is the land of promise, and the place for the city of Zion” (D&C 57:1–2).

Mormons believe that within the text of each revelation given in Doctrine and Covenants, prophecy and wisdom are also given. Instructions and answers are given for questions that members of the LDS Church may have had.

Within D&C 57, three happenings were meant to take place. First, Independence was to be the City of Zion in which a temple would be built. Second, members of the church were to purchase land in Jackson County, Missouri, and they were to “receive inheritances” in the area. Third, early leaders of the church, Sidney Gilbert, Oliver Cowdery, and W.W. Phelps, were to be commissioned to set up shops and printers to edit and publish material for publication for the LDS Church.

As the members of the newly founded LDS Church were looking for a place to call their own, they looked to the western part of Missouri as a safe haven for their members. On July 20, 1831, Joseph Smith brought forth a new revelation to the members of the LDS Church that he claimed came to him from God. This revelation was to announce that God had revealed the location of the site for the city of Zion, the New Jerusalem. This location was Independence, Missouri, in Jackson County.

As members of the LDS Church heard these words, they may have been reminded of the revelation (D&C 38) given just six months earlier in January that talked about a “land of promise” given by God to the members of the LDS Church.

Finally, this “land of promise” was being revealed to them, and also now, according to D&C 57, not only was it the “land of promise,” but it was now the promised City of Zion, the location of the second coming of Jesus Christ.

“It will be in America — at Jackson County, Missouri — that the New Jerusalem will be built; and from there will the Lord govern the world during the Millennium.”¹

This teaching is further supported in D&C 133, where Joseph Smith once again teaches that the “graves of the saints shall be opened,” and “we would stand on the right hand of the lamb,” and that all this would happen as Jesus would be standing on “Mount Zion and upon, the Holy City, the New Jerusalem.”²

Clear teaching from church leaders and Mormon scholars show us that LDS beliefs and teachings of the end times state that Independence will be the City of Zion, the New Jerusalem, and the place where Jesus will govern the world.

WHERE WILL JESUS RETURN?

If it is true that Jesus’s second coming will take place in Independence, that means Missouri is a very special place; however, we have to look at the Bible. We must gain a scriptural understanding of the return of Jesus Christ.

When we look at these events, we should be excited about them, knowing that Jesus will defeat the evil one and will give us a new heaven and a new earth, a place with no sickness or death. A true place of peace has been promised to those who call on the name of the Lord. These words should give us hope.

Although the exact geographical location has been debated over the years, most biblical scholars point to the current location of the biblical Holy Land as being the spot of Jesus’s return.

When Gabriel told Mary in Luke 1 that she would have a child even though she was a virgin, Gabriel explained just how important the unborn Christ child was. Gabriel told Mary that Jesus would be called the Son of the Most High and that the Lord God would give him the throne of his father David (Luke 1:32–33). This was due to the fact that Jesus was a descendent of David through Mary’s line.

Zion/Jerusalem coincides with the first mention of Zion and the City of David found in the Bible. In 2 Samuel 5:6, David “marched to Jerusalem against the Jebusites” and “captured the stronghold of Zion,

that is, the City of David” (v. 7). After David conquered the Jebusites, he took up residence and had a royal palace built there. It was at this time that David knew the Lord God had established him as king over all of Israel, and now Zion/Jerusalem had become the seat of power for the kingdom of Israel.

Scripture teaches that when Jesus returns, he will most likely return to the land of David.

WHAT IS NEW JERUSALEM?

We have looked at the first mention of Zion in the Bible and the history behind it. We can see that in scripture, the name of Zion can hold both physical and spiritual meanings; the Bible, however, uses the name of New Jerusalem only when specifically naming it as the capital of the new heaven and the new earth.

In Revelation 21, we see the end of the story God has planned since he decided to create the earth and everyone in it. In the second coming, we see a promise to believing Christians of a new heaven and a new earth.

In Revelation 21:2, we see that out of heaven came down the New Jerusalem as the capital city. The New Jerusalem is not heaven but is, in fact, the capital of heaven.³

This new capital is given to the children of God by God as a reward for putting our trust in the Savior, Jesus Christ. People will not build this city. It will not be placed on the old earth because the earth that we know will fade away (1 John 2:17) and the new earth will come.

In fact, John tells us in Revelation that the New Jerusalem is very big in size. Being a perfect square, we are told it will be fourteen hundred miles long and wide. This means roughly that New Jerusalem will be two million square miles. This is extremely large for Independence, since Missouri as a whole is only 69,704 square miles.

FALSE PROPHECY OUT OF THE REVELATION

When it comes to the revelations of Joseph Smith found in the

scriptures of the Mormon Church, they are understood to be taken two ways. The first way is that they should be understood as instruction for what members of the church should do. Second, they should be taken as prophecy and promises of blessings of things that will come forth. Within D&C 57, we can clearly see a prophecy of Joseph Smith that has not come to pass.

D&C 57 states that a temple will be placed “not far from the courthouse” in Independence on land “purchased by the saints.” The location of the temple lot is 200 South River Boulevard, Independence, Missouri 64050, but as of now, no temple exists in that location. The temple lot is fenced off with only a marker placed on it giving the history of the location.

Although the land was dedicated in August 1831 by Joseph Smith, and the LDS Church owns land around the temple lot, they do not own the temple lot itself or have one of their temples located in this area. The closest LDS temple is 13.9 miles away in North Kansas City.

Another promise that was given within the prophecies dealing with Mormons in Missouri was that Independence was to be the Promised Land for members of the LDS Church. Many members believed this would be a new capital for Mormonism. Both D&C 64 and 84 say that the land/New Jerusalem was to be their kingdom where both the land and the people would flourish. In 1833, however, actions of mob violence in Missouri forced Mormons out of Jackson County. This was because of the Mormon doctrines that revolved around slavery and Native Americans. Conflicts and battles between Mormons and non-Mormons in Missouri came to a breaking point in 1838, which is known as the Mormon War of 1838.

This conflict resulted in Missouri Executive Order 44, also known as the Extermination Order. Executive Order 44 stated that Mormons are to be “treated as enemies and must be exterminated or driven from the state if necessary for the public peace.”⁴

The Bible makes it clear that many people claim to be from God and speak for God; however, we are told to test the spirits (people claiming divine gifting for service) to see if they actually are from God (1 John 4:1). When it comes to prophecy and prophets that speak for

God, if God truly gives them a prophecy of things to come, then those things will come to pass.

Some Mormons say that these prophecies and many other false prophecies in Mormon scripture could still come to pass; however, it does not look as though the LDS will ever own the spot of land that Joseph Smith pointed to for the temple. The temple lot is owned by a Mormon sect called the Church of Christ-Temple Lot. They also believe they are the only true church, and they will never sell the land because they believe Jesus will return there. But even if this Mormon sect built its own temple on the land, the LDS Church still would not recognize this as a fulfillment of the prophecy because it is not an official temple of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.⁵

CONCLUSION

Although I personally believe Missouri is the best state in the union, I cannot say it is the Holy Land. In reality, we need to look at what Joseph Smith was teaching and who he was. Joseph Smith was not a biblical scholar, and that can easily be seen in his writings. A one-time treasure seeker with his father, Joseph Smith was looking for an easy payday. Having seen the successes of the revivals that were taking place in northeast America in the 1820s and 1830s, Joseph Smith saw a new revenue source.

Joseph Smith created a religion that was loosely based on the Bible. He would take pieces of biblical accounts and add his own message. With his new religion experiencing persecution, fearing that his members would turn on him, Joseph Smith wanted to give them hope.

Taking details from scripture, he presented them with a place he believed would be welcoming. He wanted them to see that place as heaven on earth. What they found, however, was a state that was set in its ways. Missourians saw a man who had visions of being the leader of an army made up of male members of the LDS Church who practiced polygamy. This resulted not in heaven on earth, but a hostile land for members of the Mormon Church.

Joseph Smith did not have a biblical understanding of the Holy

City. He took the scriptures out of context and clumsily pieced them together, succeeding in deceiving millions of people.

WIL HOFFMAN



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It was in Bible College where Wil found a love for apologetics, and for over a decade, Wil has been studying, writing, and witnessing to members of the Mormon faith, eventually being called to serve for three years in Duchesne, Utah. Along with Mormonism, Wil has also been studying Catholicism, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Church of Scientology.

CHAPTER 11: A CLOSER LOOK AT JOSEPH SMITH JR. AND THE ORIGINS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

JIM SCHURKE

Joseph Smith Jr. — Prophet or Deceiver?

“You don’t know me; you never knew my heart. No man knows my history. I cannot tell it; I shall never undertake it. I don’t blame anyone for not believing my history. If I had not experienced what I have, I could not have believed it myself.”¹

The above quote is from a funeral sermon delivered by Joseph Smith Jr. on April 7, 1844, in Nauvoo, Illinois. Joseph Smith Jr., the founder and first Prophet, Seer, and Revelator of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, had certainly experienced many things in his thirty-nine years, but the veracity of many of the things written have been called into question. Joseph’s early life is filled with uncertainties. Most of what has been written about him was not written until long after he founded the Mormon Church.

He was born on December 23, 1805, in Sharon, Vermont, to Joseph and Lucy Mack Smith. When Joseph was eleven years of age, his family relocated to a farm south of Palmyra, New York. The Palmyra area is where The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints traces its beginnings. In considering those beginnings, one must first consider the cultural and religious atmosphere in which Joseph grew

up. The early 1800s found the Palmyra area a virtual hot bed of religious activity, with numerous groups and their varying practices and doctrines conducting camp meetings. The religious fervor in the Palmyra area at this time was such that circuit-riding preachers referred to the area as the “burnt over” district. In Fawn M. Brodie’s biography of Joseph Smith Jr., entitled *No Man Knows My History*, she writes:

Nowhere was a lapse from the old codes more evident than in the churches, which were racked with schisms. The Methodists split four ways between 1814 and 1830. The Baptists split into Reformed Baptists, Hard-Shell Baptists, Free-Will Baptists, Seventh-Day Baptists, Foot washers, and other sects. Unfettered religious liberty began spawning a host of new religions.²

The religious activity, coupled with an interest in the occult practices of searching for buried treasure of silver and gold using aids such as a St. John’s rod and seer stones, doubtless had a large influence on young Joseph Smith Jr., who was involved in treasure seeking through occult means. An 1826 court record documents the results of a trial held before a Justice of the Peace in Bainbridge, Chenango County, New York, in which Joseph was arrested and tried on the charge of being a “disorderly person and an impostor”³ and was charged \$2.68 in court costs to examine the case. The transcript of the trial appears in Appendix A, page 405, of Fawn M. Brodie’s book.

JOSHEPH SMITH’S VISIONS

Against this backdrop, Joseph Smith Jr., a young man with a colorful imagination, began what is now The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The church traces its beginnings to two visions Smith supposedly had in his mid-teens. The official version of these visions appears in *The Pearl of Great Price*, one of the four standard works of the Mormon Church. In considering the first vision, it is interesting to note that there are other authenticated versions, and there are inconsistencies when comparing the different versions. The earliest version was handwritten by Smith in 1830, ten years after the

vision allegedly occurred. In this version, Smith claims he was fifteen years old and was visited by only the Lord. Smith dictated another version of this first vision in 1835. In this version, Smith claimed he was fourteen years old and was visited by two personages with many angels. The official version was not written by Smith until 1838 and was published in the *Times and Seasons* in 1842, twenty-two years after the vision supposedly occurred. The official version, as published in *The Pearl of Great Price*, states Joseph was visited by “two personages” with no mention of angels. It is also of interest that all the versions of this first vision were written many years after it was supposed to have occurred. In the published version of his first vision, Smith claims to have gone out into a wooded area to seek the Lord concerning which church he should join. The discourse between Joseph and the “Personage” that addressed him is found in *The Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith – History 1:18–19:

¹⁸ My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner, therefore did I get possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, then I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right (for at this time it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong) — and which I should join.

¹⁹ I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: ‘they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof.’⁴

On September 21, 1823, Smith claims to have had another vision, this one in his bedroom. Again, Smith states that he was calling upon God, and this time he was visited by an angel named Moroni. Smith claims that Moroni visited him three times that night and again the next day as he was working in a field. In these visions, Smith stated that he was told of golden plates hidden on a hill called Cumorah.

Following his September 22nd vision in the field, Smith says he went to the location he was told about by Moroni and found the golden plates, a breastplate, and objects called an Urim and Thummim which would later be used in the “translation.”

As with the first vision, there are multiple versions of the second vision. In Fawn Brodie’s book, Appendix A, page 408, Joseph Smith Sr. said that his son had seen the golden plates, the breastplate, and the Urim and Thummim, and they were all buried in a stone box. Smith claims he was prevented from taking the articles found in the box until September 22, 1827, when he removed them and took them home.

TRANSLATION OF THE GOLDEN PLATES

The “translation” of the golden plates, written in “reformed Egyptian” (see Mormon 9:32 in the Book of Mormon), began in Harmony, Pennsylvania, with Smith’s wife, Emma, serving as his first scribe. Martin Harris, a wealthy farmer from the Palmyra area, also assisted Smith by paying off his debts and assisting as scribe. The method of translation used had Smith with the golden plates on one side of a partition and Harris on the other. Smith would “translate” the characters on the plates with the use of the Urim and Thummim, and Harris would record what Smith said. Harris’s wife was skeptical of Smith and his story of the golden plates, and at the insistence of Harris, Smith permitted him to take the first 116 pages of the “translation” home to show his wife. Those pages disappeared and have never been found. Knowing that he could not duplicate the lost pages, Smith was forced to adopt another method of translation. This method was described by David Whitmer, one of the “three witnesses,” in a writing in 1827:

I will now give you a description of the manner in which the Book of Mormon was translated. Joseph Smith would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face into the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing.⁵

Smith's wife, Emma, also described the method used to translate the Book of Mormon:

Now the first my husband translated, was translated by the use of the Urim and Thummim, and that was the part that Martin Harris lost, after that he used a small stone, not exactly black, but it was rather dark in color.⁶

Oliver Cowdery, a school teacher from Poultney, Vermont, arrived in Harmony, Pennsylvania, on April 5, 1829. Cowdery had stayed with Joseph and Emma Smith in the Palmyra area prior to their moving to Harmony. Cowdery also served as Smith's scribe, recording the majority of the 275,000 words of the Book of Mormon. The translation of the Book of Mormon was completed in June of 1829.

According to Emma Smith, Martin Harris, David Whitmer, and others who were involved in the translation process, most, if not all of the translation was completed using the same technique Smith used to look for buried treasure. Smith would place a small stone in his hat and place the hat against his face to block out the light.

It was not until the discovery of the Rosetta Stone in 1799, and its deciphering completed in 1822, that translation of Egyptian hieroglyphics could be accurately completed. Thus, Smith's veracity as a translator could not be tested. Smith claimed that the golden plates were returned to Moroni following his translation, making it impossible to verify his work.

THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPYRI AND THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM

With the golden plates supposedly returned to the angel Moroni following Smith's translation, it was impossible to test the accuracy of his work as a translator. Smith's ability to translate Egyptian hieroglyphics has been tested, however, with another of his claims. In 1835, while in Kirtland, Ohio, Smith purchased Egyptian artifacts, including mummies and papyri, from a man named Michael Chandler for \$2,400. Smith claimed to have translated one of the papyri into

what is now the Book of Abraham and published his work in 1842. The Book of Abraham now appears in *The Pearl of Great Price*, one of Mormonism's four standard works. Some of the teachings of the Book of Abraham are that God lives near a star called Kolob, the Pre-Existence of our Souls, and The Plurality of Gods.

Following Smith's death on June 27, 1844, his family sold the papyri, and they were eventually given to a museum in Chicago. For many years, it was thought that these papyri were destroyed in the 1871 Chicago fire, but in 1967, they were discovered in the New York Metropolitan Museum. These papyri, now called The Joseph Smith Papyri, were then given to the Mormon Church. Several Egyptologists were given the opportunity to examine these papyri and discovered they had absolutely nothing to do with Abraham and his being in Egypt, nor any of the points mentioned earlier, but were in reality a portion of what was called The Book of Breathings, a funeral text placed with the deceased to guide them through their journey in the afterlife. With this discovery, Joseph Smith was exposed as an imposter who intentionally misled the people regarding his ability to translate Egyptian hieroglyphics.

CONCLUSION

The Articles of Faith, as found in *The Pearl of Great Price*, clearly demonstrates where the LDS Church stands regarding the Book of Mormon and the Bible. Article eight states:

⁸ We believe the Bible to be the Word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.⁷

Joseph Fielding Smith, the tenth President, Prophet, Seer, and Revelator of the LDS Church and a distant relative of Joseph Smith Jr., wrote the following, which is published in the *Doctrines of Salvation, Volume 1*, page 116:

Mormonism as it is called, must stand or fall on the story of Joseph

Smith. He was either a prophet of God, divinely called, properly appointed and commissioned, or he was one of the biggest frauds this world has ever seen. There is no middle ground.⁸

Joseph Fielding Smith could not have been more correct as there truly is “no middle ground” in considering a prophet. The test of the veracity of a prophet is very simple, and the test is clearly defined in Deuteronomy 18: 21–22:

²¹ You may say to yourselves, “How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the Lord?”

²² If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him.⁹

A prophet speaks for the Lord. He is to deliver to the people what the Lord has given to him to proclaim. The message delivered by a prophet is the Lord’s message and not his own. So then, a “prophet” who speaks presumptuously or takes liberties in what is said is simply a false prophet, and the instruction to us is, “Do not be afraid of him.” There is no second chance or opportunity for redemption and restoration to the status of prophet.

Joseph Fielding Smith goes on to say:

If Joseph Smith was a deceiver, who willfully attempted to mislead the people, then he should be exposed; his claims should be refuted, and his doctrines shown to be false, for the doctrines of an imposter cannot be made to harmonize in all particulars with divine truth. If his claims and declarations were built upon fraud and deceit, there would appear many errors and contradictions, which would be easy to detect. The doctrines of false teachers will not stand the test when tried by the accepted standards of measurement, the scripture.¹⁰

Once again, Joseph Fielding Smith is correct. Deceivers, or in this case false prophets, must be “exposed.” False prophets were dangerous

in biblical times, and they are just as dangerous today as they continue to “mislead the people.” So, the question must be asked, was Joseph Smith Jr. a deceiver? Did he “willfully” attempt to mislead through his false prophecies and teaching? The supposed “translation” of the Book of Abraham found in *The Pearl of Great Price* is a good example showing that Joseph Smith Jr. was a false prophet who willfully misled people. The differing versions of both his first and second visions seem indicative of a person who had intentions of being a deceiver. Considering the alleged “golden plates” themselves, the inconsistencies here related to the true nature of God are profound.

One must ask, why would God allow for the preservation of the biblical text such as the Dead Sea Scrolls and not preserve the text of the Book of Mormon? There are no examples of earlier texts that relate to the text of the Book of Mormon. If the Book of Mormon is so important, why would earlier texts supporting the Book of Mormon not be preserved, and why were the alleged golden plates returned to Moroni, never to be seen again? If Joseph Smith could, in fact, translate Egyptian hieroglyphics, why did he incorrectly identify the papyri he purchased in Kirtland, Ohio? As mentioned earlier, what Joseph Smith identified as the Book of Abraham is, in fact, part of an Egyptian funeral text. These and many more questions could be asked, but the first question should be, was Joseph Smith Jr. a prophet or a deceiver?

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CHAPTER 12: THE WATCH TOWER'S HAS-BEEN GOD

ROB PHILLIPS

*Why Jehovah's Witnesses Can't Find the Deity of Christ
In the New World Translation*

Jehovah's Witnesses have high regard for scripture. They believe the Bible is the Word of God. They base their beliefs and practices on it. And they prove themselves adept at using selected Bible passages to weave convincing arguments for their unique doctrines — particularly doctrines that place the Watch Tower outside the margins of historic Christianity. These include a denial of the Trinity, the belief in Jesus as a created being, and the depiction of the “holy spirit” as an impersonal force.

Jehovah's Witnesses display a commendable fervor for sharing the Bible, amassing millions of hours each year in door-to-door “publishing” across 240 nations.¹ So, why do they reject basic Christian doctrines the church has embraced since the days of the apostles — most notably, the deity of Christ?

For starters, it's because Watch Tower forefather Charles Taze Russell and his successors rejected certain biblical teachings that conflicted with their human reasoning. Jehovah's Witnesses claim Christianity fell into general apostasy under Emperor Constantine in

the fourth century A.D. To restore pure worship, Jehovah appointed Russell to provide spiritual manna for his true worshipers.

This so-called heavenly bread featured, among other things, a denial of the deity both of the Son and Holy Spirit. The July 1882 issue of *Zion's Watch Tower* said, "Our readers are aware that while we believe in Jehovah and Jesus, and the holy spirit, we reject as totally unscriptural, the teaching that these are *three* Gods in *one* person or, as some put it, one God in three persons."² Russell later wrote, "The clergy's God is plainly not Jehovah but the ancient deity, hoary with the iniquity of the ages — Baal, the Devil Himself."³

Russell and his protégés twisted the scriptures, wedged new meanings into them, or used proof-text hopscotch to manufacture doctrines they claimed distinguished them as the only rightful members of Jehovah's kingdom on earth. By 1950, Watch Tower leaders buttressed their false doctrines with their very own translation of the New Testament. In 1961, they issued the full New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures, updating it in 1984 and again in 2013.

In essence, the Watch Tower placed a sanitized version of the Bible into the hands of its followers, declaring The New World Translation "an accurate, easy-to-read translation of the Bible."⁴ Feigning humility to escape accountability, the translators said they wished to remain anonymous. *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, a Watch Tower witnessing guide, explains: "The translators were not seeking prominence for themselves but only to honor the Divine Author of the Holy Scriptures."⁵

In fact, the identity of the translators is well-known. Of the six men who served on the original translation committee, only one had any formal training in biblical languages, and that training was limited.⁶ Today, the New World Bible Translation Committee continues its work anonymously. Safely ensconced in the trust of faithful Jehovah's Witnesses, the committee manipulates the biblical text so that crucial Watch Tower doctrines are preserved, and the clear teaching of scripture with respect to the deity of Christ remains masked.

Jehovah's Witnesses may regard the New World Translation

(NWT) as accurate and impartial, but distinguished Bible scholars disagree, categorizing the NWT as “an incredibly biased translation.”⁷

British scholar H.H. Rowley called it “a shining example of how the Bible should not be translated,” classifying the text as “an insult to the Word of God.”⁸ Julius Mantey, author of *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, called the NWT’s rendering of John 1:1 (“and the Word was a god”) “a shocking mistranslation.”⁹ And Bruce Metzger, the late professor of New Testament Language and Literature at Princeton, called the NWT’s version of John 1:1 “a frightful translation,” “erroneous,” “pernicious,” and “reprehensible.”¹⁰ He further stated, “If the Jehovah’s Witnesses take this translation seriously, they are polytheists.”¹¹

Jehovah’s Witnesses must trust the New World Translation because it comes from the Watch Tower, the self-proclaimed “faithful and discreet slave” of Matthew 24:45–47, dispensing spiritual food to Jehovah’s people in the last days. Witnesses who challenge the Watch Tower’s doctrine or authority may be labeled prideful and spiritually weak and could face shunning.

Space does not permit an exhaustive look at the NWT’s many subtle manipulations of the text, so let’s examine a few Bible passages that clearly point to the deity of Christ and compare how the NWT has twisted these scriptures to drain them of their clarity and truth.

JESUS IS “A GOD”

John 1:1

This verse in the NWT 2013 reads: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with *God*, and the Word was *a god*” (emphasis added). The Watch Tower goes to great lengths to explain why this is an accurate rendering of the Greek, citing grammatical rules and misquoting Greek scholars to support its belief that the Word is “godlike, divine, a god” but not coequal and coeternal with the Father.

In truth, as the late professor and dean Charles L. Feinberg noted,

“I can assure you that the rendering which the Jehovah’s Witnesses give John 1:1 is not held by any reputable Greek scholar.”¹²

Compare the King James Version (KJV): “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” The New American Standard Bible (NASB), English Standard Version (ESV), and Christian Standard Bible (CSB) read exactly the same.

JESUS IS CREATED

John 8:58

The NWT 2013 renders this: “Jesus said to them: ‘Most truly I say to you, before Abraham *came into existence, I have been*’ (emphasis added). Because Jehovah’s Witnesses deny the deity and eternity of Jesus, their translators had to change the biblical text to match their errant doctrines. In effect, they made Jesus a has-been god.

Compare the KJV: “Jesus said to them, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.’” Or consider the NASB: “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.” The ESV translates this verse, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” And the CSB renders it, “Truly I tell you, before Abraham was, I am.”

Here, Jesus harks back to Exodus 3 where God reveals himself to Moses in the burning bush as I AM, or YHWH, a unique name Jesus applies to himself as he speaks to the religious leaders of his day. We’ll come back to this verse shortly.

JESUS IS A SECONDARY CREATOR

Colossians 1:16

The NWT 2013 reads: “because by means of him *all other things were created* in the heavens and on the earth, the things visible and the things invisible, whether they are thrones or lordships or governments or authorities. *All other things have been created through him* and for him” (emphasis added).

Jehovah's Witnesses argue that Jesus is the first of Jehovah's created beings who then created all "other" things. Again, the biblical text is bent to match Watch Tower doctrine. The word "other" does not appear in the Greek text. Earlier versions of the NWT bracketed "other" and explained that "other" is implied. But the NWT 2013 boldly includes "other" without brackets, leaving the Watch Tower faithful to believe it comes from the Greek text.

The KJV reads: "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him."

The NASB: "For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created through Him and for Him."

The ESV: "For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things were created through him and for him."

The CSB: "For everything was created by him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created through him and for him."

No English translation distorts the true meaning of this verse like the NWT.

FINDING THE REAL JESUS IN THE NWT

We could cite other examples — Colossians 2:9, Titus 2:13, and Hebrews 1:8 to name three — but the point is that scripture must dictate doctrine, not the other way around. And that is the fatal flaw of the six "scholars" who gave us a frightful translation that strips the deity and divine attributes from the eternal Son of God.

If Jehovah's Witnesses are leery of — or even forbidden from — using any translation of scripture other than the NWT, what hope exists for them to find the real Jesus in the Watch Tower's official translation? Have any passages survived the Watch Tower's theological

scrubbing, so we may point our Witness friends to an eternal and divine Jesus who took on flesh to save us from our sins?

Fortunately, the answer is yes. We may begin by raising sincere questions and seeking answers in the New World Translation.

WHO IS LORD?

Jehovah's Witnesses boldly proclaim Jehovah as Lord. Deuteronomy 10:17 in the NWT 2013 reads: "For Jehovah your God is the God of gods and *the Lord* of lords ..." (emphasis added). Clearly, there is but one Lord, Jehovah.

But the NWT's New Testament contains the following:

- Luke 2:11 - "For today there was born to you in David's city a savior, who is Christ the Lord."
- 1 Corinthians 8:6 - "... there is actually to us one God, the Father, from whom all things are and we for him; and there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things are and we through him."
- Jude 4b - "My reason is that certain men have slipped in among you ... they are ungodly men who turn the undeserved kindness of our God into an excuse for brazen conduct and who prove false to our only owner [master] and Lord, Jesus Christ."

We may ask our Witness friends, "If Jehovah is Lord, and Jesus is Lord, according to the NWT, are there two Lords? Or is it possible the New Testament writers are affirming that Jesus is coequal with the Father?"

WHO CREATED ALL THINGS?

Jehovah's Witnesses say Jehovah created Jesus *ex nihilo* (out of nothing). Jesus then created all other things. But consider what the NWT 2013 says:

- Isaiah 44:24b - “I am Jehovah, who made everything. I stretched out the heavens *by myself*, and I spread out the earth. *Who was with me?*” (emphasis added).
- Isaiah 48:13 - “My own hand laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens ...”
- Ephesians 3:9b - “God, who created *all things*” (emphasis added).

So, clearly, Jehovah made everything — and Witnesses would include Jesus in “everything.” However, look at the following New Testament passage in the NWT:

- John 1:3 - “*All things* came into existence through him [the Word/Jesus], and apart from him not even one thing came into existence” (emphasis added).

If Jesus is a created being, then he is a “thing.” But this verse says that “all things” came into existence through Jesus. So, either Jesus is uncreated and, with the Father and Holy Spirit, created everything, or there is a contradiction in the NWT.

WHO IS THE FIRST AND THE LAST?

Jehovah's Witnesses say only Jehovah is the first and the last. Isaiah 44:6 in the NWT reads, “This is what Jehovah says ... ‘I am the first and I am the last. There is no God but me.’” In Isaiah 48:12b, Jehovah declares, “I am the first; I am also the last.” This carries through into the New Testament, where Jehovah calls himself “the Alpha and the Omega” (Rev. 1:7).

But a few verses later we see the glorified Jesus, who tells the apostle John, “I am the First and the Last” (Rev. 1:17). Then, to the church at Smyrna, Jesus is “the First and the Last” (Rev. 2:8). Finally, in the closing chapter of Revelation, “I, Jesus” (Rev. 22:16) identifies himself as “the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” (Rev. 22:13).

So, either there are two Alpha and Omegas, two first and lasts,

according to the NWT, or Jesus may rightly declare himself eternal and sovereign, just as the Father does.

WHO IS THE I AM?

Let's return briefly to John 8:58, which the NWT translates, "Jesus said to them: 'Most truly I say to you, before Abraham came into existence, *I have been*'" (emphasis added). Curiously, the Watch Tower translators have rendered the Greek phrase *ego eimi* as "I have been." As we've already seen, other English translations render these words, "I AM," connecting them with the divine name in the Old Testament, where Yahweh self-identifies as "I AM" (Ex. 3:14). However, if the correct translation of *ego eimi* is "I have been," one would expect the NWT to render this phrase consistently. But it does not.

Consider the NWT's rendering of *ego eimi* elsewhere in the Gospel of John. A few examples:

- To the woman at the well: "I am he [the Messiah]" (John 4:26).
- To his followers: "I am the bread of life ..." (John 6:35).
- To the Pharisees: "I am the light of the world ..." (John 8:12).
- To the disbelieving Jews: "That is why I said to you: You will die in your sins. For if you do not believe that I am the one, you will die in your sins" (John 8:24).
- To his apostles in the upper room: "From this moment on, I am telling you before it occurs, so that when it does occur you may believe that I am he" (John 13:19).
- To the detachment of soldiers and officers who came to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, when they confirmed they were seeking Jesus of Nazareth: "I am he" (John 18:5) — a statement that caused them to fall backward (v. 6). James White notes, "Amazing efforts have been expended [by Jehovah's Witnesses] to avoid the plain meaning of this text, but to no avail. When Jesus speaks these words, something miraculous takes place."¹³

Further, White notes that the strongest connection between Yahweh and *ego eimi* is in the books of the prophets, especially Isaiah. In fact, we find the phrase *ego eimi* used as a name of the one true God numerous times in Isaiah in the Septuagint (e.g. 41:4; 43:10, 25; 45:8, 18, 19, 22; 46:9; 48:12, 17), and most significantly in the very verse from which Jehovah's Witnesses derive their name (43:10).

Jesus used the very same phrase from Isaiah 43:10 in John 13:19 to explain how his revelation of the future would aid the disciples to have true faith in him, for only God knows the future. This also helps us understand why the Jews reacted as they did when Jesus used *ego eimi* in John 8:58, for only God has always existed. Last, it explains why the soldiers, who likely had no knowledge of the Hebrew scriptures, fell back on the ground when Christ identified himself in John 18:5.

When we look at the entire record of John's use of this phrase, the NWT is glaringly inconsistent. It does not mistranslate *ego eimi* in any other passage. White comments, "By attempting to hide this truth in just *one instance*, the translation testifies to its own inconsistency and its true purpose. When we approach the disputed text by first examining verses in which the NWT accurately renders the phrase so as to view the text in a wider context, we can avoid much of the argumentation and defense that Witnesses offer and can present the truth clearly to them."¹⁴

CONCLUSION

There are many other questions whose answers we may explore in the NWT: Who is the Savior? Who may forgive sins? How many true Gods are there? Who receives worship (or "obeisance" as the Watch Tower puts it)? And so on.

The Witnesses you encounter are as sincere about their faith as you are about yours. They are good neighbors, faithful spouses, mindful parents, and, they believe, loyal followers of Jehovah. Reading the only "trustworthy" translation of the Bible, the New World Translation, they don't find it necessary to see the deity of Christ for two reasons: (1) The Watch Tower has attempted to scrub the Bible clean of all references to Jesus's deity, and (2) the Watch Tower's "faithful and

discreet slave,” its Governing Body, assures its followers that Jesus is a created archangel rather than the eternal Son of God.

If we encourage Jehovah’s Witnesses to consider the challenges that the NWT presents to the Watch Tower claims about Jesus, perhaps they may consider our testimony of the God-Man who paid our sin debt on the cross.

ROB PHILLIPS



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He also speaks in Missouri Baptist churches and leads conferences on Christian apologetics, and he directs the Missouri Baptist Apologetics Network. He is certified in Christian apologetics from the North American Mission Board.

He is the author of seven books including *The Apologist's Tool Kit*; *What Every Christian Should Know about Islam*; *What Everyone Should Know about the Afterlife*; and, most recently, *What Every Christian Should Know about Salvation*.

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31. American Theology, 4. “51% agree ‘The Bible was written for each person to interpret as he or she chooses.’”

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33. American Theology, 4. “60% of Americans believe ‘all people will go to heaven.’”

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<https://www.ccel.org/ccel/richardson/fathers.vi.ii.iii.i.html> (accessed June 20, 2018).

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45. Irenaeus, “The Encyclical Epistle of the Church at Smyrna Concerning the Martyrdom of the Holy Polycarp” in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, 1, by Philip Schaff, ed. Alexander Roberts, D.D. & James Donaldson (Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2005), 42. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.iv.iv.xiv.html> (accessed June 20, 2018). Polycarp prays at his martyrdom the following prayer: “O Lord God Almighty, the Father of thy beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the knowledge of Thee, the God of angels and powers, and of every creature, and of the whole race of the righteous who live before thee, I give Thee thanks that Thou hast counted me worthy of this day and this hour, that I should have a part in the number of Thy martyrs, in the cup of Thy Christ, to the resurrection of eternal life, both of soul and body, through the incorruption [imparted] by the Holy Ghost. Among whom may I be accepted this day before Thee as a fat and acceptable sacrifice, according as Thou, the ever-truthful God, hast foreordained, hast revealed beforehand to me, and now hast fulfilled. Wherefore also I praise Thee for all things, I bless Thee, I glorify Thee, along with the everlasting and heavenly Jesus Christ, Thy beloved Son, with whom, to Thee, and the Holy Ghost, be glory both now and to all coming ages. Amen.” It is nearly impossible to miss out on the obviously Trinitarian elements of the prayer and Polycarp’s theology as a whole.

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53. John B. Polhill, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of the Holy Scripture*, v. 26. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 1992), 158.
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56. R.C. Sproul, “The Council of Nicea” in *The Reformation Study Bible*, ed. R.C. Sproul (Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust publishing, 2015), 1851.

57. D. A. Carson, 657–659.

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59. The Council of Chalcedon, (451 A.D.),
<http://www.prca.org/about/official-standards/creeds/ecumenical/chalcedon> (accessed June 23, 2018).

60. Alpha & Omega Ministries, “Is the Future Settled or Open? James White vs Bob Enyart” YouTube. Online video clip,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fxOOcJxEEYU> (accessed June 23, 2018). Dr. White uses this exact phrase while being cross-examined by Mr. Enyart on Christ and his immutability.

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(accessed June 23, 2018). “The son of God, the second person in the holy Trinity, being very and eternal God ... one substance an equal with him who made the world, who uphold and governeth all things he hath made, did ... take upon him man’s nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin; being conceived by the Holy Spirit which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only mediator between God and man.”

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69. Grudem, 64.

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71. “Christ’s View,” 3–36.

72. Michel Kruger, *The Question of Canon* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2013), 27–46.

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CHAPTER 6: CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS IN THE AFTERMATH OF POSTMODERNISM

Parenthetical notes only.

PART II: UNDERSTANDING GOD AND HIS WORK

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3. C. S. Lewis and Kathleen Norris, *Mere Christianity*, Revised & Enlarged ed. (San Francisco: HarperOne), 53.
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Editor’s note. *The Chicago Manual of Style* recommends non-capitalization of deity pronouns, 8.95. Writer preference guides the practice of retaining capitalization in this chapter.

2. The use of “man” throughout this chapter, though also deviating from the Chicago Manual of Style, is in keeping with the Scriptural use of man, that is referring to the human race collectively, both male and female, and is not intended to be sexist in any way.

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<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/culpable>.

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CHAPTER 9: HISTORY, BIAS, AND THE CASE AGAINST THE GOSPELS

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3. N. T. Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 14–15.
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PART III: COUNTERING COUNTERFEIT CHRISTIANITY

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5. David Whitmer, *An Address to all Believers in Christ*, 1827, 12.

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6. The translators were: Frederick W. Franz, who completed a two-hour survey course in biblical Greek and taught himself Hebrew and Aramaic; Nathan H. Knorr, no training in biblical languages; Milton G. Henschel, no training in biblical languages; Albert D. Schroeder, no training in biblical languages; Karl Klein, no training in biblical languages; and George D. Gangas, no training in biblical languages. "As 'head theologian' and vice-president of the Watch Tower Society, Franz was required to ensure that his work was consistent with existing doctrine, just as any group of translators is required by those who commission them to follow the precepts of the group," according to Free Minds, Inc., a non-profit organization that keeps "a critical eye on the Watch Tower" but is not affiliated with any religious organization. Viewed at <http://freeminds.org/history/NWtauthors.htm>.

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THE MISSOURI BAPTIST APOLOGETICS NETWORK

The Missouri Baptist Apologetics Network is a group of church leaders committed to the defense of the Christian faith and called to equip others to more effectively share the gospel of Jesus Christ. The shared vision of all network members is to equip every Missouri Baptist to defend the Christian faith with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15–16).

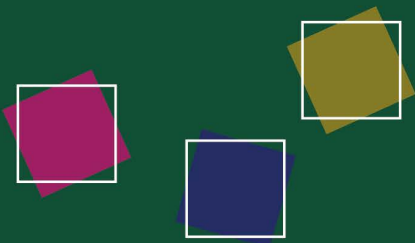
Network members are Christian apologists approved by the Missouri Baptist Convention (MBC). Whether ordained ministers or lay leaders, they are committed to equip others to defend the faith by speaking and providing resources that enable Missouri Baptists to become bolder and more effective in sharing Christ with others.

All members of the network are:

- Devoted followers of Christ
- Committed to cooperation with Missouri Baptists
- Endorsed by their pastor and/or associational director of missions
- Well-trained in their areas of Christian apologetics
- Active members of a local church affiliated with the MBC
- Engaged in equipping others to defend the Christian faith

- Devoted to helping Missouri Baptists become more biblically grounded and evangelistically bold
- Defenders of the faith whose views are consistent with the *Baptist Faith & Message 2000*

To learn more about the network, to contact a member, or to become a member, visit mobaptist.org/apologetics.



Show Me Why

Missouri Baptists are blessed with leaders who take an active role in defending the Christian faith. While all followers of Jesus should be ready to offer a reason for the hope in us (1 Peter 3:15-16), some are especially gifted in Christian apologetics.

More than a dozen such persons are members of the Missouri Baptist Apologetics Network. They are committed to equipping others to defend the faith by speaking and providing resources that enable Missouri Baptists to become bolder and more effective in sharing Christ.

Show Me Why is a collection of their writings. From the biblical case for apologetics ... to what it means to be created in the image of God ... to a closer look at the founder of the world's most successful form of counterfeit Christianity, this book engages your mind and encourages your Christian faith.



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ISBN 978-0-9972251-9-8

US\$19.95



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