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A PLAN FOR MCLEAN BIBLE CHURCH TO INCREASE APOLOGETICS  
KNOWLEDGE FOR THE CONGREGANTS IN THE CONTEXT  
OF SECULAR WASHINGTON, DC

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A Project  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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Doctor of Educational Ministry

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by  
John Anderson Pidgeon, Jr.

May 2020

**APPROVAL SHEET**

A PLAN FOR MCLEAN BIBLE CHURCH TO INCREASE APOLOGETICS  
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OF SECULAR WASHINGTON, DC

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## PREFACE

This project is due to the love and support of my wife, Suzanne, whom Christ gave to me as my life partner. I want to thank my supervisor, Dr. Shane Parker, and reader, Dr. Danny Bowen, for their guidance and support through this journey. My life has been completely led by the Holy Spirit as have been my academic pursuits. I could not have completed this without HIM. I hope this project assists all my brothers and sisters in Christ who wish to have the tools to bring the lost to the peace and love of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. We must get them past the stumbling blocks of scientific rationalism by offering the evidence for the faith in which we hold dear. I also hope this project will be assimilated by other pastors who need to remove all false secular scientific and rationalistic memes to bring their congregants to the love and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sandy Pidgeon

Great Falls, Virginia

May 2020

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The rise of the “New Atheists” in not only the United States but in much of secular Europe has exposed a need for Christian apologetics training. Christians’ very beliefs are threatened by what some would term an atheistic faith in science or “scientism.” This is at least recognized even by atheist evolutionary biologist Jerry Coyne, as he states,

Physician and bioethics expert Leon Kass characterizes scientism as an attempt to replace religion—and everything else—with science: “A quasi-religious faith has sprung up among us—let me call it *soulless scientism*—which believes that our new biology, eliminating all mystery, can give a complete account of human life, giving purely scientific explanations of human thought, love, creativity, moral judgement, and even why we believe in God . . . make no mistake. The stakes in this contest are high: at issue are the spiritual and moral health of our nation, the continued vitality of science, and our own self-understanding as human beings and children of the West.”<sup>1</sup>

In the introduction to, and book reviews of, Coyne’s *Faith Versus Fact* are found these statements, which undergird the New Atheist meme:<sup>2</sup>

“God is an hypothesis, and as such, stands in need of proof: the *onus probandi* (burden of proof) rests on the theist.” (Percy Bysshe Shelley)

“Though religion will live on in the minds of the unlettered, in educated circles faith is entering its death throes. Symptomatic of its terminal desperation are the apophatic pretensions of sophisticated theologians, for whose obscurantism Coyne reserves his most devastating sallies.” (Richard Dawkins)

“None make the case for the final divorce of religion and science, with permanent restraining orders against harassment and stalking of science by religion, better than Coyne.” (Ray Olson)

These reviews are not simply “friendly reviews by fellow atheists.” They are the current meme of the “New Atheists,” and Richard Dawkins, Professor of Zoology at Oxford, is

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<sup>1</sup> Jerry Coyne, *Faith versus Fact: Why Religion and Science Are Incompatible* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015), 197.

<sup>2</sup> Coyne, *Faith versus Fact*, introduction. Quotes attributed to reviewing authors are in parentheses and extracted from the introduction and internal book review appearing on the first pages—no page numbers are given.

perhaps the most vociferous of them. Dawkins is quoted in an infamous YouTube video of the annual Rally for Reason on March 24, 2012, on the Mall in Washington, DC, instructing, “Mock Christians . . . ridicule them in public. Don’t fall for the convention that we’re all too polite to talk about religion. Religion is not off the table, religion is not off limits, religion makes specific claims about the universe which need to be substantiated and challenged, and if necessary, need to be ridiculed with contempt.”<sup>3</sup>

Second Peter 3:3 states, “Knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.”<sup>4</sup> Laying apocalyptic theology aside from this verse, all should be concerned at the militant atheism that Dawkins promotes. This is not a new theme. The twentieth century was perhaps the most barbaric time in the earth’s history as self-proclaimed God-less societies were responsible for 94 million deaths *outside* of warfare.<sup>5</sup> Noted Christian apologist Ravi Zacharias adds that atheist philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche “prognosticated that the twentieth century would become the bloodiest century in history, and, second, that a universal madness would break out. He has been right on both counts.”<sup>6</sup> These Marxist-Leninist-Mao and socialist-Nazi (National Socialist Worker’s Party) countries controlled or eliminated Christianity. Martyred Christian pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a witness to the compromise of the German Lutheran churches in the Nazi-era, stated, “The catch phrases ‘cheap grace’ and ‘costly grace’ seemed to sum up so well the problems posed by the bondage of churches to secular powers and the reductionist faith of traditional churchgoers which proved so

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<sup>3</sup> Richard Dawkins quotes from “Rally for Reason, Washington, DC,” March 24, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uPqqp8KVuQU>.

<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture citations are from the English Standard Version.

<sup>5</sup> Stephane Courtois, *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Repression, Terror* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 4.

<sup>6</sup> Ravi Zacharias, *The Real Face of Atheism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 30.

fatal under the Nazi regime.”<sup>7</sup> The truth of the gospel was compromised for secular cultural adherence, and that liberal theology is present today. Although such theology is seemingly innocuous to many and presented as inclusiveness, the course has been set to bring nominalism into the Christian mainstream, thus diluting Christianity at its core and relegating it to “just another value set” to be relativized by secular norms and seen through the lens of “scientism.” Compatibilism to fill pews is at a premium—scriptural truth is not.

A more important historical point is that Nazism died as prominent in a worldwide dialogue and as a national movement. The entire world engaged against it and the Emperor’s Japan; however, its cousins, communism, socialism, and its American cousin, Progressivism, did not.<sup>8</sup> The academics retained Darwinism with its socialist/communist and scientific under-girding for the rest of the areas of science and disdained any theological premises. As agnostic physicist David Berlinski notes, “If Darwin’s theory of evolution has little to contribute to the content of the sciences, it has much to offer their ideology. It serves as the creation myth of our time, assigning properties to nature previously assigned to God. It thus demands an especially ardent form of advocacy.”<sup>9</sup> Berlinski also notes, “‘Darwin?’ . . . a Nobel laureate in biology once remarked to me over his bifocals. ‘That’s just the party line.’”<sup>10</sup> Indeed, secular humanism through scientism has thrived. Schwarz and Noebel add the language of that Supreme Court of the United States ruling in their notes: “Among religions in this country which do not teach what would generally be considered a belief in in the existence of God are

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<sup>7</sup> Geoffrey B. Kelly and John D. Godsey, introduction to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, ed. Geoffrey B. Kelly and John D. Godsey (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 3.

<sup>8</sup> The academic and socio-political remnants of “collectivism” in socialism, communism, and progressivism are discussed in chap. 3. Neo-Darwinism and the rejection of religion and anything associated with supernatural association has a causal nexus.

<sup>9</sup> David Berlinski, *The Devil’s Delusion* (New York: Crown Publishing, 2008), 190-91.

<sup>10</sup> Berlinski, *The Devil’s Delusion*, 192.

Buddhism, Taoism, Ethical Culture, Secular Humanism, and others. US Supreme Court, *Torcaso vs. Watkins*, decided June 19, 1961.”<sup>11</sup> “Secular Humanism” is now a recognized “religion.”<sup>12</sup>

The emphasis to this background is that history is repeating itself. Militant atheism through “scientism” is on the rise by scientific rationalists and so-called humanists, and alarmingly, many Americans are being inveigled to a sweeping rejection of Judeo-Christian ethics and morality in lieu of the new religion of “scientism.” Berlinski adds,

The attack on traditional religious thought marks the consolidation in our time of science as the single system of belief in which rational men and women might place their faith, and if not their faith, then certainly their devotion. From cosmology to biology, its narratives have become the narratives. They are, these narratives, immensely seductive, so much so that looking at them with innocent eyes requires a very deliberative act.<sup>13</sup>

Recent acceptance of eugenics and late term abortion, the justification by Planned Parenthood of selling infant parts, the defense by feminists, academia, and the courts of these organizations, have begun a desensitization process through the compliant media. Also, the devaluation of elderly human life is implied in one of President Obama’s Town Halls when a woman asked about her 105-year-old mother’s illnesses, to which he replied, “At least we can let doctors know and your mom know that, you know what? Maybe this isn’t going to help. Maybe you’re better off not having the surgery, but taking the painkiller.”<sup>14</sup> Activist William Watkins notes, “Polls show that nearly three out of four Americans support some type of euthanasia . . . and, why should we not do these things?

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<sup>11</sup> Fred C. Schwarz and David Noebel, *You Can Still Trust the Communists . . . to Be Communists (Socialists and Progressives too)* (Manitou Springs, CO: Prentice Hall, 2010), 338n105.

<sup>12</sup> Secular Humanism is discussed in chap. 3 of this project.

<sup>13</sup> Berlinski, *The Devil’s Delusion*, 10.

<sup>14</sup> *The Wall Street Journal*, quoted in “Obama: Maybe You’re ‘Better Off’ Taking Painkillers and Forgoing Surgery,” *Real Clear Politics Online Journal*, June 26, 2009, accessed May 14, 2018, [https://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2009/06/26/obama\\_maybe\\_youre\\_better\\_off\\_taking\\_painkillers\\_and\\_forgoing\\_surgery.html](https://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2009/06/26/obama_maybe_youre_better_off_taking_painkillers_and_forgoing_surgery.html).

After all, the image of God is gone. We are not special anymore.”<sup>15</sup> One could argue that this has been a creeping and incremental process since the 1950s; however, the issue is that this world has seen this “God-lessness” before in the last century, and culture is witnessing it now.<sup>16</sup>

If Christians are to fulfill the Great Commission per Christ’s exhortations, rebuttal to these arguments must be revitalized and brought to the forefront to get those persons to a point where evangelism can be undertaken.<sup>17</sup> Great Christian apologist G. C. Chesterton once quipped, “The problem with Christianity is not that it has been tried and found wanting, but that it has been found difficult, and left untried.”<sup>18</sup> Christians have the obligation per Scripture to bring non-believers the evidence so as to bring them to the Cross.<sup>19</sup>

Bringing America back to the Lord by offering training in apologetics, with this training being offered in the environs of Washington, DC, can effect change worldwide; however, apologetics must begin with each believer, which was the focus of main effort in this project.

### **Context**

McLean Bible Church (MBC), with 18,000 congregants and six campuses, lies in the heart of Metropolitan Washington, DC. It is home to people from many different nations (106), as well as a prominent seat of national thought and debate. MBC has been instrumental in church plants for Hispanic, Nepalese, Iranian, and especially Ethiopian

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<sup>15</sup> William D. Watkins, *The New Absolutes: How They Are Being Imposed on Us* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1996), 86-87.

<sup>16</sup> This issue is discussed at length in chap. 3 of this project.

<sup>17</sup> See chap. 2 of this project.

<sup>18</sup> Zacharias, *The Real Face of Atheism*, 117.

<sup>19</sup> The scriptural passages are discussed in chap. 2 of this project.

immigrants, which have also been conducive to making church plants in their respective countries. The congregation consists of leaders of foreign governments as well as United States Congressmen and US government agencies' heads.

Although apologetics has been preached by the former senior pastor in sermons in the past, there exists a need for a reinvigorated and strengthened apologetics program to assist Christians in defending their faith and making the underlying arguments as to Judeo-Christian traditions in defense. Secular thought, and especially scientific rationalism and humanism, has replaced many of the underpinnings of American traditions as promulgated from Washington, DC, as noted above in the background. As Rabbi David Lapin writes, "The overarching philosophy that fuels Leftist agenda is a ferocious determination to extirpate all religious influence in American public life."<sup>20</sup>

MBC is a strict biblically-inspired and Christ-centered church, and expository preaching is stressed, and until recently, interspersed with apologetics. MBC's mission statement is "Our vision is to impact lives with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, beginning with the greater Washington, DC area." "Mission" must begin in this church's context, and it is vital that apologetics be vigorously presented to plant the seeds of doubt in secularism, which in turn become the seeds of faith. Apologetics can bring people to a point where evangelism and belief will be fostered by the Holy Spirit.

Washington, DC's cultural context bears semblance to 50 AD Corinth and Rome, with money, prestige, men and women as "little gods," and want of earthly notoriety.<sup>21</sup> Rush Limbaugh, a conservative talk show host, constantly quips, "Washington, D.C. is Hollywood for un-attractive people"<sup>22</sup>; hence, there is a worldly need for star notoriety and popularity at the expense of principles. All these worldly

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<sup>20</sup> Daniel Lapin, *America's Real War* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1999), 60.

<sup>21</sup> Chap. 2 of this project references and details this notion in scriptural references.

<sup>22</sup> Heard on the "Rush Limbaugh Show" syndicated. Limbaugh makes this statement frequently as to politicians garnering "camera-time" for their own purposes.

notions are reinforced each day by this atmosphere. Many in our ministry context can influence the population: members of Congress, cabinet heads, heads of US and foreign governments, government agencies, and many representatives of other countries. Their attitudes can radiate throughout their respective spheres of influence. Arming them with the knowledge of Christian apologetics can effect attitudinal change.

### **Rationale**

A strong apologetics program can combat the scientific rationalism and secular humanism that is so unfortunately pervasive in this context. Additionally, a strong apologetics program guards the hearts of believers who are exposed every day to secularism. Technology, though it has eased burdens in this world, has also lessened the time Christians spend in reflective spiritual and eschatological thought.<sup>23</sup>

Science, particularly, has been unwilling to discuss anything outside what is referred to as the “Newtonian sphere,” even though the greatest scientists of the Enlightenment and before were Christians. Faraday, Boyle, Newton, Pascal, Kepler, and others’ theories constructed this “sphere”; however, their equivocation to their religious beliefs is dismissed as is their use of deductive scientific reasoning, that is, simply, “God made it, let’s see *why*.” Inductive scientific reasoning, or simply “how it works,” has replaced and moved this deductive approach to the side. “New Atheist” scientists, such as Richard Dawkins, physicist Lawrence Krauss, behavioral psychologist Michael Shermer (Editor of the atheist “Skeptic Magazine”), astrophysicist Neil DeGrasse Tyson, David Silverman (organizer of the 2012 *Rally for Reason*, mentioned above), and neuroscientist Sam Harris, are all seen on various media productions. They are vociferous in their rejection of a designer and routinely respond that “we know how it works, so we don’t need God.” The “God of the Gaps” theory is their foil, which apologist Doug Groothuis

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<sup>23</sup> This latter fact is discussed in using technology to apologetics advantage in chaps. 3 and 5 of this project as part of the overall strategy.

says is simply “invoking the supernatural instead of working out a sufficient naturalistic explanation.”<sup>24</sup> These thoughts *are* the context of Washington, DC, which sets the nation’s tone and oftentimes constructs laws based on populism rather than principles. Rejection of any notion of the supernatural also effects media’s “reality.” Moreover, it is the context in which our congregants live and work. Any reference to the Bible or any Judeo-Christian reference is shunned. That said, the most prominent issue for this context is in giving not only our congregants the arguments for defense of their faith but training for pastors in discussing opposing secular ideas, such as intelligent design, biblical inerrancy, archaeological evidence, and a host of other Judeo-Christian facts.

Christian apologist Timothy Paul Jones states very succinctly,

The strongest faith is a faith that knows not only *what* we believe but also *why* . . . how do you *know* that the Bible is God’s Word? Is it simply because the Bible claims to be inspired by God? Unless there’s a firmer foundation for the truth of Scripture than the Bible’s own claims about itself, the fact that ‘the Bible says it’ doesn’t settle anything.<sup>25</sup>

The average member of most congregations in America has difficulty with any defense of the Bible when confronting secularists, let alone state “why” they believe what they believe. “Why” can reinforce a believer’s waning faith and allow them to steadfastly reject the secular context. “Why” is the simplest question asked by skeptics and even believers. Children ask “why” incessantly! This is a realization of the need for apologetics training as commanded in Scripture.<sup>26</sup>

Other objections can include “slavery and genocide in the Bible” (a need for correct theological historical context); “miracles aren’t possible” (a need for the historical evidence and the possibility of the supernatural); “the Bible is copied from myths or is 100 years after the supposed events” (a need for historical-contextual evidence); “morals

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<sup>24</sup> Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011), 246.

<sup>25</sup> Timothy Paul Jones, *Conspiracies and the Cross: How to Intelligently Counter the Ten Most Popular Arguments against the Gospel of Jesus* (Lake Mary, FL: Frontline, 2012), 5-6.

<sup>26</sup> See chap. 2 of this project.

are relative” (a need for understanding moral duties and obligations and their basis); and “evolution and science already explain everything” (the need for science based on the evidence, not atheist scientific philosophy). Training and knowledge in basic apologetics matter as a pre-evangelistic pursuit.

Apologetics as a subject is not discussed in the churches in the vociferous manner that it should, perhaps leading to confusion from false anti-theological arguments amongst Christian congregations.

Rather than the simplicity of using a room in a government facility for a Bible study at lunch in Washington, DC, many pause as to the legality of it and to any possible

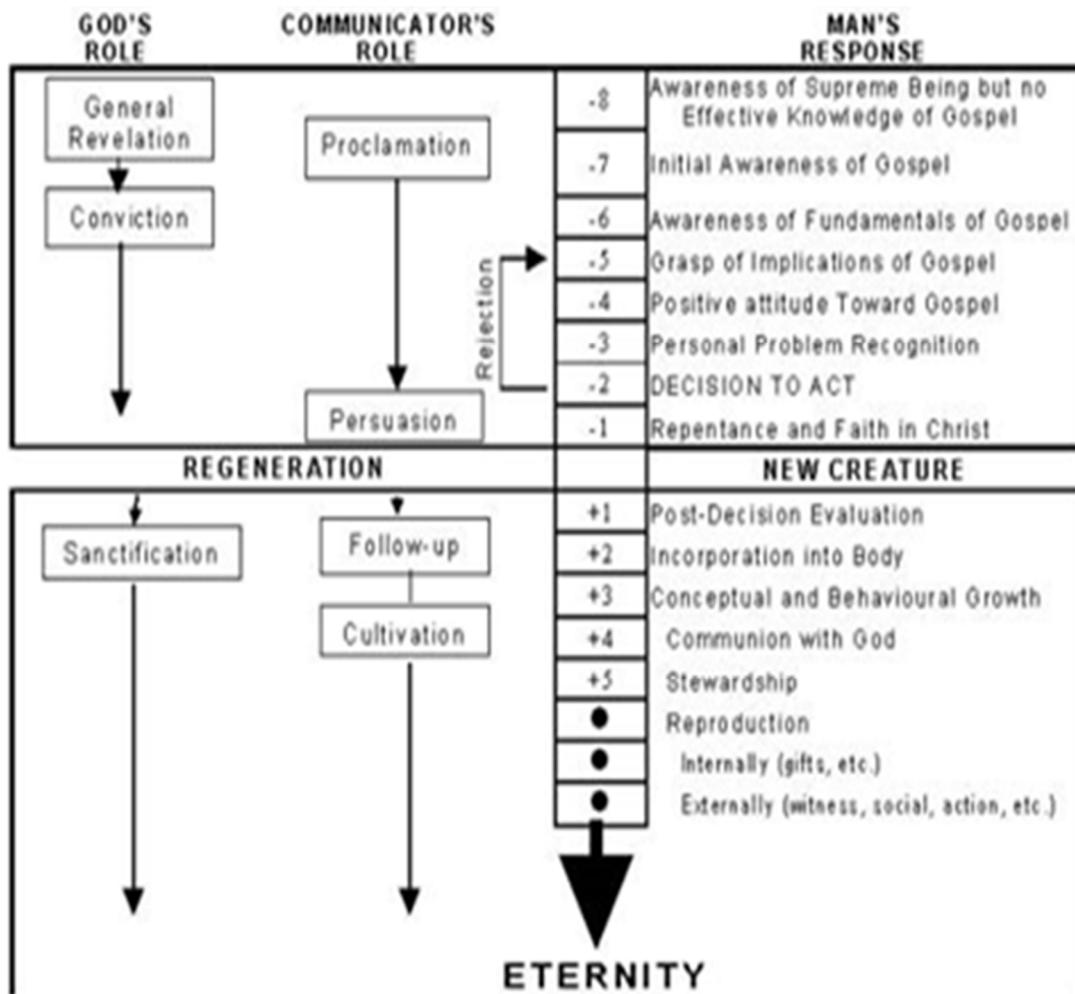


Figure 1. Engel Scale

retribution. Unfortunately, the “legality” of a Bible study becomes the “default question” which, itself, is not constitutionally founded.<sup>27</sup>

For those outside the Engel scale of evangelism (no belief or antagonistic anti-theism and/or passive atheism, see figure 1) or those who object to Christ due to scientific rationalism, there must be more emphasis on apologetics to bring them to, or within, the Engel scale where evangelism can be effected for conversion (see note on Engel scale).<sup>28</sup> Trained apologists must be available per Scripture.<sup>29</sup> They must be a church mainstay for refutation of the scientific rationalism that has pervaded contemporary society’s very “science-soaked” culture in the West, which began when God was taken from the schools.<sup>30</sup>

Many persons, if shown through apologetics evidence in archaeological, physical, and environmental science, as well as moral arguments and biblical inerrancy, can be brought to a point where the gospel may be seen as logical and the truth. A “seed” can be planted, as Paul discusses in 1 Corinthians 3:6-9. Apologetics, then, can be at least the thawing mechanism to then plant the seed through evangelistic engagement. Christian apologist Douglas Groothuis notes, “The claim that no one is argued into the Christianity

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<sup>27</sup> The false meme of “separation of church and state” is discussed in chap. 3 of this project.

<sup>28</sup> Dave Wheeler explains, “A missionary named James Engel wanted to depict a typical journey a person takes to conversion and after . . . if we understand roughly where a person (or a whole target group of people) stands spiritually on this scale, we can adjust the way we present the Gospel on this scale.” Dave Earley and David Wheeler, *Evangelism Is . . .* (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 81. Apologetics can lead people to this scale as well as reinforcing a believer’s faith by presenting “why” they believe the Gospel is true and why God exists.

<sup>29</sup> To be discussed in totality in chap. 2 of this project.

<sup>30</sup> The Supreme Court of the United States Case of Madelyn Murray O’Hair is discussed in chap. 3 of this project.

is simply false.”<sup>31</sup> The present context of Washington, DC, overall, demands approaches in evidentialism and the historicity of the Bible. Defense of Christianity is commanded in Scripture.<sup>32</sup>

One can liken creating a steadfast program in this high visibility environment to a counter-insurgency model called the ‘ink blot’ theory, where small areas start this process and it slowly “runs” to other geographical areas (discussed later). The apostle Paul’s approach in church planting in Asia Minor and modern Greece are of the same strategy as he purposefully planted churches in large urban settings along Roman lines of sea and road communication—centers of many different theologies and Greco-Roman philosophy. Paul’s educational background and patience in letting the Holy Spirit guide him helped him to contextualize his evangelism and brought the Word to the Gentiles of so many disparate backgrounds. Theologian George Ladd notes,

Paul, speaking to Jews in Jerusalem, claims to have been “brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel.” . . . Paul was also at home in the Greek world, and found his mission in extending the church throughout the Greco-Roman world . . . if he spent his boyhood in Tarsus, he would have become familiar with wandering cynic-stoic philosophers.<sup>33</sup>

In that light, this plan would not only train MBC’s congregation, but it would also train and lend a model to the other area churches. If the culture of the Washington, DC, area is exposed to what could be called “full-spectrum apologetics” (scientific, moral, Biblical inerrancy), secularists will be exposed, and even if they take it in a negative context, it is being implanted into the cultural dialogue. Christians should remember how many times Paul was opposed by those populations for many different reasons, but his persistence and travel exposed those people to arguments, for example, of Greek belief in transcendent powers being God, to which seeds were planted, and the

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<sup>31</sup> Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 29.

<sup>32</sup> More on the defense of Christianity is discussed in chap. 2 of this project.

<sup>33</sup> George Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1974), 398.

Holy Spirit had fertile ground. Consequently, given the transient nature of the Washington, DC, population, this strategy would have a multiplicative effect.

At MBC, evangelism outreach from to the DC community has been notable; however, apologetics have been relegated to insertion in sermons (which have been effective, but not comprehensive). There is no formal training program for leaders, local pastors, or volunteers who have tried to start classes. Apologetics classes at MBC have been in the form of volunteer-taught classes and were not well-attended nor resourced by the church. This point is not to smite efforts, as some of these men are highly educated in the field by their own rigorous study; however, apologetics training and awareness have not been formalized, taught, or promulgated by the teaching pastorate outside of sermons.

Evangelism can only be truly effective if the heart is opened, and in many cases, apologetics can “lead the brain” to accomplish this. Washington, DC, is a center of scientific practice, thought, and cultural implementation and infusion. Apologetics implemented and infused into this cultural center of America can assist in the spreading of “the ink blot,” a counter-insurgency tactic to be explained later.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to assess and increase the apologetics knowledge of the congregants at McLean Bible Church to possibly effect training in apologetics.

### **Goals**

Increasing the apologetics knowledge of the congregants at McLean Bible Church required four goals:

1. The first goal was to measure and increase the current apologetics knowledge of the congregants of McLean Bible Church.
2. The second goal was to compose a training lesson of three apologetics lessons citing the evidential apologetics in science, history, and archaeology.
3. The third goal was to deliver the apologetic lessons to increase the current apologetics knowledge of congregants of McLean Bible Church.

4. The fourth goal was to measure the impact of the apologetic lessons to the congregation.

### **Research Methodology**

To accomplish the goals and achieve the purpose of the project, the following methodology was used.

The first goal as to measure the current apologetics knowledge of the congregants of McLean Bible Church. Measurement were done using an electronic survey in a Likert form called “Qualtrics.”<sup>34</sup> These two survey forms were affixed to the apologetics lessons for congregants to immediately access. This software automatically collates answers and puts them into graphs for presentation. This goal was considered successfully met when a base metric of 50 congregants responded.

The second goal was to compose an “interrogative” training plan of three apologetics lessons citing the evidential and moral apologetics. Measures of Effectiveness (MOE) were to be collected and analyzed via the Likert form.<sup>35</sup>

The third goal was to deliver the apologetics lessons to effectively increase apologetics knowledge for congregants of McLean Bible Church.<sup>36</sup>

The fourth goal was to measure the impact of the apologetic lessons on the congregation using the aforementioned “Qualtrics” surveys, which were placed in the apologetics assessment e-mails. Again, this program automatically collated the answers and put them into tables for presentation. This goal was considered successfully met when adequate empirical evidence, at least 50 persons, responded to the pre- and post-survey.<sup>37</sup> The same methodology for the pre-survey applied to the post-survey.

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<sup>34</sup> This software was recommended by a PhD psychometrician.

<sup>35</sup> See appendix 1. All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

<sup>36</sup> See appendix 2.

<sup>37</sup> See appendix 1.

## **Limitations/Delimitations**

Four limitations applied to this project. First, the accuracy of the pre- and post-series surveys was dependent upon the willingness of the respondents to be honest about their knowledge and understanding of apologetics and how these short lessons can be effectively used for evangelism in the end. To mitigate this limitation, respondents were promised that their answers would remain nameless.

Second, the effectiveness of the training was limited by the willingness of respondents. If the participants did not read all the training lessons, then it would be difficult to measure how beneficial the training was. To mitigate this limitation, the surveys were administered over a fourteen-day period so as to gather enough empirical data for use.

Third, since this project occurred within a single church with four campuses, the results may not be generalizable to those outside this church; however, the structure could be applied.

Fourth, since the project occurred in the DC metro area, which is unique in many ways, the results may not be applicable to congregations in other rural locations; however, the structure and framework of this project is applicable to any context.

Two delimitations were placed on the project. The project was delimited to members of the MBC and delimited to apologetics in the context of Washington, DC.

## **Conclusion**

This project was simply part of the Great Commission in leveraging the apologetic tools and knowledge to enhance the success of it. Western culture at this juncture in history demands that militant atheism and secular humanism be challenged, courageously, but in a winsome manner. The outright rejection of Christianity by the secular scientific community demands that their propositions in rejection be brought to light and put into the forum of debate, which is scientific. Christians can no longer afford

to keep those bullied by scientific rationalism from having the Light shine upon their worldly “tents.” Apologetics training is the answer.

CHAPTER 2  
THE BIBLICAL MANDATES TO TEACH AND FOSTER  
APOLOGETICS TO ALL BELIEVERS FOR  
ASSISTANCE IN EVANGELISM

The Christian mandate for the Great Commission is commanded in Scripture. The following exegesis of Scriptures was selected for the evangelistic and apologetic mandates with commentaries from biblical and Christian scientific scholars.

**First Peter 3:14-16**

The biblical mandate for every Christian to be knowledgeable about *why* they believe is administered in many Scripture passages, and the most notable is 1 Peter 3:14-16, although verse 14 is also the lead-in to this passage as it exhorts grace in the face of a vociferous skeptic:

But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. (1 Pet 3:14-16)

In making clear these passages, it is prudent to first begin with verse 14 as a prelude. Schreiner notes of this verse,

Those who suffer for the sake of righteousness, those who endure opposition because of their zeal for what is good, are “blessed” (*makarioi*; see also 4:14). The blessing comes from God himself, showing that believers are beneficiaries when they are afflicted. In what sense are they blessed? Peter hardly could have meant that sufferings are themselves pleasant, for then, obviously, they would not be sufferings. He was almost certainly drawing on the Jesus tradition here, for Jesus himself taught in Matt 5:10–12 (cf. Luke 6:22–23) that those who suffer are blessed because of the eschatological reward they will receive.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary, vol. 37 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2003), 170-71.

The inevitable conflict that arises with skeptics is unavoidable, but Peter exhorts that all, like Christ, have suffered and will continue to suffer for Him and Christian beliefs. He also purports to an eschatological implication of focusing on the Light that Christians will reach as suffering is felt in this lifetime. R. M. Raymer explains, “To be ‘blessed’ in this context does not mean to ‘feel delighted’ but to be ‘highly privileged.’ Christians are not to be afraid of what men can do to them (cf. Matt. 10:28). Consequently, 1 Peter 3:14 concludes with a quotation from Isaiah 8:12 which, in context, is part of an exhortation to fear God rather than men.”<sup>2</sup> Fearing God rather than man can provide the moral certainty and stalwartness one needs in defending the gospel; however, that certainty allows for sincere compassion to whom the defense is given as one’s motive is to bring them to the Light, as well. Christians should “have no fear of them, nor be troubled,” as most times it is skeptics who actually fear the truth of the gospel, intellectually, but their heart cannot accept that their sin can be forgiven—they pine to remain a slave to it. Paul refers to this in Colossians 4:6 when he says, “Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.” Paul is asking evangelists to listen, first, to understand one’s context, but also that listening is love. People pay a great deal to psychiatrists for “listening.” Listening can allow for the skeptic to emotionally “vent,” which allows for the apologist to empathize with their context. Verse 15a begins, “But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy.” The great John Wesley states, “Have a Holy fear and a full trust in his wise providence: the hope—Of eternal life, with meekness—For anger would hurt your cause as well as your soul; and fear—A filial fear of offending God, and a jealousy over yourselves, lest ye speak amiss.”<sup>3</sup> Wesley makes the point from his vast missionary experience that grace must lead any

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<sup>2</sup> R. M. Raymer, “1 Peter,” in J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 2:850.

<sup>3</sup> John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, 4th ed. (New York: T. Soule and T. Mason, 1818), 640.

engagement; whereas, the Christian cause is just in Christ and the Holy Spirit will lead evangelizers in these endeavors—engage in meekness, no matter how vociferous the skeptic. Raymer adds, “Christians should overcome fear by sanctifying (*hagiasate*, ‘make separate from others’) Christ as their Lord (*kyrion*).”<sup>4</sup> In reference to the “heart,” Thomas Schreiner writes,

We should not understand the heart as our inner and private lives, which are inaccessible to others. The heart is the origin of human behavior (cf. 1:22; 3:4), and from it flows everything people do. Hence, setting apart Christ as Lord in the heart is not merely a private reality but will be evident to all when believers suffer for their faith. The inner and outer life are inseparable, for what happens within will inevitably be displayed to all, especially when one suffers.<sup>5</sup>

Schreiner’s notation references the Christian walk. Many skeptics are brought to at least a curiosity of why believers have the peace that they have in the face of adversity. Many a believer has been told by a skeptic, “I want what you have.” Adversarial approaches and sharp retorts to skeptics can result in rejection, though one may argue that “we leave a stone in their shoe.” Believers already know their eschatology; whereas, most skeptics even avoid the thought from fear. Grace matters, and listening while praying for that person and knowing that the Holy Spirit will lead evangelizers renders confidence. Second Timothy 2:25 references these remarks as Paul states, “Correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth.” The Christian position here on earth is to bring even unbelievers to a knowledge of Christ. Second Peter 3:15b refers to the intellectual knowledge needed: “Always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.” Scholars differ on whether Peter had any philosophical or legal arguments in mind. Schreiner notes, “What Peter emphasized is that they were to be prepared to provide a “defense” (NRSV, *apologia*—rendered “answer” by NIV) to those who ask about the Christian faith. The word “defense”

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<sup>4</sup> Raymer, “1 Peter,” 850.

<sup>5</sup> Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 173-74.

suggests to some scholars a reference to formal court cases in which believers responded to legal accusations.”<sup>6</sup> Craig Keener states, “The ‘defense’ (NASB, NSRV; the common translation ‘answer’ is too weak) implies especially (though probably not only) the image of a legal defense before a court, given ‘judgement’ and execution in the context (4:5-6).”<sup>7</sup> Given both views, it is both. While the apologetic knowledge of *why* Christians believe for skeptics is important (and being mindful of Peter’s exhortations to Jews), God was looking forward to that time of extreme persecution as well, evidenced in the later day legal engagements before the Emperor per early church apologists Quadratus, Aristides, Athenagoras, and Justin Martyr as well as lawyer Tertullian. These men had to answer scurrilous charges, such as cannibalism and polygamy. N. T. Wright notes, “Athenagoras’ own *Apology* is a defence of the Christians against what are already standard accusations, and the beginnings of a reasoned explanation of just who is this one God whom Christians worship, over and against the follies of paganism.”<sup>8</sup> Edgar and Oliphint explain further that “the first was the charge of atheism; the second involved the so-called Thyestean banquets, or cannibalism; the third was Oedipean intercourse, or incest.”<sup>9</sup> Also an issue was the Roman form of abortion, called exposure, where unwanted children were left in fields to die—many Christians rescued them.

Mentionable, also, was the need to defeat heretical doctrine, such as Marcionism and Docetism, and of course the Gnostic gospels, later.<sup>10</sup> While Peter’s

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<sup>6</sup> Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 174.

<sup>7</sup> Craig Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 694.

<sup>8</sup> N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of The Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 503-4.

<sup>9</sup> William K. Edgar and K. Scott Oliphint, *Christian Apologetics Past and Present* (Wheaton, IL: Crossways, 2009), 1:68.

<sup>10</sup> Everett Ferguson explains, “Marcion rejected the Old Testament [OT] and issued his own New Testament . . . Jesus Christ was not the Messiah predicted in the OT but a revelation of God . . . Christ was not born but simply appeared; he only seemed to suffer and he raised himself from the dead.” Everett Ferguson, “Marcion,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. W. A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker,

defense was aided by his short historical distance and eyewitness testimony, later scientific apologetics were never pondered as they are currently.<sup>11</sup> In summary, Schreiner notes,

The exhortation here is instructive, for Peter assumed that believers have solid intellectual grounds for believing the gospel. The truth of the gospel is a public truth that can be defended in the public arena. This does not mean, of course, that every Christian is to be a highly skilled apologist for the faith. It does mean that every believer should grasp the essentials of the faith and should have the ability to explain to others why they think the Christian faith is true.<sup>12</sup>

Peter's reference "to the hope that is in you" is an obvious reference to the Holy Spirit, which should be a believer's guide in all matters. When Christians are imbued with the Holy Spirit, He lives believer's lives *for* the believer; hence, the believer must have the strength and wisdom to let Him do so. Peter's last phrase of "yet do it with gentleness and respect" is a repetition in exhortation and emphasis of the need for Grace. Verse 16 renders again the need for the Christian "walk" in "having a good conscience." The peace Christians have must be notable to the unbeliever. Attacks must be met with Grace "so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame." I. H. Marshall provides an excellent summation:

It is this gentle behavior that excites opprobrium from non-Christians. But now they are puzzled by the way in which the Christians respond to their slander, and the hoped-for result is that they will be ashamed of their earlier attitudes. Peter says that the demeanor of Christians on trial for their faith should make those who formerly jeered at them think again as they are confronted by their gracious attitudes. Possibly he is thinking of the way in which persecutors will be ashamed at the Last Judgment when they realize that the people whom they despised are honored by God. More likely he has in mind a change of heart by the persecutors here in this life.<sup>13</sup>

In summary of these three verses per current Western context, the basis of defense is now extended to the scientific rationalism that is prevalent in society; however,

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2001), 735. Docetism also denied the humanity of Christ. G. L. Borchert writes, "Gnosticism (is) the product of Greek philosophy and Christianity [heretical]. . . . For instance, after detailing Gnostic heretics, Tertullian announces, 'What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church.'" G. L. Borchert, "Gnosticism," in Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 489.

<sup>11</sup> Many of the scientific apologetic arguments are discussed in chap. 3 of this project.

<sup>12</sup> Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 174, 175.

<sup>13</sup> I. H. Marshall, *1 Peter*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), s.v., 1 Pe 3:15, Logos Bible Software.

Peter’s remonstrations of all believers to adhere to Christian principles in the face of antagonists, skeptics, and those seeking must be flavored with salt, no matter what type of apologetics (scientific, evidential, moral, cumulative case) believers are using for that unbelieving person’s or persons’ context. Listening, praying during encounters, and letting the Holy Spirit be manifest in conversations is still the key, even if first encounters fail. He will do the work. Conversion, ultimately, is His.

### **First Corinthians 9:19-23**

The apostle Paul was, through the Holy Spirit, a masterful contextual preacher. As a former Special Warfare operator who spent many years teaching to foreign military entities and later as an intelligence operator, I can attest to the need for socio-cultural and historical readings of those targeted audiences. No two audiences are ever the same, and the dynamics of each audience change with time. First Corinthians 9:19-23 exemplifies this assertion.

Verse 19 reads, “For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them.” Paul is reminding the audience that he was a Roman citizen to emphasize that he is making his being a servant from free will, not being bound by anyone to preach monetarily or legally. It also derives the sense of the freedom that Christians enjoy in the Spirit vice the “world.” R. H. Lenski notes of Paul’s past and his conversion,

“Free from all men”—what a weight these few words carry! Paul had broken with his entire past, with his own nation, and was not understood by many of his fellow believers. He had learned to endure envy and hate, to face danger and persecution, to look death in the face again and again—alone, depending only on his Lord. He had unlearned completely to bow to the opinions and the will of men. He is free, he enjoys the whole of Christian freedom, he is wholly sure of himself, he is dependent on no man, he is proud with a sacred pride, unyielding to the demands of any man.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1963), 375.

Lenski's words about Paul ring true for me. Freedom from men's opinions and trust in Christ and the Holy Spirit have freed me from those bonds. What matters is allowing the Holy Spirit to lead.

Lenski continues with respect to this new "kind" of servitude to men:

The thought itself is highly paradoxical: on the one hand, to be free from all men; then, to be bound to all men. Luther had caught Paul's secret when he wrote regarding the liberty of a Christian man: "A Christian man is a free lord over all things and subject to nobody. A Christian man is a ministering servant in all things and subject to everybody." Yet Paul's paradox must be properly understood: when he made himself a slave to all men he did this of his own accord, he did it freely; it was the voluntary act of a free man: "Being free, I made myself a slave."<sup>15</sup>

His act of voluntary servitude in this matter "(to) win more of them" is a Christian act, where his aim is to show how Christians must be subservient to the Great Commission. Anthony Thiselton adds,

Paul explicates his principles of "nothing to hinder the path for the gospel" by using the positive image of doing everything he can, including putting himself into slavery in a certain sense (i.e., certainly restricting his own options) in order to gain or to win (κερδαίνω) all the more people for the gospel of Christ. The missionary background of winning disciples for Jesus Christ occurs in Matt 18:15, although it derives from the commercial background of gaining an asset or making a profit . . . the permanent and eternal effects of this "gain" enhance Paul's notion of what is at issue in voluntary restraint for the greater good.<sup>16</sup>

Craig Keener makes an extremely cogent point here in Paul's use of "slave":

Rhetoric valued adapting to one's audience, but the elite disdained those who were too flexible as fickle demagogues tried to please the masses; they considered such demagogues "slaves." Still, some valued being 'slaves' or 'pleasing' others if it kept civil stability. Paul borrows the language of populist politics, undoubtedly offending defenders of the aristocratic element in Corinth.<sup>17</sup>

There is little doubt that Paul used "slave" as a rhetorical device to not only convey his wanting to act freely, but also, given his tongue lashing to the Corinthians throughout 1 Corinthians as a whole, to make them feel some humility.

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<sup>15</sup> Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 374.

<sup>16</sup> A. C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2000), 701.

<sup>17</sup> Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 479.

The next verse, 20a, states, “To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews.” Paul was a Jew, and he had prized the law and Pharisaical hierarchy before his conversion. In effect, he was a zealot for Judaism—an extremist to do the bidding of the Law as other men saw it. He reverts to his knowledge of Judaism so as to convey his new-found faith, which arises from the Old Testament texts and laws, and there is little doubt that typographical inferences would have been forefront in his conversations. With this is his first lesson, or example, of *how* one speaks of the gospel within the contextual variances of a given audience. Thiselton notes, “In his relation to the Jews, whom he sought to convert, he [Paul] behaved in Jewish fashion observing, e.g., Jewish customs (Acts 16:3; 21:26). Paul is not alluding to behavior among Jewish Christians, but the Jews whom he is seeking to win.”<sup>18</sup> Thiselton’s last sentence is a reminder that Paul was probably mindful of the “Judaizers” that had harassed him throughout his journeys—those newly converted Jewish Christians who sought to make Gentiles abide by Mosaic law before accepting Christ—a problem he addressed in other passages and other letters such as Galatians. Verse 20b states, “To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law.” This passage again points to Paul’s submissiveness through the Holy Spirit to at least a recognition of the laws and actions to establish rapport with “legalists” and explain to them that the works of legalism are not in keeping with faith in Christ. J. A. Davis well explains,

But given independence from all, Paul has freely subjugated himself again; not to their support, but to their way of life, in order to win them to faith. Though no longer bound by the notion of the Law as a covenant enabling maintenance of the righteousness necessary to fellowship with God, Paul is nonetheless willing to follow many of the customs that are indifferent to one justified by faith (see also Rom. 3:21–22; Acts 18:18; 21:26) when to do so means an opportunity to gain entrance for the gospel. Conversely, among those for whom the law was no guide, Paul is willing, to the extent permitted to him by “Christ’s law” (Mark 12:28–34; Luke 10:25–37; Gal. 6:2), to loose himself from divine Law as a point of reference if this leads to the fulfillment of the gospel’s objective. And so, at length, his reasons now plain, Paul repeats his readiness to abide by the standards of the weak, or even

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<sup>18</sup> Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 702.

to become all things to all men if, in this way, it becomes possible for him to bring about their continuing allegiance to the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. For in the blessing of their entrance into a growing faith, Paul, as their apostle, also shares.<sup>19</sup>

The next verse, 21, states, “To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law.” The passage is an obvious reference to the Gentiles in the audience, as well as a possible appeal to any pagans. Alan Johnson states succinctly,

Among those not having the law, or “outside the law” (NRSV), that is, Gentiles, Paul adopts Gentile cultural ways (1 Cor 9:21). But to avoid being misunderstood as an advocate of unrestrained moral freedom, Paul adds that *he is not free from God’s law* (not lawless with respect to God) but . . . under Christ’s law. . . . To be under Christ’s law is at the same time to be under God’s law (translate ‘governed according to Christ’s law’). . . . Paul adopts Gentile ways to be a servant to the Gentiles to win them for Christ.<sup>20</sup>

One may mistakenly argue for a syncretic meaning in these passages in Paul’s appeal to all forms of socio-cultural differences, but they fail at remembering Paul’s exhortation at *remaining in Christ* throughout—not veering from Christ for compatibilism.

The next two verses, 22-23, state, “To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.” When Paul speaks of weakness, he is entering into empathy with those Christians who are struggling. Paul is advocating that “weakness” in any sin must be then a reliance upon Christ and acceptance of the Holy Spirit to live their lives for them, which is true strength in the abandonment of their own physicality for strength. He enters into their weakness—their problems—and exhorts that strength will come through Christ. Lenski notes,

To them Paul condescends as if he, too, were “weak” by entering into their difficulties, avoiding offense, helping them to become strong. The term “weak” has a fixed meaning in connections such as this: weak and undeveloped in knowledge and in faith, Paul does not need to add: “yet being not weak myself,” for between the

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<sup>19</sup> J. A. Davis, “1-2 Corinthians,” in *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Walter Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 3:974.

<sup>20</sup> Alan F. Johnson, *1 Corinthians*, The New IVP Commentary Series, vol. 7 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 147-48.

weak and the strong there is no such difference as between Jews and Christians or Gentiles and Christians. Once more we have the refrain: “in order that I might gain the weak.” We now see why Paul selects the verb “gain” when he writes this refrain. It is wider in force than “save.” The weak are saved, indeed, because they are Christians, but they can be gained for greater strength, for an advance in knowledge and in faith.<sup>21</sup>

Paul is a master of empathy while remaining truthful. There is little doubt that his ability to listen and empathize with all, especially given his past sins and adherence to legalism, made the “gain” of those who did not understand from where true strength comes. Alan Johnson quotes Anthony Thiselton:

As Anthony Thiselton remarks, “he does not say that he became an idolater to idolaters or an adulterer to adulterers. But in matters that he did not see as ethically or theologically essential or implied by the gospel, Paul believed in flexibility.” . . . Johnson then quotes Hooker (1996): “Christians have looked for other models for ministry—and those models have tended to be about status and authority, instead of about kenosis? Paul, I think, would claim that when that happens, men and women have misunderstood, not simply Christian ministry, but the Gospel itself.”<sup>22</sup>

Hooker’s quote is indeed demonstrative of the need for witness among Christians. Being lofty and legalistic is exactly how some clergy, especially the Roman Catholic Church, approach their congregations, and it is a failed strategy. Pastors and Christians must have empathy but must also lift their fellow man to the Light and peace of Christ, not merely state legalisms. Christians do, however, need to state the truth, no matter the consequences, but grace in exhortation is a must.

In summation of these passages, Craig Ott notes of Paul’s cultural contextualization,

[Missiologist] Dean Flemming sums up Paul’s guidelines on contextualization in 1 Corinthians 8-10: “Because no single cultural expression is ultimate, the gospel is free to come to life in a plurality of cultures and circumstances. Yet because God values all cultures and because the Gospel cannot be heard in the abstract apart from a cultural home, God must speak to the Jew as a Jew, to the Greek as a Greek, to the Filipino as a Filipino, to the Gen-Xer as a Gen-Xer. . . . Our articulation of the Gospel must be culture specific, but not culture bound.” . . . Jesus and the apostles tailor the Gospel message to address different groups of people.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 379-80.

<sup>22</sup> Johnson, *1 Corinthians*, 148-49.

<sup>23</sup> Craig Ott and Stephen J. Strauss, *Encountering Theology of Mission: Biblical Foundations*,

## First Corinthians 15: 1-8, 15-19

First Corinthians 15 is an essential chapter in the Bible for the centrality of *what* and *why* Christians believe. The cross and Christ's Resurrection are the central points of Christianity. Defending its historicity is vital for each Christian. Paul, a hired assassin of the Sanhedrin, was given all his knowledge during his encounter with Christ in the desert on his way to Damascus to persecute and/or kill believers. Paul's conversion is testament to his unrelenting defense of the cross and Christ. First Corinthians 15 is so vitally important to the Resurrection of Christ and to Christianity as Paul, himself, states in verse 14, "If Christ be not raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain." First Corinthians 15 is the first written recording of Christ's Resurrection, verified by not only Paul's witness but also by his meetings with the apostles Peter and James. In a historical context, one can note that when Paul did speak with the apostles James and Peter for two weeks, Galatians 2:6 states, "And they added nothing to me." This is important for the concomitant verification that Paul had indeed received, and was teaching, the true gospel. Noted Christian authors and expositors D. A. Carson and Douglas Moo state, "1 Corinthians 15 constitutes not only the earliest written list of the witnesses of Jesus' resurrection but the most important New Testament treatment of the nature of the Resurrection."<sup>24</sup>

In the first verses of this epistle in chapter 15, Paul states, "Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain" (vv.1-2). Noted here is the historical fact of Paul's preaching, *long before* this letter was written, during his second missionary journey. Also, other leaders had unfortunately divided some of the church in whom they "followed." Paul reminds the

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*Historical Developments, and Contemporary Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 273.

<sup>24</sup> D. A. Carson and Douglas Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 450.

Corinthians that it was he who brought the gospel message to them long before, not Apollos, nor Peter (who had visited), and not their own leaders, and immediately questions the authenticity of their conversion. Was this simply “group-think” or a “fad,” he asks? Were they not able to remember his own conversion witness? Theologian F. F. Bruce adds, “In addition to a party at Corinth which followed Apollos and another which claimed Paul as its leader, there was yet another whose members declared, ‘I follow Cephas’—that is, Peter.”<sup>25</sup> Although Paul makes no critical remarks about either Apollos or Peter, it is apparent that he had to reestablish his mission and return them to the original message that may have been skewed. He exhorts: Follow Christ, not men.

In verses 3-5, Paul states, “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.” Paul reminds the audience that he received the gospel and authentication on what was being preached in every church. Timothy Paul Jones notes,

If Paul had altered this testimony between the time he first taught the Corinthians and the moment he wrote this letter, the members of the Corinthian church would have noticed the changes, but Paul hadn’t changed his message in the least . . . and it was the same message that Paul repeated in city after city as he crisscrossed the Roman Empire.<sup>26</sup>

The cross and the resurrection are the central precepts of Christianity—“of first importance”—without them, Christianity is fruitless. It is interesting to note that Paul emphasizes Peter (Cephas) in this passage as he had been there during his absence, which adds to historicity as does his own verification of his conversion in “what I also received.” Also, Paul gives a wonderful clue of “according to the Scriptures,” which would indicate that in some respect, Scripture was being recorded in some form, whether in wax tablets or some other media form, as preached by the church in Jerusalem. Christian historian

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<sup>25</sup> F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (New York: Doubleday, 1971), 323.

<sup>26</sup> Timothy Paul Jones, *How We Got the Bible* (Torrance, CA: Rose Publishing, 2015), 72.

Gary Burge notes, “We should also remember that Paul ‘wrote’ his letters using an amanuensis (secretary), who would have taken dictation on wax tablets before transcribing the work onto papyrus. Thus, we are more surprised by the document’s cohesion than its multi-colored contents.”<sup>27</sup> Typographically, “according to the Scripture” would have also referred to Isaiah 52-53 and many of the predictions of the Old Testament. Craig Keener notes,

The Scriptures probably refer to an assortment of texts, such as Psalm 16 and Isaiah 53:12. If the ‘third day’ is also in view in ‘according to the Scriptures,’ perhaps it alludes to Hosea 6:2, Jonah 1:17 or other texts, although Paul may include the phrase simply to say, according to Jewish custom, that Jesus was raised before He could ‘see corruption.’ (Psalm 16:10).<sup>28</sup>

J. P. Lange concurs with Keener’s notation:

The testimony here referred to bears primarily on the fact of His having risen (Ps. 16:10; Acts 13:34 ff.; Isa. 53:8–10 ff.), including also the time of His rising which is hinted at in the type of Jonah (comp. Matt. 12:40; 16:4). But this type, as well as the prophecy in Isa. 53:9, allows also of a reference to the burial (and) the death and the resurrection of Christ that are sustained upon Scripture testimony.<sup>29</sup>

The early credal form in these verses, which was carried by oral tradition to the latter church and councils, is a verification in authenticity. Walter Elwell states, “The creed (whose elements are all joined to one another by the repetition of the word *that*) is now supplemented by addition.”<sup>30</sup> Noted also is the use of *then* in credal form in the passages which cannot be over-emphasized as it authenticates oral tradition.

In the next three verses, Paul then reiterates the number of eyewitnesses other than the apostles, especially Peter: “Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared

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<sup>27</sup> Gary Burge, Lynn Cohick, and Gene Green, *The New Testament in Antiquity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 307-8.

<sup>28</sup> Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 491.

<sup>29</sup> J. P. Lange, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 310.

<sup>30</sup> Davis, “1-2 Corinthians,” 981.

also to me” (vv. 6-8). Verse 6 gives the numbers of brothers (500) who saw Christ as risen, and it can be surmised from the cultural background that at least twice that number would have been eyewitnesses given that women and children were not counted. He exhorts that many of these eyewitnesses are still alive, “so examine it for yourself.” Keener notes,

Paul’s purpose in appealing to witnesses still alive may be to invite his readers to check his facts if they doubt his words. We may safely rule out the suggestion that the resurrection appearances were mass hallucinations, because mass hallucinations of a demonstrably physical person is virtually unparalleled in history. (Were this evidence being cited for a war, about which we often take the word of a single ancient author, or any other event in history, few today would think to deny it.)<sup>31</sup>

Verse 7 reiterates that he appeared to James, and James had thought that his brother had been delusional; however, after Christ’s appearance to James, he became one of the leaders in the church in Jerusalem and was eventually martyred for what he saw and subsequently preached. Verse 8 again reminds the audience of his own witness, and the phrase “as to one untimely born, He appeared also to me” demarcates the *separate* eye-witnessing of Christ apart from all other testimonies. Again, the creedal form is important for historicity as well as Paul’s *receiving* it, in addition, from believers in Damascus. Craig Blomberg cites from atheist New Testament scholar, Gerd Ludemann:

Ludemann explains that the heart of this creed must have been established by the time of Paul’s own conversion, which had to have been within two to three years of Jesus’ death, in light of the sum total of New Testament data. But that information was passed along to Paul in Damascus, a distance from Jerusalem, so a longer period of time would have been needed for the early Christian leaders to formulate the foundational, creedal elements of their fledgling faith and spread the word to places as far away as Syria that these were the truths to be taught to new converts. Ludemann persuasively argues, therefore, that belief in Christ’s bodily resurrection must have emerged in a Jewish context *within one to two years after Jesus’ death*. This argument alone obliterates many theories of stories of Jesus’ resurrection being modeled on Greco-Roman myths and emerging only after Christianity was well-entrenched throughout the empire generations or more, later.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 492.

<sup>32</sup> Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the New Testament* (Nashville: B & H, 2016), 697.

Noted apologist Gary Habermas uses 1 Corinthians 15 as one of the primary defenses of the historicity of the main tenets of Christ and His resurrection. He supports Ludemann's notation and creedal form when he states,

Several factors mark this as an ancient creed that was part of the earliest traditions of the Christian Church and that predate the writings of Paul. In fact, many critical scholars hold that Paul received it from the disciples Peter and James while visiting them in Jerusalem three years after his conversion. If so, Paul learned it within five years of Jesus' crucifixion and from the disciples themselves. At a minimum, we have source material that dates within two decades of the alleged event of Jesus' Resurrection and comes from a source that Paul thought was reliable. Dean John Rogers of Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry comments, 'This is the sort of data that historians drool over.'<sup>33</sup>

In addition to Paul's learning this information from Christ, and from the believers in Damascus, many of them eye-witnesses, he verifies it once more with the Apostles. It should be remembered, also, that James had thought his brother, Jesus, to be mentally ill before his own conversion in witnessing Him. James was martyred by the Sanhedrin for his belief (Acts 12). Apologist Timothy Paul Jones again stipulates, "There is clear evidence in Paul's letter to the Corinthians that the authors of the New Testament repeated and wrote the same testimonies they received. When they composed letters and Gospels, these authors drew from a rich range of oral testimonies and teachings from the people who had seen the Lord."<sup>34</sup> Apologist Michael Licona verifies Jones, "In 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, we find very early tradition about the Resurrection of Jesus, the contents of which can be traced with a high degree of probability to the Jerusalem apostles."<sup>35</sup> Acts 15, which documents the Council of Jerusalem, again solidifies the teachings of Paul as being correct from what he had been given by both Christ and the Apostles, and eschews the "Judaizers"

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<sup>33</sup> Gary Habermas and Michael Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004), 52.

<sup>34</sup> Jones, *How We Got the Bible*, 72.

<sup>35</sup> Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010), 337.

who preceded or followed him throughout his missionary journeys. “Judaizers” exhorted Gentiles to follow Mosaic law if they were to truly become Christians, which is false.

The next verses, 15-19, state,

We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom He did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

The emphasis by Paul in these passages is to the bodily resurrection, appealing not only to Jewish Christians but to Gentiles as well. Anthony Thiselton explains,

The first *refutatio* (15:12–19) begins to explain the dire consequences of denying the resurrection: If the resurrection of the dead is in principle impossible, how could Christ have been raised (15:12–14, 16)? Paul then uses deliberative rhetoric to underline the disadvantages or (here) disastrous consequences of such a denial: faith is empty; the apostles are false witnesses; there is no release from sin; dead believers are lost (15:15–19).<sup>36</sup>

In essence, Paul confronts those who are merely following the church without truly being believers in the centrality of Christ and His resurrection. Charles Barrett notes,

If Christian life means simply hoping in Christ during the present life, it is indeed but a poor shadow of itself, and Christians have lost both their present enjoyment of eternal life, and the future to which they look. But Paul says more than this: not merely that they are pitiable, but that they are the most pitiable of all men. It may be that this is rhetorical exaggeration, intended vividly to depict the wretched state of those who are suddenly reduced to the same level as that of their fellow-mortals and fellow-sinners. Such rhetoric would not be un-Pauline, or unmeaning.<sup>37</sup>

Apologet John Feinberg stresses the Resurrection’s centrality:

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is no minor or nonessential doctrine of the Christian faith. We cannot abandon it and still have true, biblical Christianity. Like the doctrines of the Trinity and the hypostatic union of Christ, the doctrine of Christ’s resurrection is unique to Christianity—no other religion has such a doctrine and none of them needs it.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1177.

<sup>37</sup> C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Black’s New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1968), 350.

<sup>38</sup> John S. Feinberg, *Can You Believe It’s True: Christian Apologetics in a Modern and Postmodern Era* (Wheaton, IL: Crossways, 2013), 406.

Many in the skeptic community have fostered the idea that resurrection stories had been commonplace in the pre-Christian world in myths. Gary Habermas, in debating *Skeptic Magazine* editor Tim Callahan, references ancient documents in that there were no resurrection stories in pagan myth nor Greek and Roman mythology until well into the second and fourth centuries AD. Callahan could not offer any documented evidence other than vase paintings, which still had no resurrection stories associated.<sup>39</sup>

In disputation of the Christian movement as myth, Craig Blomberg adds,

Had the gospel first emerged in Athens and Rome and after a generation, this scenario [of gospel as myth] might have certain elements of plausibility to it. Bodily resurrection was rarely countenanced in the pre-Christian Greco-Roman world; whereas, except among the Sadducees, it was the norm for the Jews. One could then envision the story of a “spiritual resurrection” being told repeatedly and over time morphing into the account of a an increasingly bodily nature, as the gospel left Greek and Roman circles and took root in Jewish ones. But, of course, that is exactly backwards from the actual sequence of events.<sup>40</sup>

Apologists should emphasize that no other religion has as its leader someone who claimed to be the Son of God. No other religion has nearly an entire people, Jews, rail against the prophecies in their own texts that showed Christ’s coming, and Paul emphasized this in all his letters, as does Stephen in Acts 7. John 5:46 recalls Christ saying, “For if you believed in Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote about me.” Some other religions claim divine inspiration, and other religions have some of the same tenets espoused by Christianity; however, believers must exhort that all people are made in the image of God. What is meant by this? Apologists can refer to the distinctiveness of the human race in that all humans are endowed with a sense of conscience, consciousness of one’s self and surroundings, the ability to study that and think about God’s creation all around us all, and a sense of justice—it is witness to God’s creation. Christians call this General Revelation. Therefore, an apologist can point to some truths in each religion, but,

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<sup>39</sup> Lee Strobel, Gary Habermas, and Tim Callahan, “Historian vs Atheist: Is Jesus A Knock-Off of Pagan Gods?,” 2005, accessed February 29, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HCqaVSQkFdQ>.

<sup>40</sup> Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the New Testament*, 699-700.

the whole truth is found in Christianity. Christ also proclaims that He is the Way, and following Him is the only way to the narrow path to eternal life. Not all of God’s creation in man are children of God—only those who accept Christ and the Holy Spirit are, and there is the difference. This is the essence of Paul’s preaching in 1 Corinthians 15—one must truly believe in those creeds mentioned in the passages. Christians worship a living Savior; whereas, all other religions’ leaders are dead.

Lastly, and for historicity, most importantly, eye-witness testimony is crucial for ancient history and for the Bible, and Paul’s list is perhaps the most succinct comprehensive list in Scripture. As Richard Bauckham notes, “The historians’ preference for eyewitness reports or their own eyewitness observation was justified by the well-known saying of Heraclitus, quoted by Thucydides (1.73.2) and Polybius (12.7.1) in the form ‘Eyes are surer witnesses than ears’ . . . and by Herodotus (1.8) and Lucian (*Hist. Conscr.* 29).”<sup>41</sup> Christ and the Christian movement were all mentioned in Roman history, most notably by Roman historians Thallus, Tacitus, Suetonius, and Josephus.<sup>42</sup> These *extra-ordinary* events were forefront in the memories of not only Romans but all Christians and the apostles. Bauckham further notes, “We must be aware of a historical methodology that prejudices inquiry against exceptionality in history and is biased toward the leveling down of the extraordinary to the ordinary.”<sup>43</sup> Paul’s listing of the eyewitnesses is what former atheist and police detective J. Warner Wallace calls “the chain of custody” in eyewitness testimony. He states,

Paul relied on his status as an eyewitness. . . . Paul wrote to many of them and identified himself as an apostle and as someone who could testify as an eye-witness. . . . [It] was the text written by apostolic eye-witness . . . or by someone who at least had access to one or more of the eye-witnesses (e.g., Mark and Luke). Only the

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<sup>41</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2006), 406.

<sup>42</sup> See Josh D. McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 51-56.

<sup>43</sup> Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 506.

accounts of the original eye-witnesses were given serious consideration, and all the Gospels have always been understood as a set of eyewitness accounts.<sup>44</sup>

Again, apologists should emphasize Paul's travel to Jerusalem, within two to three years of the Resurrection, to meet Peter and James for corroboration of Christ's teachings. First Corinthians 15 is one of the most important chapters in the Bible for apologetics as it comes from not only an eye-witness, but these verses document, clearly, the eye-witnesses' testimony of much of the Christian movement in a very close historical distance to the events. Few other ancient documents can match this historicity.

### **Second Corinthians 10: 1-6**

Second Corinthians 10:1-6 begins with Paul's admonishment in his letter to the Corinthians, but then shows that "meekness" must be adhered to in presenting the truths, to which he had previously given them a rather harsh "tongue-lashing" as disobedience and turmoil had rocked the church at Corinth. This rebuke would be akin to a parental reprimand followed by *why* one was castigated, and *what for*, for understanding how to move forward. One can almost hear the somewhat nervous chuckle in the audience in the opening verse which reads, "I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away!" (v. 1). C. K. Barrett notes, "Paul's humbleness is not servility but part, a necessary part, of his service of the humble Christ; thus it is precisely by the meekness and gentleness of Christ that he begs his readers not to force him to adopt a different attitude, which may become necessary, and yet at the same time will obscure the Gospel."<sup>45</sup> Verse 2 further explains this "parental attitude" of not wishing further confrontation, and he comes as a consoling witness in "meekness": "I beg of you that when I am present I may not have to show boldness with such confidence as I count on showing against some who suspect us

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<sup>44</sup> J. Warner Wallace, *Cold Case Christianity* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2013), 79-80.

<sup>45</sup> C. K. Barrett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, Black's New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1973), 248.

of walking according to the flesh.” Paul has raised their attention, even though some of his critics think his sending a letter was a sign of weakness. He exhorts that while he explained the truth, he will not revert to a “worldly response” in an outright affray.

Keener further explicates, “Because of love and in order to spare them, Paul had sent a firm letter rather than coming in person . . . but some, who valued forceful speech, mistook his affectionate strategy for weakness. . . . Yet Paul knew that people respected a “meek” ruler, that is, a merciful and benevolent one.”<sup>46</sup>

David Garland adds,

He stresses that he is present to them through this letter. Nevertheless, he is acutely aware of the difference between being present in person and being present through written correspondence and therefore underscores that the acknowledged forcefulness of his letters is not some false front. A continuity exists between the apostle who writes these letters and the apostle who will soon come to them in person.<sup>47</sup>

Hence, per Paul’s opening, apologists can rely on the Word as the admonishment, while remaining meek and empathetic. Christians can rely on the Holy Spirit to effect the needed change as Paul did, in meekness, but with authority. Verse 3 continues, “For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh.”

Garland adds, “He is defending *his* authority, explaining the theological significance of *his* weakness, and warning of *his* power and willingness to discipline the disobedient vigorously when he comes.”<sup>48</sup> Paul’s language in a de-escalating matter, “not waging war according to the flesh,” has the double meaning of his own need to be fruitful in the Spirit, but also, that the congregation must not resort to “worldly means” in this war, meaning, boastfulness outside of the Spirit and possibly even violent confrontation.

Verse 4 continues, “For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.” Ben Witherington remarks, “It is clear by v. 3

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<sup>46</sup> Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 515.

<sup>47</sup> D. E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, The New American Commentary, vol. 29 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 425.

<sup>48</sup> Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 426, emphasis original.

that he is angry and is ready to go to war, but his weapons for the campaign are not ‘fleshly’; rather, they have divine power and are able to demolish high and lofty arguments and sophistries (v. 4).”<sup>49</sup> With respect to apologetic approaches to skeptics and false teachers, the truth of what is known by believers must be framed in love and respect for that person and not of “fleshly” means. The Holy Spirit must be the witness *through* us and not *of* us.

Verses 5-6 read, “We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.” Verse 5 becomes the rallying motif and identifies not only the strategy but the tactics—destroy the arguments; hence, the apologist shows the evidence of God’s truth against false teachers, false prophets, and false arguments, no matter what “lofty” opinion is levied. The argument, not the person, is debated so as the person does not feel “attacked”. Paul is presumably referring to the Greek philosophers and the contextual background of the Corinthian church. M. J. Harris notes,

Paul’s campaign strategy was not to ignore, dismiss, or ridicule his opponents’ ideas and arguments, but to “demolish” (καθαίρω) them by exposing their fallacies. . . . Paul is certainly not denigrating rational thought and logical argumentation. His own letters are replete with careful and convincing argument. It is not “reasoning” as such that is attacked here but fallacious reasoning and conceited argument.<sup>50</sup>

With respect to apologetics, one’s interlocution must be framed to simply ask how “one comes by one’s belief in those arguments.” The logic and evidence must be argued and not fall on ad-hominem attacks nor a person’s credentials. The mission is to win the unbeliever to Christ, not debase them in showing the falsity of their arguments. Grace matters.

Lastly, verse 6 reminds the Corinthians that not only must they be ready to wage

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<sup>49</sup> Ben Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995), 438.

<sup>50</sup> Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to The Corinthians*, The New International Greek Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 2005), 682.

this “war,” but they must be first obedient in God’s Word as well as realizing that the obedience is Spirit born. Garland explains,

It is not that Paul needs to rally the Corinthians to his side so that in concert with them he can give the intruders the boot. Paul does not want to take over their own responsibility to examine themselves and to discipline wrongdoers (see 1 Cor 5:1–5; 6:1–11). When their obedience is complete, they need to take action as they did when the majority disciplined a previous offender (2:6).<sup>51</sup>

Again, with respect to apologetics, believers must first be obedient through the Holy Spirit and have ensured that not only the believer, but our church, has “removed the plank from our own eye” before engaging false teachers and skeptics, doing this with humility, so they cannot argue per Shakespeare, “the lady doth protest too much, me thinks.”<sup>52</sup> The Christian walk in the grace of Christ and the Holy Spirit is crucial.

### **Psalm 90:4 and 2 Peter 3:8**

One of the more pressing intra-Christian apologetic arguments has been among Old Earth Creationists (OEC) and Young Earth Creationists (YEC), to say nothing of the Intelligent Design (ID) theists and Evolutionary theists, the latter of which is also problematic (BioLogos).<sup>53</sup> While Christians should indeed study all arguments, the differences must not divide the Christian community, especially in some of the vociferous arguments made by YECs, such as Ken Ham, who alleges Old Earth proponents as heretics. Psalm 90:4 and 2 Peter 3:8 make these issues far from settled in a scientific sense, and the division is fodder for skeptics and humanists. As Ted Cabal stipulates, “The sheer daily investment of emotion spent debating these matters can render

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<sup>51</sup> Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 438.

<sup>52</sup> Quote by “Queen Gertrude” in *Hamlet*, William Shakespeare. Excessive and emotional protestations often lend to an air of simple ego and arrogance in “winning the argument,” thus degrading the argument and the encounter with the skeptic. Grace matters. Christians can only present the evidence and argument; The Holy Spirit must convict the person, in finality.

<sup>53</sup> BioLogos is a scientific organization that touts a Christian worldview but does not believe in the inerrancy of the Bible per the *Chicago Statement*. For an extended explanation, see Theodore Cabal and Peter J. Rastor, *The Controversy for the Ages: Why Christians Should Not Divide Over the Age of the Earth* (Wooster, OH: Weaver Books, 2017), 185.

evangelicals unmindful of the attacks by people like the New Atheists.”<sup>54</sup>

Admittedly, the biblical commentaries forthwith explain contexts and thoughts not relative to scientific arguments, thus “straining” my intention. Other explanations from noted scientists will also be used. That said, apologists must be able to explain to skeptics that the YEC/OEC arguments have little to do with the basic tenets of faith: Christ and the cross. In this sense as well, though the majesty of God operating in a different realm outside of worldly “scientific knowns” has value, no one can argue that these tenets are extra-ordinary; thus, another reason for the need to explore the supernatural, as skeptics quip, i.e., God, which is anything but supernatural to believers as believers experience Him each day. Apologists must be able to move a skeptic away from these questions to bring him or her to the cross. “Scientism” is the current foe.

Psalm 90:4 states, “For a thousand years in your sight, are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night.” R. G. Bratcher notes, “In some cases it will be clearer to say, for example, ‘A thousand years of ours is like one day of yours’ or ‘The way people count time, a thousand years is the same as one day in the way you count time.’”<sup>55</sup> This simple explanation delineates a scientific notion of the different realm in which God operates—He was here before and will be after. Biblical commentators Keil and Delitzsche note,

The Lord was God before the world was; His divine existence reaches out of the unlimited past into the unlimited future. . . . He is however exalted above all time, inasmuch as the longest period appears to Him very short, and in the shortest period the greatest work can be executed by Him. The standpoint of the first comparison, “as yesterday,” is taken towards the end of the thousand of years. A whole millennium appears to God, when He glances over it, just as the yesterday does to us when (פִּי) it is passing by (יַעֲבֹר), and we, standing on the border of the opening day, look back upon the day that is gone.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Cabal and Rastor, *The Controversy for the Ages*, 25.

<sup>55</sup> R. G. Bratcher and W. D. Reyburn, *A Translator’s Book on the Book of Psalms* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1991), 794.

<sup>56</sup> C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsche, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 5:594-95

The apologist, when speaking to a skeptic, can explain that God is *above* and *outside* that which is known in man's current scientific knowledge, almost. The man-made construct emanating from man's shaping of the "Newtonian sphere," with the prominence of a "philosophy," immediately rejects anything outside that sphere; hence, anything which might upset that basis for a stable environment for scientific inquiry is in some sense a rational fear of atheist scientists. That said, how can any scientist do science if, by their own premises, chaos exists? Even the skeptic can observe a stable world where science has already been effected. The answer lies outside of the observable time, space, and matter, or outside the Newtonian sphere. Quantum physics arguably holds the answers, which will be discussed more in detail in chapter 3. Alvin Plantinga notes, "In 1958, William Pollard suggested that God acts at the quantum level. . . . God can cause quantum events, and, because the laws are merely statistical, do so without "suspending" those laws. . . . God can cause dramatic effects at the level of everyday life, and do so without falling into intervention."<sup>57</sup> There is still so much to learn about quantum physics, but enough is known that one can explain to a skeptic these points to move beyond that which is at least somewhat certain in the known world. A stumbling block can be avoided.

Likewise, 2 Peter 3:8 states, "Nevertheless, do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like a day." Peter Davids explains, "This passage was used in a number of ways in the ensuing Jewish (and Christian) tradition: "(1) to define the length of one of the days of creation, (2) to explain why Adam lived for a thousand years after his sin, (3) to calculate the length of the Messiah's day, and (4) to explain the length of the world."<sup>58</sup> Whether one takes creation as six 24-hour days or as another time period, the issue of these two

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<sup>57</sup> Alvin Plantinga, *Where Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 114.

<sup>58</sup> Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2006), 275.

passages marks that the question is exegetically and scientifically open, and, chaos was being suppressed by God at the time. Thomas Schreiner notes,

The world has not always been marked by regularity and order. God in his creative work shaped the chaotic world so that it was habitable for human beings. Peter exhorted the beloved believers not to forget a crucial truth about God, a truth they were liable to forget since they were under pressure from the teachers, who quite likely argued that too much time had elapsed for the promise of Christ's return to be credible.<sup>59</sup>

While Schreiner, admittedly, is using this commentary to explain Paul's disputation of false teachers with timing of Christ's return, it still marks the question of "time."

While many have issues with theologian and transcendentalist writer Ralph Waldo Emerson, he treats this issue succinctly when he states,

As I have said, it [the Over Soul] abolishes time and space. The influence of the senses has in most men overpowered the mind to the degree that the walls of time and space have come to look real and insurmountable; and to speak with levity of these limits is, in the world, the sign of insanity. Yet time and space are but inverse measures of the force of the soul. The Spirit sports with time: Can crowd eternity into an hour, or stretch an hour to eternity.<sup>60</sup>

This thought states the present quandary many scientists have who reject all but the "Newtonian sphere," which has guided scientific exploration. One can imagine that science, in effect, "suspends" this when doing the kind of injection in gene therapy or even in-vitro fertilization. The same concept would apply by a creator or intelligent agent. That agent is using the "sphere," or "injecting" into it, rather than changing its dynamic. Why could not a rational scientist believe that an intelligent agent could foster the same? They seem to reject exploration of hard science in lieu of stating a "philosophy of science," which *a priori* rejects a supernatural or "extra-Newtonian physical sphere" as I would propose. As evidence, astrophysicist and Christian apologist Leslie Wickham

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<sup>59</sup> Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 379.

<sup>60</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Ralph Waldo Emerson Selected Essays* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 209. Emerson was an ordained minister but rejected much of the legalism found in the church. His concepts of "spirituality" in his philosophy were sometimes misinterpreted and put him out of the mainstream of theology; however, this quote touches on his deep belief in God being omnipotent and omnipresent. These thoughts are mine from studying his essays in depth.

wrote a piece for CNN, explaining, “The recent news on the detection of evidence for gravitational waves in the cosmic background radiation—ripples in the space-time fabric of the universe—rocked the world of science.”<sup>61</sup> She goes on to state that this discovery proves causation for the Big Bang. I would also postulate that it gives credence to a Creator’s ability to manipulate that space-time fabric. One could also postulate that time could be compressed, given Einstein’s Theory of time compressed by motion, giving YEC a foothold with also recognizing OEC arguments. Noted YEC advocate Terry Mortenson makes two observations, which can note this continued argument:

Augustine believed that the six days of creation typologically predicted that the entire history of the earth would last six millennia. . . . The basis of the sex/septa millenary view was a typological interpretation of the six days of creation. Based on Psalm 90:4 and 2 Peter 3:8. . . . The fathers believed that each day of creation typified a period of one thousand years in the future history of the earth.<sup>62</sup>

Mortenson continues,

(William) Dembski (2007) argues that there are two kinds of “time” (based on two New Testament Greek words, *chronos* and *kairos*): 1) a sequential or chronological time in which we experience, and 2) the ‘time’ which is a-temporal and is linked to God’s plan. Dembski states very plainly that the ‘days’ of Genesis 1 are to be seen as non-chronological. ‘Genesis 1 is therefore not to be interpreted as ordinary chronological time (*chronos*) but rather as time from the vantage of God’s purposes (*kairos*). He likens this view of time to Christ being ‘slain before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8).’ The theodicy Dembski has suggested is an improvement over many theodicies, and it does seem to answer many of the problems.<sup>63</sup>

Lastly, and most notably, is Oxford physicist John Polkinghorne’s recollection of what Einstein said just before he died: “For us convinced physicists, the distinction between past, present, and future is an illusion, though a persistent one.”<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Leslie Wickham, *God of the Big Bang: How Modern Science Affirms the Creator* (Brentwood, TN: Worthy Books, 2015), 7.

<sup>62</sup> Terry Mortenson and Thane H. Ury, *Coming to Grips with Genesis: Biblical Authority and the Age of the Earth* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2008), 38-39.

<sup>63</sup> Mortenson and Ury, *Coming to Grips with Genesis*, 390.

<sup>64</sup> I. Prigogine and I. Stengers, *The Quantum World* (London: Heinemann, 1984), 294, quoted in John C. Polkinghorne, *Science and Providence: God’s Interaction with the World* (Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2005), 89.

Although many more scientists could be noted for these arguments, and one can argue the meaning of the original Hebrew *yom* incessantly, the summation to these two passages for apologetics in approaching skeptics is crucial. Apologists must be able to take the inerrancy of the Bible and explain these issues to skeptics and move them to the arrears as what Al Mohler cites as “second and third tier issues.”<sup>65</sup> All Christians must dispense with the dogmatism that has arisen regarding OEC and YEC as the vociferous arguments lend to disunity, to say nothing of disharmony, when confronting the New Atheists. Appealing to the “scientism” skeptic that, simply, “the earth looks old, but time compression via science, these two passages, and quantum physics, may hold the answers,” can then move the apologetic approach to his or her eschatological questions, thus opening the door to the cross. This is a Christian’s first and real priority. These two passages are very helpful in that process as they have already assisted me.

### **Conclusion**

The preceding passages verify the commandment of the Great Commission, and also inform how to accomplish reaching the lost. The legacy of the apostles in apologetic approaches leading to evangelism in these verses is the Christians’ roadmap as they dealt with many different contexts in each church and geographical area, and all were unique and dealt with in different manners; however, all were dealt with grace and the Holy Spirit in the lead. The apostles were threatened with death, privation, torture, beatings, and even shipwrecks, but they remained faithful and persevered as should all who follow Christ. The Christian mandate is clear—pick up your cross, follow Christ, and bring the unbeliever to the truth.

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<sup>65</sup> See reference to Mohler’s article in Cabal, *Controversy of the Ages*, 188n.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE HISTORICAL, SCIENTIFIC, AND HUMANISTIC STUMBLING BLOCKS TO ACCEPTING GOD: THE ARGUMENTS WITH WHICH EVERY CHRISTIAN SHOULD BE FAMILIAR

Every Christian needs to at least be familiar with apologetic issues and armed with as many facts as possible. More important, still, is knowing the resources available. As noted in chapter 2, evangelism is commanded in the Great Commission (Matt 28:16-20). One must be able to bring a skeptic to a point where evangelism can be effected, and in today's context, especially that of secular Washington, DC, this is difficult, just as it was in Rome and other secular capitals. Conversely, it is also the perfect place for this dialogue to happen as these secular cities are also cultural and educational centers, then spreading in what counter-insurgency experts call "the ink blot" theory. I have studied this theory and others from my active duty service. David Axe from the *Washington Times* summarizes the strategy: "U.S. forces are testing a modified strategy dubbed "ink spots" in which coalition forces pick certain districts to flood with reconstruction projects and permanently defend from . . . insurgents. The "ink-spot" approach initially concentrates on just a handful of population centers and slowly expands outward."<sup>66</sup> To further explicate this strategy, once ink from a well or even a discolored water or soda is spilled upon a blotter, it "stains" or adheres to that spot. Then, it spreads slowly from simple displacement and absorption. What is even more interesting in this theory is that the remedy, swiping/wiping it, usually spreads it, in this case, atheists trying to dispel the gospel or apologetic facts. Hence, the remedy starts a clamorous dialogue and has the consequential

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<sup>66</sup> David Axe, "US Tests 'Ink Blot' Strategy in Afghanistan," *Washington Times*, November 12, 2009, <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/nov/12/us-tests-ink-spot-strategy-in-afghanistan/>.

effect of spreading to other places—the dialogue is started. Thus, a broad-based and vigorous apologetics program at MBC, the largest church in the DC Metro area, can have multiplicative effects and be a model for other churches in the area as well as being in the heart of the country with those modern lines of communication.

### **The Historical and Philosophical Precedence for the Presupposition of Church and Science Incompatibility**

While strident apologetic points are normally focused upon the atheist skeptic, this dialogue also must focus on the preponderance of Christians exiting their faith as problematic, especially Christian youth who enter the university setting. Former atheist and police detective, now Christian apologist, J. Warner Wallace, focuses on both these issues. Wallace explains both:

When Christians walk away from the faith, more often than not, it's due to some form of intellectual skepticism. Ex-Christians often describe religious beliefs as innately blind or unreasonable. But that doesn't accurately reflect the rich, evidential history of Christianity. The psalmist appealed to the design and fine-tuning of the universe to demonstrate the existence of God (Psalm 19:1). Jesus appealed to both eyewitness testimony (John 16:8) and the indirect evidence of his miracles (John 10:38) to argue for the authority of his statements. The disciples identified themselves as eyewitnesses and appealed to their observations of the Resurrection to make the case for the Deity of Jesus (Acts 4:33). . . . Ex-Christians often leave the Church because they don't think anyone in the Church can answer their questions or make a case. It's time for believers to accept their responsibility to explain what Christianity proposes and why these propositions are true, especially when interacting with young people who have legitimate questions.<sup>67</sup>

Wallace accentuates Tim Jones' assertion of the need for *why* one believes; however, the question must be asked as to *when* and *how* this schism between science and Christianity became prevalent.

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<sup>67</sup> J. Warner Wallace, "Young Christians Are Leaving the Church-Here's Why," *FOX News*, September 9, 2018, <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2018/09/09/young-christians-are-leaving-church-here-s-why.html>.

## The History of the Religion and Science Schism

The more frequent attribution of this schism is with William of Ockham and John Duns Scotus in the late thirteenth century. Thomas Aquinas is also notable here, but his pointedness in remaining God-centered in his premises separates him from these two other theologians. “Nominalism,” which is at the root cause of the argument, is best explained by Thomas Shetler when he states,

Nominalism, the focus on the actual objects in the world, gave birth to the radical empiricism that dominates our culture, while the emphasis on inductive reasoning as the pathway to truth led us to the scientific method and the scientific revolution that is central to our worldview. Nominalism and the inductive approach also led to the emphasis on reasoning from immediate experience and a de-emphasis on reasoning from principle, this led to both naturalism and relativistic pluralism postmodernism.<sup>68</sup>

Shetler continues,

Today, it lies at the root of the empiricism and naturalism that dominates Western secular culture. The separation of church and state in our society is an expression of the secularist demand for the marginalization of religious faith as “anti-science,” and is nothing short of the claim by the forces of “reason” to have vanquished faith and banished it from the field of valid human endeavor. The medieval church fathers, such as Ockham and Duns Scotus, who first coined the term, nominalism, were attempting to protect faith from the attacks of reason. In the end, they laid the path for its destruction.<sup>69</sup>

To be clear, Shetler’s reference to the “inductive approach” references the *how* in modern scientific exploration with little emphasis on the *why*, which is the “deductive approach,” ironically, the latter being that which the earliest of Christian scientists used—Newton, Pascal, Boyle, Kepler, and others. While the Duns Scotus/Ockham theories took many years to dominate thought, Ernest L. Simmons believes that a historical date marks the true demarcation of the Modern Age:

One might date the beginning of The Modern Period philosophically with Rene Descartes’ bifurcation of subject from object and establishing a method for the pursuit of objective science; and one dates it politically with the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 which ended the Thirty Years War. In the wake of such religious civil war with its

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<sup>68</sup> Thomas Shetler, “The Influence of Nominalism on the Development of the Modern Worldview,” *Languages in India*, March 3, 2015, <http://www.languageinindia.com/march2015/tomshetlernominalism.pdf>, 254.

<sup>69</sup> Shetler, “The Influence of Nominalism,” 271.

concomitant fanaticism and destruction, intellectuals in Europe turned to forms of analysis that stressed reason, objectivity, toleration and individual rights coupled with the empirical success of the newly emerging physical sciences. What emerged from this newly evolving worldview was a splitting off of religion from science. Religion was sent to sit in the subjective corner, while science took front stage in the pursuit of objective knowledge. Religion was given feeling and value, while science was given fact and knowledge. It was, in effect, the separation of fact from value. Empirical measurement, which was observable, quantifiable, and repeatable, became the standard of truth with anything less empirical, such as faith, being relegated to personal speculation.<sup>70</sup>

Simmons relates the beginning of the philosophical queries into religious thought as well. The religious wars of this period help to exacerbate this split of science and theology, tainting Christianity by equivocating it with the actions of the church as an institution, which is still prevalent today. Apologists can point to the philosophers of that time, such as Immanuel Kant, in unfortunately reinforcing this theme. Apologist Doug Groothuis notes, “Kant claim[ed] that while being almighty is necessary to the idea of God, existing is not. In the same way, having three sides is necessary to the idea of a triangle, but existing is not necessary for the idea of a triangle.”<sup>71</sup> These philosophers’ ideas were bolstered by the continuing march of science, ironically funded by the church as it established the university system, and it can be marked by Newton’s publication of *Principia Mathematica* in 1687. Historian Mark Noll notes,

Although Newton was a painstaking student of the Bible . . . and although Newton’s reputation at first inspired closer ties between formal religion and Europe’s intellectual elite, the use of his work would eventually help revolutionize European intellectual life. Newton’s ability to describe the apparently boundless course of nature with precise mathematical formulas eventually led to the claim that all life could be understood with reference to itself, rather than reference to God or the teachings of the churches.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Ernest L. Simmons, “Beyond Dialogue: The Role of Science within Theology,” *Dialog* 46, no. 3 (September 2007): 190.

<sup>71</sup> Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011), 191.

<sup>72</sup> Mark A. Noll, *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 246.

Noll then quotes Owen Chadwick from *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (1975), which shows this symbiotic effect of science with philosophy intensifying secularization:

“The years between 1650 and 1750”—the years of Sir Isaac Newton, his English contemporary John Locke, Voltaire, and the French philosophes, the creative pantheist Baruch Spinoza, and the Scottish skeptic David Hume—“were the seminal years of modern intellectual history”—but for the results of these ideas to affect broader European society, it took another century and a half. That is why the problem of secularization is not the same as the problem of Enlightenment, Enlightenment was of the few. Secularization is of the many.<sup>73</sup>

It should be noted that Humean philosophy is still quoted by the “New Atheists” in debates and papers. Chadwick was correct, and the first indication was the French Revolution. French historian Alexis de Tocqueville, in his famous study *Democracy in America*, realized that America had remained relatively untouched by this turn of events, and he explored the reasons for this. He notes,

When such [French revolutionaries] attack religious beliefs, they obey the dictates of their passions, not their interests. Despotism may be able to do without faith, but freedom cannot. . . . In France, I had seen the spirits of religion and of freedom almost always marching in the opposite directions. In America, I found them intimately linked together in joint reign over the same land.<sup>74</sup>

D. A. Carson adds, “At least in part, the American Revolution and its aftermath were designed to support freedom *for* religion; at least in part, the French Revolution and its aftermath were designed to support freedom *from* religion.”<sup>75</sup>

America’s recognition of a higher power in its founding documents, being that America was for the most part founded on Judeo-Christian dictates, kept the secularist aspect at an ocean’s length. John Fea, who is skeptical of this premise, admits, “If there was one universal idea that all the founders believed about the relationship between religion and the new nation, it was that religion was necessary in order to sustain an

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<sup>73</sup> Noll, *Turning Points*, 246.

<sup>74</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (1836) (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 271-72.

<sup>75</sup> D. A. Carson, *Christ & Culture Revisited* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008), 189.

ordered and virtuous republic.”<sup>76</sup> That said, Europe precipitously moved ever forward toward secularization. Noll continues,

By the second half of the [nineteenth] century, Europe’s traditional churches, after having already lost the intellectuals, were losing the working classes as well. . . . Negotiations neutralizing the authority of the churches contributed to Bismarck’s strategy in unifying a German nation in 1871. The parallel movement that led to the unification of the Italian state at just about the same time moved aggressively against traditional religion by forcefully pushing the Pope aside. . . . The carnage of the First World War overwhelmed any lingering sense of divine solicitude for Europe. The Russian Revolution of 1917 dropped any pretense of deference to Christianity and treated the institutions and leaders of the Orthodox Church as enemies of the people.<sup>77</sup>

Carson states, “By the end of the [nineteenth] century, however, a cultural switch was flipped: either people did not presuppose the existence of God, or, if they did, they no longer presupposed that He was immediately relevant to all the questions raised in the public square.”<sup>78</sup>

Undergirding all of this thought was the “German poison” of atheist philosophers in the late nineteenth century, a combination of which usurped man’s God-given rights and individual worth, to the State’s aims and made scientific inquiry above and against any theological presuppositions the *raison d’etre*. R. C. Sproul notes,

The views of Freud [religion arises out of guilt and the fear of nature], Feuerbach [religion is only wish fulfillment], Marx [religion is used to keep the lower classes happy], and Nietzsche [religion is rooted in man’s weakness] have been so widely disseminated in our culture today that it is a common occurrence for the theist to have his faith challenged on the basis of psychological charges.<sup>79</sup>

These philosophies are still taught in the university setting, which does not begin to speak to Darwin’s theory, which was not initially accepted by the scientific community.

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<sup>76</sup> John Fea, *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation?* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 246.

<sup>77</sup> Noll, *Turning Points*, 247.

<sup>78</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Intolerance of Tolerance* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2013), 71.

<sup>79</sup> R. C. Sproul, *If There’s a God, Why Are There Atheists?* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1974), 57. Addendums in brackets are taken from the back cover.

Intelligent Design proponent Stephen Meyer notes of Darwin's esteemed colleague, Louis Agassiz, "In 1874 Atlantic Monthly essay titled, 'Evolution and the Permanence of Type,' Agassiz explained his reasons for doubting the creative power of natural selection. Small scale variations, he argued, had never produced a 'specific difference' [i.e., a difference in species]."<sup>80</sup> Agassiz was considered, even by Darwin, the most pre-eminent paleontologist of the era; however, atheist philosophers now had a backing for their own philosophies, and Darwin's theory became their rationale. Ted Cabal notes,

In the notebook on the mind, Darwin reveals that he has become a philosophical materialist. Brain function alone explains human thought, and free will is an illusion . . . because humans are animals fully explicable by science with no divine spark, even our belief in God results from the slow, gradual development of our animal ancestry . . . by age 40, he had washed his hands of Christianity.<sup>81</sup>

Society was then riddled with science over-riding theological thought, making theological thought and naturalism two distinct areas of study per Kant as described. L. Russ Bush notes, "The first noticeable symptoms of the shift from a Christian to a naturalistic worldview began to show up among the 18th century Deists . . . for Deists, GOD was transcendent, but he was not imminent."<sup>82</sup> James Beilby concurs, "(Darwin's) theory of evolution and natural selection helped many of those who would have been Deists in the 18th century become the skeptics and atheists of the 19th century."<sup>83</sup> Darwin's theory had not quite the acceptance until more scientists, fueled by philosophers, preceded to find any evidence that would satiate the desire to separate man from God. In 1899, scientist Ernst Haeckel's *The Riddle of the Universe at the Close of the 19th*

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<sup>80</sup> Stephen C. Meyer, *Darwin's Doubt: The Explosive Origin of Animal Life and The Case for Intelligent Design* (New York: Harper ONE, 2013), 11.

<sup>81</sup> Theodore Cabal and Peter J. Rastor, *Controversy for the Age: Why Christians Should Not Divide Over the Age of The Earths* (Wooster, OH: Weaver Book, 2017), 57.

<sup>82</sup> L. Russ Bush, *The Advancement: Keeping the Faith in an Evolutionary Age* (Nashville: B & H, 2003), 21.

<sup>83</sup> James K. Beilby *Thinking about Christian Apologetics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011), 74.

*Century* contributed greatly to the schism. This book has been all but completely refuted by scientists, but the damage was done. Bush again notes,

This book became a bestseller and was influential among both scientists and layman . . . he suggested that “matter and energy are eternal.” All things, including the human mind, were to be explained on a truly materialistic cause and effect . . . and, he pointed out in his earlier work in 1884, *The History of Creation*, “the theory of the animal descent of the human race . . . [and] a non-miraculous history of the development of the human race.”<sup>84</sup>

Again, when one couples this scientific thesis with the “German poison,” such as Nietzsche, the symbiotic spiral to divorce society from religion is nearly completed. Groothuis quotes Nietzsche from his best seller and modern-day fodder in university classrooms, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: “The God who saw everything, even man—this God had to die! Man cannot bear it that such a witness should live.”<sup>85</sup> This thinking is still prevalent today, and, is not the entire Old Testament filled with rejections of God after God redeemed and blessed the Israelites? This has been seen before.

Also not “helpful” were some early twentieth-century theologians such as Rudolph Bultmann and his “demythologization” of Christianity, and the earlier writings of theologian Karl Barth and his “Christology from Above.” Millard Erickson describes this demythologization as “the basis of understanding of Christ is not the historical Jesus, but the *kerygma*, the church’s proclamation regarding the Christ. . . . Faith in Christ is not based on nor legitimized by rational proof. The content believed lies outside the sphere of natural reason and historical investigation and consequently cannot be conclusively proven.”<sup>86</sup>

Postmodernists obviously took Barth’s writings and others as evidence for their positions, and evidential and scientific proofs for Christianity were readily discarded or ignored. The cultural malaise that ensued was confessed in part by Aldous Huxley later in

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<sup>84</sup> Bush, *The Advancement*, 23.

<sup>85</sup> Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 144.

<sup>86</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 608.

his life. Groothuis cites Aldous Huxley, arguably one of the more widely read of the twentieth century, with his greatest novel of dystopian fame, *Brave New World* (1931). This novel was perhaps an unconscious admission of the dangers of scientism coming of age. Groothuis introduces Huxley's quote: "The great essayist and novelist Aldous Huxley gives us a window into the machinations of the human soul in this candid revelation about the philosophy of his youth:

I took it for granted that there was no meaning. This was partly due to the fact that I shared a common belief that the scientific picture of an abstraction from reality was a true picture of reality as a whole; partly also to other non-intellectual reasons. I had motives for not wanting the world to have meaning; consequently, I assumed that it had none, and was able without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption. Most ignorance is vincible ignorance. We don't know because we don't want to know. It is our will that describes how and upon what subjects we shall use our intelligence. Those who detect no meaning in the world generally do so because, for one reason or another, it suits their books that the world should be meaningless.<sup>87</sup>

Groothuis, then, comments on another Huxley quote as he continues,

Huxley goes on to confess that, "for myself as, no doubt, for most of my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation." He coveted freedom from the perceived political, economic, and sexual norms of his day, all of which were substantially influenced by Christianity: "There was admirably simple method of confuting these people and at the same time justifying ourselves in our political and erotic revolt; we could deny that the world had any meaning whatsoever."<sup>88</sup>

Frank Turek and Norman Geisler, to support the "moral comfort" afforded by Darwinism, note,

The late Julian Huxley (brother of Aldous Huxley), was asked by talk show host Merv Griffin, "Why do people believe in Darwinism?" Huxley answered honestly, "The reason we accepted Darwinism, even without proof, is because we didn't want God to interfere with our sexual mores." Notice he didn't cite evidence for spontaneous generation or evidence from the fossil record. The motivation he observed among evolutionists was based on moral preferences, not scientific evidence.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Douglas Groothuis, "Why Truth Matters Most: An Apologetic for Truth-Seeking in Post-Modern Times," *The Journal of The Evangelical Theological Society* 47, no. 3 (September 2004): 443-44.

<sup>88</sup> Groothuis, "Why Truth Matters Most," 444.

<sup>89</sup> Norman Geisler and Frank Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Wheaton,

Are there “cracks” into the thinking of the scientific community? Perhaps. Atheist philosopher Thomas Nagel in a 2006 article in *The New Republic* titled “The Fear of Religion,” wrote, “I am talking about the . . . fear of religion. . . . I don’t want there to be a God: I don’t want the universe to be like that.”<sup>90</sup> However, has the once skeptic begun to realize that this philosophy is illogical when evidence is presented in an objective lens? In his 2012 book *Mind and Cosmos*, which is in reaction to especially shrill “New Atheist” Oxford zoologist Richard Dawkins’ many books and recent appearances, he states, “Physico-chemical reductionism in biology is the orthodox view, and any resistance to it is highly regarded as not only scientific but politically incorrect. . . . It is prima-facie highly implausible that life as we know it is the result of a sequence of physical accidents together with the mechanism of natural selection.”<sup>91</sup>

Nagel’s reaction is stunning, but it is also a reaction to the “establishment” thinking. The *a priori* rejection of any explanation other than naturalism is literally unscientific in itself; however, “Scientism” is the new religion. New School Professor of sociology Martin Gross, calls this “The New Establishment”:

The New Establishment has all the tenants of a religion, or perhaps more accurately, as a cult it preaches a “specious goodness” and asks only that one give up one’s mind and reason in exchange for modern salvation, and gaining their reputation among one’s peers for being sensitive or concerned. . . . [The New Establishment] fills the spiritual void in millions who no longer truly believe in either Christianity or Judaism, yet who insist on a faith larger than themselves. . . . It is a secular religion.<sup>92</sup>

Whether this new meme is collective “groupthink” or not, the desired schism between man and God is sought, intellectually, morally, and philosophically. Historian

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IL: Crossway, 2004), 163.

<sup>90</sup> Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), 123.

<sup>91</sup> Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False* (Oxford: Oxford Press, 2012), 5-6.

<sup>92</sup> Martin L. Gros, *The End of Sanity* (New York: Avon Books, 1997), 18.

and philosopher Charles Taylor says the whole of this man-made dissension between science and religion is also a problem in man's striving for independence from God in his own physicality, which has given rise to humanism, with "scientism" as its rationale. He quotes French philosopher Alain Renaut: "Fundamentally, humanism is the conception and valorization of humanity in its capacity for autonomy . . . The man of humanism is the one who no longer receives his norms and laws either from the nature of things (Aristotle) nor from God, but who establishes them himself on the basis of his reason and will. Thus modern natural right is a subjective right, posited and defined by human reason (juridical rationalism) or by human will (juridical voluntarism)"<sup>93</sup> Taylor then comments,

Self-authorization is just taken here as an axiomatic feature of modernity, whether it be by reason or will. This is a tremendously widespread narrative nowadays; it crops up everywhere. . . . The sense that we have reached maturity in casting aside faith can be played out in the register of disengaged reason, and the need to accept deliverances of neutral science, whatever they be. . . . The main virtue stressed here is the imaginative courage to face the void, and to be energized by it to the creation of meaning. Nietzsche and his followers are crucial protagonists of this spin on immanence. And (Albert) Camus . . . offered another very influenced version of it.<sup>94</sup>

Again, philosophically, per post-modernism's rejection of Christianity and adoption of human "independence from God," there is simply a rationalization and convenient excuse for worldliness and fleshly desires. The scientific view, as well as today's scientism, allows for the moral relativism that has arisen again. These two views are coupled with philosophic scientific naturalism and the anti-supernatural bias, which has led many to a Christianity that becomes a philosophy rather than a theological reality and adherence to Christian principles, at the least. It has also fostered a rejection of the supernatural acceptance of Christ and the Holy Spirit. I certainly never understood "giving one's life to Christ" nor "letting the Holy Spirit live our lives for us." It was a difficult process, but it was a process nonetheless, to which I had never been exposed until

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<sup>93</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 588.

<sup>94</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 588-89.

believers and pastors showed the evidence, which then fostered true belief and not a simplistic feeling of legalism, in the end.

### **The Results of The “Schism” in Christianity: Syncretism.**

“Christmas” or “pedestrian” or “cultural” Christianity is unfortunately alive. Syncretism thrives in churches such as the Unitarian-Universalist church, which literally throws biblical principles out in favor of inclusiveness. David Aikman notes, “The religion of ‘Therapeutic Moral Deism’ is actually an expression of the triumph of liberal Protestantism in the larger American culture. . . . This liberal theology holds that ‘a God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgement through the ministrations of a Christ without a Cross.’”<sup>95</sup> D. A. Carson supports this notion when he writes, “These cultural Christians have no firm grasp of Christian views of sin, of grace and law, and of the Trinity. . . . Theirs is a moralism that understands little of grace, because it understands little of the need for grace. And GOD Himself easily becomes redefined.”<sup>96</sup> The literal absurdity in the acceptance of unfortunate and unbiblical practices for seemingly “cultural relevance” can be seen in this example by apologist Micaiah Bilger:

The Rev. Marvin Ellison, a volunteer chaplain at the Planned Parenthood in Portland, Maine, wrote a column for the *Press Herald* this week to defend his abortion advocacy. The Portland abortion facility aborts unborn babies up to 18 weeks and 6 days of pregnancy, long after they already have heartbeats, brain waves, fingers, toes and their own unique fingerprints. He made it clear that he is an abortion supporter because of his Christian faith and values. Ellison also bragged about his influence on patients’ religious views. “We believe in its mission and applaud its life-affirming values. As we said during the blessing, We thank God for Planned Parenthood.”<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> David Aikman, *One Nation without GOD: The Battle for Christianity in an Age of Unbelief* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 52-53.

<sup>96</sup> Carson, *Christ & Culture Revisited*, 19.

<sup>97</sup> Micaiah Bilger, “Presbyterian Minister Blesses Planned Parenthood Abortion Clinic in God’s Name, Volunteers as Its Chaplain,” *Life News*, May 11, 2018, <http://www.lifenews.com/2018/05/11/presbyterian-minister-blesses-planned-parenthood-abortion-clinic-in-gods-name-volunteers-as-its-chaplain/>.

The undergirding of scientific rationalistic thought, and scientism, with its anti-supernatural bias, has progressively eroded the truth of Christianity. In critiquing Christian Smith from *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism*, Carson answers Smith's potential questions:

Smith described the classic weakness of all “hard” postmodernists, but he does not refute it; he comes very close to adopting it. [Smith says] “We can’t know that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself,” the postmodern theologian [Smith] says, “The best we can do is to *believe*.” And why is that? “Because to know would mean to be certain.” And when this theologian adds, without a trace of embarrassment, “We know that such certainty is an impossible dream.” The harder the postmodernism, the more absolute the claim, and the more internally illogical it is. If the postmodern theologian *knows* that such certainty is impossible, he or she must *know* it certainly. But that means certain knowledge is not impossible after all.<sup>98</sup>

In summation of this section, I have given examples of how this current post-modern anathema to science and religious compatibility has progressed and intensified; however, there are reasons for hope in shattering this schism. Groothuis summarizes in his essay,

Despite the truth-allergic pathologies of our postmodern culture, truth remains to be considered, known, and embraced. If one rejects truth-avoiding attitudes and actions, embraces the virtues of knowing, and finally casts one-self on the mercies of whatever truth may exist. . . . The truth itself may disclose itself to such a receptive soul—and the light of grace may be drawn.<sup>99</sup>

Christians are responsible for presenting these truths in light of the scientism currently present.

### **Acceptance of Scientism as Scientific Certainty Is Unscientific: Current Arguments Christians Should Know**

As shown in the previous section, the “glue” of Darwinism lies in the anti-supernatural bias that pervades the scientific community. The immediate *a priori* rejection of investigating YEC, OEC, and Intelligent Design (ID) claims is unscientific in itself; whereas, a “club” or herd “groupthink” mentality has grown and endured in the post-modern era. Darwinism is seen as “certain” when it is in fact a *theory* as there are many

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<sup>98</sup> Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, 107.

<sup>99</sup> Groothuis, “Why Truth Matters Most,” 453-54.

missing links therein. This mentality has the effect on Christianity of vitalizing the schism between science and Christianity. In the opening of his book *Faith Versus Fact: Why Religion and Science are Incompatible* (2015), atheist evolutionary biologist Jerry Coyne states,

That persuading Americans to accept the truth of evolution involved not just an education in facts, but a de-education in faith—the form of belief that replaces the need for evidence with simple emotional commitment. . . . And above all, I’ll have achieved my aim if, when you hear someone described as a “person of faith,” you see it as a criticism rather than praise.<sup>100</sup>

Coyne’s words are the rhetoric of scientism and its congregants, the New Atheists, who have not the courage to investigate any disputations of their own philosophy and relegate religion to superstition. Coyne continues, “The notion of ‘free will’—a linchpin of many faiths—now looks increasingly dubious as scientists not only untangle the influence of our genes and environments on our behavior, but also show that some ‘decisions’ can be predicted from brain scans several seconds before people are conscious of having made them.”<sup>101</sup> One must ask, is this not a determinist and materialist truth claim? Was he determined to say this, and, if so, why do not all other people adhere to this claim if all are “wired” to do so? This statement is illogical and flies in the face of all philosophy, science itself, and religion. Three pages later, he contradicts himself:

Yet consciousness subsumes at least four phenomena: intelligence, self-awareness, the ability to access information (being unconscious versus “conscience”), and the first-person sense of subjectivity. Only the last—the so-called hard problem of consciousness—seems baffling, for it’s difficult to imagine how a brain that can be studied objectively produces feelings that are subjective.<sup>102</sup>

What Coyne pondered is something professing Christians already understand—General Revelation, as already discussed. If a professing Christian scientist, not a member of “the

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<sup>100</sup> Jerry A. Coyne, *Faith versus Fact: Why Religion and Science Are Incompatible* (New York: Penguin, 2015), xv-xxii.

<sup>101</sup> Coyne, *Faith versus Fact*, 15.

<sup>102</sup> Coyne, *Faith versus Fact*, 158.

club,” said this, he would be immediately mocked. Unfortunately, or fortunately, if Christians understand that political motivations are now “out of the closet,” much of his book is politically motivated. Coyne states, “ID is simply creationism gussied up to sound more scientific, in a vain attempt to circumvent US court rulings prohibiting religious incursions into public schools.”<sup>103</sup> Hence, there is an undergirding that science, especially Darwinism, should also be the final answer to all questions.

Oxford professor and holder of two doctoral degrees, John Lennox, in his refutation of Stephen Hawking’s *Grand Design*, notes that Hawking dismisses all other forms of knowledge in answering questions:

[Hawking] writes, “Traditionally, these are questions for philosophy, but philosophy is dead. It has not kept us with modern developments in science, especially in physics. As a result, scientists have become the bearers of the torch of discovery in our quest for knowledge.” [Lennox says], Apart from the unwarranted hubris of this dismissal of philosophy. . . . It constitutes rather disturbing evidence that . . . Hawking, himself, has not kept up with philosophy sufficiently to realize that he himself is engaging in it throughout his book. . . . [His] statement about philosophy is itself a philosophical statement. . . . [It] smacks of scientism. . . . It is a conviction characteristic of that movement in secular thought known as “New Atheism.”<sup>104</sup>

Would any scientist in today’s post-modern context have the moral tenacity to doubt or desecrate the “altar” of one of the greatest theoretical physicists of all time? Some like Lennox have, as have many YEC, OEC, and ID scientists, but they are immediately relegated to positions of irrelevancy as they do not tow the party line. Their inquiries, at least, are not part of the dialogue in universities nor most mainstream scientific writings.

Thomas Nagel, once an ardent atheist, in his refutation of Darwinism, notes,

One of the tendencies (Darwinism) supports is the ludicrous overuse of evolutionary biology to explain everything about life, including everything about the human mind. Darwin enabled modern secular culture to heave a great collective sigh of relief, by apparently providing a way to eliminate purpose, meaning, and design as fundamental features of the world.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Coyne, *Faith versus Fact*, 155.

<sup>104</sup> John Lennox, *God and Stephen Hawking* (Oxford: Lion Books, 2011), 18-19.

<sup>105</sup> Thomas Nagel, *The Last Word* (New York: Oxford, 1997), 131, quoted in J. P. Moreland, *Scientism and Secularism: Learning to Respond to a Dangerous Ideology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 194.

J. P. Moreland observes that the scientific community, in large part, has a “group-think” mentality and strident philosophy when he says,

In sum, historically, evolution gave scientists a way to get rid of God and theology out of science. Sociologically, there is social pressure for the science community to remain homogenous, with groupthink about evolution, and with the social punishment meted out to those who give the slightest hint that they are considering the plausibility of intelligent design theory. And, theologically, the cosmic authority problem means that many academics in science do not want there to be a God, and evolution gives them a way to be a naturalist. . . . It is not the strength of the evidence and arguments. . . . The primary explanation for expert agreement about evolution is historical, sociological, and theological.<sup>106</sup>

One of the more glaring recent examples of this is explained by science philosopher Stephen Meyer when he published an article for the *Smithsonian*:

[In 2004], I published a peer-reviewed scientific article about the Cambrian explosion and the problem of the origin of the biological information needed to explain it. . . . I cited Axe’s results and explained why the rarity of functional proteins in sequence space posed such a severe adequacy of Neo-Darwinism mechanism. The article appeared in a biology journal, *Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington*, published out of Smithsonian Institution by scientists working for the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History. Because the article also argued that the theory of intelligent design could help explain the origin of biological information, its publication created a firestorm of controversy. Museum scientists and evolutionary biologists from around the country were furious with the journal and its editor, Richard Sternberg, for allowing the article to be peer-reviewed and then published. . . . [They] took away his keys, office, and access to specimens. . . . A Congressional subcommittee staff later investigated and found that museum officials initiated an intentional disinformation campaign. . . . “Sternberg has no biology degrees” (actually has two Ph.D.s, one in evolutionary biology and one in systems biology). . . . “He is a priest, not a scientist” . . . he was demoted.<sup>107</sup>

Scientism is the new religion, and scientists by their rhetoric seem to aspire to be the new “high priests” of all knowledge, akin to the lyrics in the rock group, RUSH, in their Ballad of 2112, when they sing,

The massive grey walls of the Temples rise from the heart of every Federation city. I have always been awed by them, to think that every single facet of every life is regulated and directed from within! Our books, our music, our work and play are all looked after by the benevolent wisdom of the priests.. We are the priests, of the temples, of Syrinx. . . . Our great computers fill the hallowed halls...all the gifts of

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<sup>106</sup> Moreland, *Scientism and Secularism*, 194.

<sup>107</sup> Meyer, *Darwin’s Doubt*, 210.

life, are held within our walls. . . . Another toy that helped destroy the elder race of man. Forget about your silly whim, It doesn't fit the Plan!<sup>108</sup>

While their meaning was to not adhere to their producers' wishes in aligning their music with more contemporaneous sounds vice their own creation, it has many overtones of both scientism and suppression of dialogue, even a political overtone in collectivism. Drummer Neil Peart, also the lyricist, is an Ayn Rand fan and agnostic. The “toy” in the next to last verse (which refers to outlawed music by the “priests”) can be a synonym for religion, something that the late cantankerous atheist Christopher Hitchens called religion—a toy. Might this not be an apologetic approach for some GEN X-ers? Perhaps!

Lastly, Meyer notes that scientism has survived and is in the most prestigious universities:

In 1997, in an article in the *New York Review of Books*, Harvard geneticist Richard Lewontin made explicit a similar commitment to a strictly materialistic explanation—whatever the evidence might seem to indicate: “We take the side of science in spite of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, in spite of its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of health and life, in spite of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment to materialism. . . . Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine foot in the door.”<sup>109</sup>

Lewontin's quote should cue all of us to this aspiration of these scientists to be the all-knowing source while Christianity is reduced to “absurdity.”

In summation, the bigotry and unscientific view in the immediate dismissal of any theory that would undermine Neo-Darwinism must be challenged. As Bush notes, “The fossil horse sequence, the peppered moths, *Archaeopteryx*, Darwin's finches, Haeckel's embryos, and more: none of this evidence stands scrutiny, and the real scholars know it. Only textbook writers continue to perpetuate these myths of science.”<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Rush Lyrics, “2112,” AZ Lyrics, accessed October 20, 2018, <https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/rush/2112.html>. Album first debuted April 1, 1976. Lyrics by Neil Peart.

<sup>109</sup> Meyer, *Darwin's Doubt*, 386.

<sup>110</sup> Bush, *The Advancement*, 129.

## **Apologetic Evidence in the Sciences: Arming Christians for Engagement—Examples**

The main crux of scientism and its undergirding religion of Neo-Darwinism is not only philosophically riddled with problems, but many examples from renowned scientists can give Christians tools to bring a fundamental dialogue to scientific materialists, challenging them on their own learnings—but it must be done gracefully. A person’s context must be known as one may make the mistake of challenging a person’s given vocation as he may indeed be a physicist or a biologist. When I learned martial arts from the third student of the great Bruce Lee in Jeet Kune Do, I was exhorted to never “box a boxer,” place kicks against a Tae Kwon Do master, etc.; such is the same when presenting science to a materialist or determinist. In other words, discuss, as well, other scientific proofs and moral dispensations. Sun Tzu said, “Know your opponent,” but one must remember that the unbeliever is not an opponent, but one whom Christians seek to bring the Light and Truth of Christ—humility is warranted, but context matters.

### **The Human Mind, Biology, Chemistry: Facts for Christians against Neo- Darwinism and Scientism**

As has already been noted, Darwin’s colleague, Louis Agassiz, objected to Darwin’s theory in 1871, as qualitative human intelligence could not be codified by evolutionary explanations. Coyne’s statement about what is essentially General Revelation undermines what atheists call “common sense” as they cannot articulate its origin. Couple Coyne’s theme with Darwin’s own following statement, written to colleague William Graham in 1881, a year before his death, and all three are helpful in undermining a determinist view of evolution. Darwin writes, “But then with me the horrid doubt always arises whether the convictions of man’s mind, which has been developed from the mind of the lower animals, are of any value or at all trustworthy. Would any one trust in the convictions of a monkey’s mind, if there are any convictions in such a mind?”<sup>111</sup> Darwin

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<sup>111</sup> Charles Darwin, “To William Graham, July 3, 1881,” *Darwin Correspondence Project*,

also makes clear his underlying racism, prominent historically in scientific materialism, and used by totalitarian dictators, in the same letter: “The more civilised so-called Caucasian races have beaten the Turkish hollow in the struggle for existence. Looking to the world at no very distant date, what an endless number of the lower races will have been eliminated by the higher civilised races throughout the world.”<sup>112</sup>

To this moralistic argument, one can state simple logic, noted by Mark Linville, who makes the “argument from evolutionary naturalism” (EN), and its assertion that morality is an accident of the evolutionary process:

- (1) If EN is true, then human morality is a by-product of natural selection.
- (2) If human morality is a by-product of natural selection, then there are no objective moral facts.
- (3) There are objective moral facts.
- (4) Therefore, EN is false.<sup>113</sup>

If human morality is a by-product of natural selection, then there is no moral knowledge. There is moral knowledge only if there are warranted moral beliefs, and the suggestion under consideration is that an evolutionary account serves to undercut whatever warrant we might have had for those beliefs.<sup>114</sup>

As discussed, God is the reason for any moral knowledge, not to be confused with animal instincts. Linville’s argument is straightforward. Alvin Plantinga notes,

When Thomas (Aquinas) speaks of our nature as including an intellect, he clearly means to endorse the thought that our cognitive faculties are for the most part reliable. But suppose you are a naturalist: you think that there is no God, and that we and our cognitive faculties have been cobbled together by natural selection. Can you then sensibly think our cognitive faculties are for the most part reliable? I say you can’t.<sup>115</sup>

However, apologists must appeal, also, to the hard science in refutation. With

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accessed June 28, 2017, <http://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/letter/DCP-LETT-13230.xml>.

<sup>112</sup> Darwin, “To William Graham, July 3, 1881.”

<sup>113</sup> Mark D. Linville, “The Moral Argument,” *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. William Lane Craig (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 394.

<sup>114</sup> Linville, “The Moral Argument,” 397.

<sup>115</sup> Alvin Plantinga, *Where Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 313-14.

respect to humans and human minds, as a group that has commonality, Bush writes, “Human minds are a *qualitative* jump, not just a *quantitative* one, above animals.”<sup>116</sup> In observing an even more scientific explanation of the specificity that humans have, especially in how human brains, or *encephalization*, occurred, Barrow and Tipler remark,

Primate encephalization cannot be regarded as a typical trend of the mammals, because primates are unusually primitive in the majority of mammalian traits. Even amongst the primates, a well-defined limit on the degree of encephalization was reached in the Miocene in all primate lineages except that leading to homo sapiens, and other hominoid primates were replaced by *less* encephalized, more reproductively successful cercopitheoids. In short, the evolution of cognition, or intelligence and self-awareness of the human type, is most unlikely in the primate lineage.<sup>117</sup>

Cercopitheoids, for definition, are primates such as gorillas and older species of primates. Barrow and Tipler are hardly theists; rather, their book discusses teleology in the observed world. William Lane Craig makes note of these two scientists:

Though diminutive in size in comparison with the cosmos, a human being is nonetheless the most complex structure in the universe. After listing a minimum of ten crucial steps in the evolution of Homo Sapiens, each of which is so improbable that the sun would have ceased to be a main sequence star and so incinerated the Earth before it would occur, Barrow and Tipler estimate that the odds against the assembly of the human genome are between (4-180th) to the (110,000) and 4-360th to the (110,000)!<sup>118</sup>

One can observe, substantially, that an intelligent agent must be involved, whether one adheres to Young Earth Creationism, Old Earth Creationism, or even Evolutionary Creationism. God is involved. There is no other relevant postulate to the data.

### **Abiogenesis: The Lack of a Creator**

Atheist scientists often “omit” or side-step the naturalistic *abiogenesis* origin of life, or “something from nothing but simple chemicals,” as it has *never* been proven in

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<sup>116</sup> Bush, *The Advancement*, 80.

<sup>117</sup> John Barrow and Frank Tipler, *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 131.

<sup>118</sup> William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Truth: Christian Truth and Apologetics* (Wheaton, IL: Crossways, 1994), 118.

any lab, *ever*. Atheist scientists often quip that “lab replication is the only proof for anything.” If abiogenesis had occurred, and could occur, the US and world markets and others would have exploited it for many different uses. The first attempt was by Miller and Urey in 1953. Jonathan Wells introduces and summaries these experiments nicely:

Although Darwin did not pretend to understand the origin of life, he speculated that it might have started in some warm little pond. . . . Russian scientist A.I. Oparin and British scientist J.B.S. Haldane hypothesized that chemicals produced in the atmosphere dissolved in the primordial seas to form a ‘hot dilute soup’ from which the first living cells and merged.<sup>119</sup>

Wells continues,

But it remained an untested hypothesis until the early 1950s when graduate student Stanley Miller and his PhD advisor, Harold Urey, produced some of the chemical building blocks of life by sending an electric sparked through the mixture of gases they thought simulated the earth’s primitive atmosphere. The experiment generated enormous excitement in the scientific community and soon found its way into almost every high school and college biology textbook as evidence that scientists had demonstrated the first step in the origin of life.<sup>120</sup>

It should be noted that Oparin and Haldane thought that lightning was the catalyst. Wells concludes,

The March 1998 issue of National geographic carries a photo of Miller standing next to his experimental apparatus. The caption reads: “approximating conditions on the early earth . . . produced amino acids.” . . . Several pages later, the article explains many scientists now suspect that the early atmosphere was different from what Miller first proposed.<sup>121</sup>

Unfortunately, as Wells notes, almost every high school biology textbook still uses abiogenesis, unexplored and ill-explained, as truth, and it has perpetuated an entire generation of scientists who cling to this notion, for many reasons.

### **Oxygen-First; RNA, DNA, Protein First Arguments**

There are many simple arguments for Christians who lack a scientific background, and one of the most understandable is the need for, or lack of, oxygen in the

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<sup>119</sup> Jonathan Wells, *Icons of Evolution* (Washington, DC: Regenery Publishing, 2000), 9.

<sup>120</sup> Wells, *Icons of Evolution*, 11.

<sup>121</sup> Wells, *Icons of Evolution*, 24-25.

early earth environment to even foster abiogenesis. William Dembski gives a simple explanation that all can understand:

All experiments simulating the atmosphere of the early Earth have excluded free oxygen, because oxygen acts like a wrench in a gear box, actively hindering the chemical reactions that produce organic compounds. If any such compounds did happen to form, free oxygen would quickly destroy them in a process called oxidation. That's why many food preservatives are anti-oxidants—they protect food from the effects of oxidation. . . . If oxygen had been present in the early Earth's atmosphere, organic compounds could not have formed and accumulated the way they did in the Miller-Urey experiment . . . yet *without* oxygen . . . organic compounds may not have accumulated either. Significant levels of oxygen would have been necessary to produce ozone. Ozone shields the Earth from levels of ultra-violet radiation lethal to biological life.<sup>122</sup>

Dembski is correct, and all one needs to do is see the new “ultra-violet” water purifiers on the market today. Lightning produces ozone, which is the ‘sweet smell’ one can recognize after a lightning storm. Ozone eliminates atmospheric pollutants and bacteria. Lightning is God’s way of renewing the atmosphere, neutralizing natural pollutants. Scientists took this cue to invent electrostatic precipitators in coal-fired electrical generation facilities, which neutralize the produced air-pollution before ejection to the atmosphere.

In conclusion of the “oxygen” argument, no laboratory experiment, the foil of atheist scientists, has ever proven the feasibility of abiogenesis or “something from nothing.” William Lane Craig once quipped in a debate, “If something comes from nothing, then why are we not worried about a horse, popping up in your living room, uncaused and from nothing, defiling the carpet? It is worse than magic . . . at least we have the magician.”<sup>123</sup>

Christians may also encounter the three arguments, “DNA-first,” “protein first,” and “RNA-first” arguments, even when skeptics reject the “oxygen” argument. To briefly

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<sup>122</sup> William Dembski and Jonathan Wells, *How to Be an Intellectually Fulfilled Atheist (or Not)* (Dallas: Foundation for Thought and Ethics, 2015), 49-50.

<sup>123</sup> William Lane Craig, “William Lane Craig’s Best Moments,” accessed February 18, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7YNhvwBFew>.

summarize, DNA is the most complex unit in the world. There are over 2 billion strands of DNA in each cell. Skeptics claim that DNA “self-assembled,” with no blueprint other than “chance.” Amino acids form proteins, which form Ribose Nucleic Acid, or RNA, which has to take information from DNA, which is formed by an even more complex process. To simplify and give the exorbitant chances of this occurring, Steven Meyer explains, “Proteins capable of performing many necessary features of a *minimally* complex cell often have to be at least 150 amino acids . . . the probability of producing a single 150-chain amino-acid *by chance* stands at 1 in 10 to the 164<sup>th</sup> power.”<sup>124</sup> That said, a protein has to be able to “fold” to be functionable. Meyer notes of Douglas Axe’s recent experiments that Axe “calculated that the ratio of (a) the number of 150 amino acid sequences (to make one protein) *capable* of folding into stable ‘function-ready’ structures to (b) the whole set of amino acid sequences of that length . . . to be 1 to 10 to the 74<sup>th</sup>.”<sup>125</sup> To be clear, these “folds” are only a fraction of one entire cell. As Meyer notes,

The simplest cell, *Mycoplasma Genitalium*, a tiny bacterium that inhabits the human urinary tract, requires “only” 482 proteins to perform its necessary functions and 562,000 bases of DNA to assemble those proteins (just under 1,200 base pairs per gene). Of course, building a functioning cell . . . would have required more than just the genetic information that directs the protein synthesis. It would have required, at the very least, a suite of existing RNA molecules . . . to process the information stored in the DNA.<sup>126</sup>

So these odds beg the question—which came first? To further explicate the probability of chance, Meyer ends, “The probability of producing a minimally complex cell by chance alone...at best, 1 chance in 10 to the 40,861<sup>th</sup>.”<sup>127</sup> He also writes, “To put this in

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<sup>124</sup> Stephen C. Meyer, *Signature in The Cell: DNA and the Evidence for Intelligent Design* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 217.

<sup>125</sup> Meyer, *Signature in The Cell*, 210.

<sup>126</sup> Meyer, *Signature in The Cell*, 201.

<sup>127</sup> Meyer, *Signature in The Cell*, 219.

perspective, there are 10 to the 65<sup>th</sup> atoms in our galaxy.”<sup>128</sup> Meyer explains, “Neither protein-first, nor DNA-first, nor RNA-first-world models solve the problem of the origin of specified information.”<sup>129</sup>

To summarize this argument, Finnish biotechnologist and former Dean of Chemistry and Material Sciences at Helsinki University of Technology, Matti Leisola, states,

Both RNA-first and DNA-first origin of life scenarios face a significant challenge. Nucleic acids consist of a long series of nucleotide subunits – (which) get connected into long chains to form the nucleic acids RNA or DNA, so nucleotides are essential to form RNA and DNA chains; however, there is no apparent way that nucleotides can be formed in the imagined prebiotic soup. This is a key reason why there are no believable models for the synthesis of RNA or DNA by undirected chemical reactions.<sup>130</sup>

Lastly, Leisola gives two quotes in his book *Heretic* (2018). One is from Sir Fred Hoyle, no friend of Christianity nor theism, who states, “If there were some deep principle which drove organic systems toward living systems, the operation of that principle should be demonstrated in a test tube in half a morning – needless to say, such a demonstration has ever been given.”<sup>131</sup> Leisola then cites James Tour:

James Tour is a leading origin-of-life researcher with over 630 research publications and over 120 patents. He was inducted into The National Academy of Inventors in 2015, listed in “The World’s Most Influential Scientific Minds” by Thomas Reuters in 2014, and “Scientist of the Year” by *R&D Magazine*. Here is how he described the state of the field: “We have no idea how the molecules that compose living systems could have been devised such that they would work in concert to fulfill biology’s functions. . . . From a synthetic chemical perspective, neither I nor any colleagues can fathom a prebiotic molecular route to construction of a complex system. We can not even figure out the prebiotic routes to the basic building blocks of life: Carbohydrates, nucleic acids, lipids, and proteins . . . no chemist understands prebiotic synthesis of the requisite building blocks, let alone assembly into a

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<sup>128</sup> Meyer, *Signature in The Cell*, 208.

<sup>129</sup> Meyer, *Signature in The Cell*, 331.

<sup>130</sup> Matti Leisola and Jonathan Witt, *Heretic: One Scientist’s Journey from Darwin to Design* (Seattle: Discovery Institute Press, 2018), 30-31.

<sup>131</sup> Leisola and Witt, *Heretic*, 36.

complex system . . . so if your professors say it's all worked out, they don't know what they are talking about."<sup>132</sup>

Tour's last sentence is certainly a stark and albeit brave admission. Leisola concludes, "Despite this, Miller's experiment is still presented in textbooks as if it all but sealed the deal for a naturalistic origin of life."<sup>133</sup> The skeptic may reply, "well, you are applying the 'God of the Gaps Theory.'" The odds preclude any scientific explanation other than God in creation. Prominent astrophysicist Hugh Ross rejects this typical retort: "In the 20th century we see the reverse of the God of the Gaps. Non-theists, confronted with problems for which ample research leads to no natural explanations and instead points to the supernatural, utterly reject the possibility of the supernatural and insist on a natural explanation even if it means resorting to absurdity."<sup>134</sup> Next, Christians can advance two of the more prevalent arguments against Neo-Darwinism in the "Cambrian explosion" and "irreducible complexity."

### **The Cambrian Explosion and Irreducible Complexity**

The Cambrian explosion of new animal life forms happened circa 543 million years ago. There suddenly appeared in the fossil record a number of animals that had no predecessors or forms, which would indicate any "change," slowly, to other animal forms. As Meyer notes in his book *Darwin's Doubt*,

Paleontologists . . . have noted several features of the Cambrian explosion that are unexpected from a Darwinian point of view in particular: (1) the sudden appearance of Cambrian animal forms; (2) an absence of transitional intermediate fossils connecting Cambrian animals to simpler Pre-Cambrian forms; (3) a startling array of completely novel animal forms with novel body plans; (4) a pattern in which radical differences in form in the fossil record arise before minor, small-scale diversification and variations. This pattern turns on its head the Darwinian expectation

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<sup>132</sup> Leisola and Witt, *Heretic*, 36-37.

<sup>133</sup> Leisola and Witt, *Heretic*, 37.

<sup>134</sup> Hugh Ross, *The Creator and Cosmos* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001), 100.

of small incremental change only gradually resulting in larger and larger differences in form.<sup>135</sup>

This discovery essentially begs for an intelligent agent. The secondary issue arising from Meyer's conclusions is the theory of "genetic mutation" being the change-agent, when it has been found that most mutations are not beneficial to the animal nor its offspring; hence, that theory is nullified. Meyer goes on to cite two other evolutionary biologists/theorists:

Univ. of Chicago evolutionary biologist Leigh Van Valen and evolutionary theorist William Wimsatt acknowledged to Dr. Paul Nelson that the scientific literature offers no examples of viable mutations affecting the early animal development and body mutations. . . . Nelson concludes, "research on animal development and macroevolution over the last thirty years—research done from within the neo-Darwinian framework—has shown that the neo-Darwinian explanation for the origin of new body plans is overwhelmingly likely to be false—and for reasons that Darwin would have understood." . . . Darwin himself insisted that "nothing can be effected" by natural selection "unless favorable variations occur." . . . Yet, the proper kind of mutations—the mutations that produce favorable changes to early acting, body-plan-shaping, regulatory genes—do not occur.<sup>136</sup>

Meyer then cites two Neo-Darwinist biologists who attempted to "assist" Neo-Darwinism, but they give what one may term "enemy attestation" in their explanation:

Biologists Scott Gilbert, John Opitz, and Rudolf Raff have attempted to develop a new theory of evolution to supplement classical neo-Darwinism, which, they argue, cannot adequately explain large scale macro-evolutionary change. . . . Genetics might be adequate for explaining microevolution, but micro-evolutionary changes in gene frequency were not seen as able to turn a reptile into a mammal or to convert a fish into an amphibian. Microevolution looks at adaptations that concern the survival of the fittest, not the arrival of the fittest. As Goodwin points out, "the origin of species—Darwin's problem—remains unsolved."<sup>137</sup>

Their points about "micro-" verses "macro-" evolution should be highly noted for apologetic points. Also, these micro-changes are *descriptive*, not *prescriptive*: they do not explain any process. The predecessors of macro-changes have never been witnessed in the fossil record. Any intra-species changes, such as dog breeds, have an intelligent agent interceding. In finality, Jonathan Wells makes the summation of the Cambrian explosion:

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<sup>135</sup> Meyer, *Darwin's Doubt*, 34.

<sup>136</sup> Meyer, *Darwin's Doubt*, 263-64.

<sup>137</sup> Meyer, *Darwin's Doubt*, 287.

[The] challenge to Darwin's theory lies not so much in its abruptness . . . 5 to 15 million years . . . or in its extent, as in the fact that *phyla* and classes appeared right from the start . . . as evolutionary theorist Jeffrey Schwartz puts it, the major animal groups "appear in the fossil record as Athena did from the head of Zeus—full blown and raring to go."<sup>138</sup>

Second, Christians can argue the point of "irreducible complexity," which has recently, again, been shown to be scientifically viable. William Dembski explains, "In 1996, Lehigh biochemist Michael Behe..wrote the book, *Darwin's Black Box* . . . [which] *National Review* called one of the most important nonfiction books of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Behe's claim was simple: *Complex molecular systems exist in the biological world that oppose Darwinian explanation.*"<sup>139</sup> Behe first introduced the scientific community to the concept of "irreducible complexity," which simply states that there are biological entities which are so complex, and in many cases, so small, that they defy explanation by Neo-Darwinian evolutionary precepts. Dembski continues,

Behe discusses several irreducibly complex systems in biology, including the intracellular transport system, blood clotting, the cilium, the bacterial flagellum, and more . . . as to the bacterium flagellum, the flagellum is like an outboard motor. . . . Its whip-like tail propels the bacterium through watery environments . . . [reaching] 100,000 rpms and can change in a quarter turn. . . . Harvard biologist Howard Berg calls (it) "the most efficient machine in the universe." The flagellum is so small that scientists were unable to study it until the 1930's, after the invention of the electron microscope.<sup>140</sup>

The complexity of these biological machines and processes are unique and unexplainable by Neo-Darwinian methods and observations. The odds of these happening by chance and from non-teleological processes defies the odds. Dembski concludes,

Given the flagellum's numerous protein constituents and its tight specifications, what are the odds that a chance-based mechanism (like natural selection acting on random variation) could produce it? . . . Given all the matter and time in the universe, I calculated . . . one out of 10 to 1170th (which is the equivalent to the probability of being dealt 190 royal flushes in a row).<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Wells, *Icons of Evolution*, 41.

<sup>139</sup> William Dembski and Sean McDowell, *Understanding Intelligent Design: Everything You Need to Know in Plain Language* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2008), 138-39, emphasis original.

<sup>140</sup> Dembski and McDowell, *Understanding Intelligent Design*, 141-42.

<sup>141</sup> Dembski and McDowell, *Understanding Intelligent Design*, 143.

Behe's assertions were recently noted by Nobel Laureates by using intelligent design as a deductive theory and inference in their methodology, which as we discussed, varies from the current reliance on the inductive model:

The recent Nobel Prize in chemistry, awarded to Drs. Frances H. Arnold, George P. Smith, and Gregory P. Winter for the ingenious engineering of biomolecules, rewards research that is crucially dependent on the inference to design in biochemistry and to intelligent design as a method of science. . . . They looked for purposes (design) in biomolecules, and used random genetic variation to engineer better biological processes. They did, in a very real sense, what design pioneer Michael Behe discovered in his principle of *irreducible complexity*: there are some biological functions that are complex in such a way that they cannot evolve simply by random variation and unintelligent natural selection. Intelligence must be added to the process to achieve high levels of biological complexity and function. The Nobel researchers showed how intelligence, coupled to variation, is essential to the evolution of biological novelty. Certain levels of biological complexity are so intricate and exquisitely purposeful that they are beyond the feeble power of random chance and mindless selection. They require the application of intelligence to evolve. Once again, it's design science, not Darwinism, that wins Nobel Prizes.<sup>142</sup>

This article is as of October 15, 2018, and it verifies not only Behe's assertions but a return to deductive scientific methodology, which has left many in the evolution field upset as per atheist Coyne's responses in the article, whom I have cited elsewhere. One of the apologetic points, also, is that this discovery includes blood clotting—it is irreducibly complex as well; hence, two easily remembered arguments. All the refutations to the theories of irreducible complexity refer to “self-assembly” and “selection”—which is teleological. Therefore, it begs the question, *what* is causing the change, even if it is a positive mutation, which has been shown to be faulty, and, *why*?

In summation, the adherents of scientism cannot explain the teleological process for Neo-Darwinism other than “trial and error” and “chance.” Why would a simple organism have any *need* or *want* to change? What is both the philosophical and teleological argument for one organism *changing* to another? If it is “survival of the fittest” per the basics of Darwinism, then why did many *without* these mechanisms of increasing

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<sup>142</sup> Michael Egnor, “Behe's Irreducible Complexity Validated by Chemistry Nobel,” *Evolution News & Science Today*, October 15, 2018, <https://evolutionnews.org/2018/10/behes-irreducible-complexity-validated-by-chemistry-nobel/>.

complexity survive? Simple mutation, as has been argued, is deleterious to organisms. Abiogenesis, mutation as the means of separate species generation, and the accounting of the human ability to study human environs and humanity through a determinist lens, are all false. As renowned Chinese Paleontologist J. Y. Chen observes, “In China, we can criticize Darwin, but not the government. In America, you can criticize the government, but not Darwinism.”<sup>143</sup>

### **Physics: Facts for Christians against the Scientism— The Big Bang, Fine-Tuning, and Quantum Physics**

Although space does not permit for the myriad of arguments in physics for the transcendence of God in the earthly physical realm, three of the more notable arguments include the first cause in the Big Bang theory, “fine tuning,” and quantum physics, the latter of which was discussed briefly in the last section of chapter 2. Christians need to begin, though, with the philosophy behind the theology which is best noted in thirteenth-century Dominican friar, Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas said that reason was *in* God and *displayed* by God. His “Five Ways” essay asserted that the cause of the universe was God, but the fifth of these is the most poignant for the discussion. It states how an orderly and stable environment must be created by an intelligent agent, God, for even atheist scientists to be able to do science, and, that everything seen in the natural realm is a result of an intelligent force. Causation is the basic premise, not only for creation, but for the “fine-tuning” in the universe, which will be discussed later. Aquinas states,

The fifth way is taken from the governance of the world. We see that things which lack intelligence, such as natural bodies, act for an end, and this is evident from their acting, always, or nearly always, in the same way, so as to obtain the best result; hence, it is plain that not fortuitously, but designedly, do they achieve their end. Now whatever lacks intelligence cannot move towards an end, unless it be directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence, as the arrow is shot to its

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<sup>143</sup> Meyer, *Darwin's Doubt*, 52.

mark by the archer. Therefore, some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end, and this being we call God.<sup>144</sup>

Aquinas' theories are all built on Aristotle's philosophy, injected into his theology, and rightly so. The atheist must still cling to notions of "everything from nothing" in trying to explain the creation of the universe let alone the stability seen forthwith. The atheist will cling to the notion of randomness and chaos being a creative force; however, does that, itself, not violate the principles under which they do empirical science? Can one truly do empirical science in a space of chaos? How can the atheist explain the environmental stability that is seen from their own perspective? Aquinas continues, "Divine Providence does not exclude other causes; rather it orders them so that the order which Providence has determined within itself may be imposed on things, and thus, secondary causes are not incompatible with Providence; instead, they carry out the effect of Providence."<sup>145</sup>

God is always active, but His works are most times sight unseen. J. P. Moreland notes,

God is not to be seen as a direct causal factor in the sense of suspending or overriding the laws of nature and acting as a primary causal agent who creates a gap in the natural fabric by acting in it in a way other than normal, regular activity; rather, God is constantly active in each and every event that happens. God sustains natural processes in existence and expresses freedom to act by employing natural processes mediately as secondary causes to accomplish God's purposes in the world.<sup>146</sup>

### **The Big Bang Theory: The Case for a Creator**

The Big Bang Theory is accepted science, and it actually makes the case for a Creator; however, atheists are hard-pressed to explain how the universe was created "from nothing." Everything has a cause, as Aquinas noted. William Lane Craig made famous the *kalam* cosmological argument, which apologist Ken Boa explains, "The *kalam*

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<sup>144</sup> William Edgar and K. Scott Oliphint, "Summa Theologica," *Christian Apologetics Past and Present to 1500* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 1:407.

<sup>145</sup> Brian Davies, *Thomas Aquinas's Summa Contra Gentiles: A Guide and Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 257.

<sup>146</sup> J. P. Moreland, quoted in R. Douglas Geivett and Gary Habermas, *In Defense of Miracles: A Comprehensive Case for God's Action in History* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 135.

cosmological argument . . . was first developed by medieval Muslim philosophers. . . . [It] is essentially a philosophical, deductive proof: 1) Whatever begins to exist has a cause. 2) The universe began to exist. 3) Therefore, the universe has a cause.”<sup>147</sup>

While the late Oxford theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking’s true position on theism has changed from time to time, implied in some of his writings, the scientism community still proclaims he is an atheist.<sup>148</sup> As such, he makes the assertions that *gravity* or *quantum fluctuations* were the cause of the Big Bang. Hawking’s colleague, John Lennox, refutes this theory:

One of the main conclusions of (Hawking’s) *The Grand Design* is: “Because there is a law of gravity, the universe can and will create itself out of nothing.” . . . The main issue for now, however, is that gravity or a law of gravity is not “nothing” . . . when physicists talk about “nothing,” they often appear to mean a quantum vacuum, which is manifestly “not nothing.” In fact, Hawking is surely alluding to this when he writes, “We are a product of quantum fluctuations in the very early universe.”<sup>149</sup>

Hawking’s assertion begs the question: who or what created gravity? Other scientists have adopted the gravity theorem, but with a twist. They exclaim that the universe has imploded and exploded many times. However, this would violate the Second Law of Thermodynamics as it would “bounce” less and less, like a ball. Ross states, “Even if a bounce mechanism were discovered or devised theoretically, the number of bounces or oscillations would be limited because of entropy (energy degradation).”<sup>150</sup> In fact, Ross claims, as does mainstream science in observations through the Hubble Telescope, that the universe in the outer reaches is still expanding. He states,

A big bang creation event implies a universal expansion of the universe from a beginning several billion years ago. The most careful measurements of the velocities of galaxies establish that such a cosmic expansion has been *proceeding* for the past

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<sup>147</sup> Ken Boa and Robert Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons: An Integrative Approach to Defending Christianity* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001), 118.

<sup>148</sup> See Ross, *The Creator and The Cosmos*, 121-23, for various arguments on Hawking’s beliefs.

<sup>149</sup> Lennox, *God and Stephen Hawking*, 29-30.

<sup>150</sup> Ross, *The Creator and The Cosmos*, 89.

14.9 billion years, a cosmic age measure that is consistent with all other cosmic age measurements.<sup>151</sup>

However, the skeptic can reply, “so what—we are here.” The issue of “fine tuning,” that is, the universe being so precisely created, that there is no recourse other than an intelligent agent being involved.

### “Fine-Tuning” of The Universe

Ross gives two examples that all Christians can understand and use:

For the universe to produce all the stars and planets necessary to explain the possibility of Earth sustaining physical life, the value of the cosmic mass density must be fine-tuned to better than 1 in 10 to 60th, and the value of the space energy density to better than 1 in 10 to 120th . . . in the words of [atheist physicist] Lawrence Krauss, “this one part in the 10 to 60th and 10 to 120th is by far the most extreme fine-tuning yet discovered in physics.” An analogy that does not even come close to describing the precarious nature of this cosmic balance would be a billion pencils all simultaneously positioned upright on their sharpened points on a smooth glass surface with no vertical supports.<sup>152</sup>

Ross also writes,

Not only must the universe be fine-tuned to get enough nucleons, but also a precise number of electrons must exist. Unless the number of electrons is equivalent to the number of protons to an accuracy of 1 part in 10 to 37th or better, electromagnetic forces in the universe would have so overcome gravitational forces that galaxies, stars, and planets never would have formed. . . . One part in 10 to the 37th is such an incredibly sensitive balance that it is hard to visualize . . . cover the entire North American continent in dimes all the way up to the moon, a height of about 239,000 miles. Next, pile dimes from here to the moon on a million other continents the size of North America. Paint one dime red and mix it into the billion piles of dimes. Blindfold a friend and ask him to pick out the one red dime—the odds he will pick the red dime are 10 to the 37th. And this is only one of the parameters that is so delicately balanced to allow life to form.<sup>153</sup>

The “fine tuning” argument is observed in every scientific discipline, and the evidence is readily available.

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<sup>151</sup> Ross, *The Creator and The Cosmos*, 222-23.

<sup>152</sup> Ross, *The Creator and The Cosmos*, 151.

<sup>153</sup> Ross, *The Creator and The Cosmos*, 150.

## Quantum Physics: Does God Work in the Quantum Realm?

The final example in this section, *quantum physics*, has been previously discussed in the last of the exegesis; however, some simple scientific arguments can be discussed with the skeptic. Briefly, at the sub-atomic level, there are particles and energy “strings” that “gel” atoms, which are always in a constant state of “flux.” In other words, they are always moving. Because they are constantly moving, it comports with Einstein’s Theory of Relativity. Amit Goswami notes,

Before Einstein, everyone thought that time was absolute, that everything happened in time, and, that clocks operated unaffected by movement. Wrong, said Einstein’s creative insight. Instead, time is relative to motion. A moving clock, such as one carried on a spaceship, runs slower. . . . It enabled Einstein to develop a new mechanics from which came the wonderful  $E=mc^2$ .<sup>154</sup>

The key issue is “motion.” The time-space fabric, as noted in the last exegesis, is known to be “bent” at the end of the expansion of the universe, thus offering a glimpse that this is scientifically correct; hence, one can look to other biblical passages of God’s Divine Action *always* present. Ross explains,

These space-time discoveries have relevance to biblical passages such as Jeremiah 23:24 and Psalm 139, which speak of God’s immanence—His capacity to be present everywhere simultaneously within everything He has created. Other passages, such as Kings 8:27; Job 37:23; Isaiah 55:8-9; and 1 Timothy 6:16, focus on God’s transcendence—His freedom to operate beyond the boundaries of cosmic space and time, unconfined by all that He has created.<sup>155</sup>

At the sub-atomic level, photons and other “particles” or “waves” are literally “non-local.” What does this mean? Simply, they can be in two positions at once, and some particles can communicate with each other, even though they may be millions of miles apart—they are “entangled” by their electromagnetic properties. Goswami summarizes this simply for non-physicists:

Quantum physics gives us an amazing principle—nonlocality. The principle of locality says that all communication must proceed through local signals that have a

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<sup>154</sup> Amit Goswami, *GOD Is Not Dead: What Quantum Physics Tells Us about Our Origins and Who We Are* (Hampton Roads, VA: Hampton Roads, 2008), 77.

<sup>155</sup> Hugh Ross, “Space and Time,” in *Dictionary of Christianity and Science*, ed. Paul Copan et al. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 637.

speed limit. Einstein established this as the speed of light. . . . This locality principle . . . precludes instantaneous communication via signals. . . . Yet, quantum objects are able to influence one another instantaneously, once they interact and become correlated through quantum nonlocality. This was demonstrated by the physicist Alain Aspect and his collaborators in 1982 for a pair of photons. . . . The conclusion based on these experiments is radical. Quantum consciousness, the precipitator of the downward causation of choice from quantum possibilities, is what esoteric spiritual traditions call God.<sup>156</sup>

To further understand this theory, called the “Copenhagen interpretation,” it was first codified in 1955 by Neils Bohr. Science and mathematics philosopher Jan Faye notes, “Bohr saw quantum mechanics as a generalization of classical physics although it violates some of the basic ontological principles on which classical physics rests.”<sup>157</sup> What is “violated” is the theory that two objects that can occupy the same space at the same time. In other words, this theory is *outside* of the “Newtonian sphere,” or “extra”-ordinary to that which observable science is based. These objects, however, are “entangled”—all seems to be connected. Scientific journalist George Musser explains,

Professor Tim Maudlin of New York University and one of the world’s leading philosophers of physics in the 1990’s [sums]: “I always thought, and still do, that the discovery and proof of non-locality is the single most astonishing discovery of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. . . . The world is not just a set of separately existing localized objects, externally related only by space and time. Something deeper, and more mysterious, knits together the fabric of the world.”<sup>158</sup>

Musser’s book is titled from an Einstein quote, “Spooky Action at a Distance,” which, one can rightly attribute to God in the Trinity in action. God’s actions are outside time, space, and matter. Bruce L. Gordon’s notes,

The Copenhagen interpretation needs recourse to a *nonphysical* causality that grounds quantum outcomes. This transcendent requirement comports well with an occasionalist conception of Divine Providence and idealist metaphysics. . . . [It] stands alone as technically adequate but metaphysically incomplete. As noted, this creates a fertile field for the metaphysics of divine action.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Goswami, *God is Not Dead*, 68-69.

<sup>157</sup> Jan Faye, “Copenhagen Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, July 24, 2014, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/qm-copenhagen/>.

<sup>158</sup> George Musser, *Spooky Action at a Distance* (New York: Scientific American/Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015), 11.

<sup>159</sup> Bruce L. Gordon, “Quantum Theory, Interpretations of,” in Copan et al., *Dictionary of*

This argument also breaks the determinist paradigm, which so many of scientism reject in the “free will” argument; whereas, they argue that our thoughts are already determined by neuro-chemical responses—we have no free will nor can God act. Astrophysicist Bernard Haisch replies, “Newtonian physics is no longer king at the fundamental level. That clears the way for free will theoretically, and the recent quantum measurements confirm free will experimentally.<sup>160</sup> Haisch concludes in a quip, “You would have to believe that somehow your decision to go see Mozart’s ‘Marriage of Figaro’ or a Rolling Stones concert can be traced back to the atomic level.”<sup>161</sup>

In conclusion, while this is a simplified explanation, it is one that most Christians can grasp and can use in trying to explain away determinism to a skeptic. The “free will” argument is no longer a “stumbling block” per the atheist’s view of determinism—that we are all simply a set of determined molecules and other chemicals, “dancing to our DNA,” as Richard Dawkins once quipped. The notion that God is unable to interject into this world is dissembled. Dawkins’ notion simply defies, also, the experiential knowledge of millions of believers.

### **Archaeology to Prove Biblical Inerrancy**

Archaeological evidence is tangible—one can see it, touch it, and grasp historical context from it. It is plainly irrefutable, unlike many arguments which dot the religion-science incompatibility dialectic landscape. For me, this evidence began the path to conversion and belief. As Joseph Holden and Norman Geisler note,

No book from ancient times has more archaeological confirmation than the Bible. Noted biblical scholar Nelson Glueck declared, “As a matter of fact . . . it may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear

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*Christianity and Science*, 552-53.

<sup>160</sup> Bernard Haisch, *The Purpose Guided Universe: Believing in Einstein, Darwin, and God*. (Fairlakes, NJ: New Page Books, 2010), 200.

<sup>161</sup> Haisch, *The Purpose Guided Universe*, 202.

outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible.” After surveying the evidence, even the secular magazine *US News & World Report* concluded (in October 25, 1999) that: “In extraordinary ways, modern archaeology has affirmed the historical core of the Old and New Testament—corroborating key portions of the stories of Israel’s patriarchs, the Exodus, the Davidic monarchy, and the life and times of Jesus.”<sup>162</sup>

As the evidence is almost overwhelming, I will give three brief examples that finally triggered me, and they are easily remembered and visible today: Sennacherib’s cylinder and the Battle for Jerusalem, Pilate’s Marker, and the evidence for the census ordered by Caesar that brought Mary and Joseph to Jerusalem, the latter being a well-worn skeptic objection.

### **The Taylor Prism, Strengthened Walls, and Siloam Tunnel**

My first experience with the truth of biblical archeology was “Sennacherib’s cylinder,” also referred to as the “Assyrian Prism” or “Taylor Prism,” which is documented in the Bible in Isaiah 36 and 37, 2 Kings 19, and 2 Chronicles 32. To give a brief summary, Sennacherib in 705 BC began a conquering of all the cities in national Israel beginning with Israel, the northern Kingdom, then the southern Kingdom of Judah with Jerusalem being the capital. The northern kingdom of Israel had been conquered with its inhabitants taken to Assyria. While King Hezekiah of Judah had been paying tribute to forestall the inevitable invasion, he also built a water tunnel to supply the city of Jerusalem during any siege as well as broad walls. Assyrian King Sennacherib in 701 BC, after surrounding Jerusalem while his army besieged the city of Lachish to the southwest, sent an ultimatum to Hezekiah. Hezekiah appealed to Isaiah, who advised him to seek the Lord, which he did. Isaiah prophesized that victory would be Jerusalem’s despite Hezekiah’s “earthly preparations,” of which, the Lord was not happy as Hezekiah relied not on Him, but himself. As noted in both Scripture and the cylinder, 185,000 and more Assyrian troops surrounded Jerusalem. This number is 9,000 more than the authorized strength of

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<sup>162</sup> Joseph M. Holden and Norman L. Geisler, *The Popular Handbook of Archeology and the Bible* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2013), 139.

the entire US Marine Corps. Sennacherib had been used by the Lord to punish all Israel; however, as 2 Kings 18:19-22 and Isaiah 36 note, he began to defy God and boast that it was by his own hand that these conquests had been undertaken. Second Kings 19:20-34 and Isaiah 37:21-35 then both recount Isaiah's prophecy to Hezekiah as both rebuke and promise of victory over the Assyrians. Both Isaiah and 2 Kings 19 end with the Assyrians being destroyed. The two notable pieces of archaeology described by Scripture are first, the strengthened "broad walls" constructed by Hezekiah, and second, the water tunnel, and both are still found in Jerusalem. Fortifications at Lachish are also notable, as arrowheads and a siege ramp have been found. Holden and Geisler write,

Hezekiah appears to have stopped paying the Assyrian vassal taxes (2 Kings 18:14-16) . . . reflecting what many believe to be an economic revolt by the remaining cities in Judea, including Lachish (2 Kings 18:13-14). Hezekiah understood that in order for Jerusalem to survive the coming Assyrian siege, he would need to strengthen his fortification defenses and make sure the people had access to water. According to 2 Chronicles 32:5, Hezekiah strengthened the walls that had been broken down and built another outer wall to reinforce the existing wall structure. In addition, he stopped the flow of water that came from the Gihon spring, which lay outside the city walls, and diverted its water to the west side of the City of David.<sup>163</sup>

Isaiah 37:36-38 reads, "Then the angel of the Lord went out and put to death 185,000 men in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning, there were all the dead bodies!" The siege had been broken by God. It should be noted that the Book of Sirach, although in the *Apocrypha*, also describes this. Historian Mark Link notes, "The Book of Sirach simply says, "God struck the camp of the Assyrians and routed them with a plague." Herodotus, the ancient Greek historian, also recorded the event. Some historians, taking their lead from Sirach, suggest the disaster was triggered by a sudden wildfire epidemic of bubonic plague."<sup>164</sup> Holden and Geisler also note, "Excavations at Lachish have exposed earthen siege ramps piled against the city walls and high quantities of

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<sup>163</sup> Holden and Geisler, *The Popular Handbook of Archeology and the Bible*, 265.

<sup>164</sup> Mark Link, *These Stones Will Shout: A New Voice for The Old Testament* (Niles, IL: Argus, 1975), 171.

Assyrian arrowheads. One mass grave contains nearly 1,600 skeletal remains, testifying to the carnage experienced.”<sup>165</sup> The aforementioned cylinders document this history, just as the Bible does. Holden and Geisler summarize,

Neither the Bible nor the annals record that Jerusalem was conquered. If in fact Sennacherib had conquered Hezekiah at Jerusalem, he surely would have written about it, as he did the lesser 46 cities . . . challenges to the historicity of Hezekiah and his position among the kings of Judah have largely vanished due to these extra-biblical sources. . . . The discovery of Hezekiah’s broad wall, the Siloam tunnel, the Annals of Sennacherib, and more recently, Hezekiah’s royal clay seal impression (bullae) has solidified his historical place alongside other ancient figures.<sup>166</sup>

Also, as stated in the *NIV Archaeological Study Bible*, “In 1850, twelve stone slabs were discovered in Sennacherib’s palace in Ninevah. . . . They vividly depict Sennacherib’s victory over the fortified town of Lachish in 701 B.C. (2 Kings 18:13-15).”<sup>167</sup> These carvings are referred to as *The Lachish Reliefs*. This is tangible evidence in three parts.

Another tangible archaeological example is the marker that Pontius Pilate planted near Caesarea Maritima, which proves that Pilate was not some mystical figure. David Dockery writes, “In 1961, an Italian archaeologist, Antonio Frova, discovered an inscription at Caesarea Maritima on a stone slab. . . . The inscription in Latin . . . *Tiberium . . . Pontius Pilate . . . Prefect of Judea*. . . . This inscription is the only archaeological evidence of both Pilate’s name and this title.”<sup>168</sup> Pilate also minted unique coins that held the image of Emperor Tiberius’s image, as he was his mentor.

### **Archaeological Evidence to Prove the Controversial “Census”**

One of the most notable of controversies levied by skeptics is the census ordered by Caesar that brought Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem. To review this in summarizing

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<sup>165</sup> Holden and Geisler, *The Popular Handbook of Archeology and the Bible*, 265n.

<sup>166</sup> Holden and Geisler, *The Popular Handbook of Archeology and the Bible*, 268.

<sup>167</sup> *NIV Archaeological Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 559.

<sup>168</sup> David Dockery, quoted in Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 67.

from the *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology*, Randall Price and Wayne House state,

Luke 2:1 reads, ‘In those days, Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.’ . . . Luke presents Joseph and Mary as obeying the decree, necessitating their journey to Bethlehem. . . . There have been arguments that the timing of the census is off. Historical sources say that Quirinius oversaw a census in AD 6. . . . However, there is good reason to believe that Luke is not referring to the AD 6 census in his Gospel. In Acts 5:37, Luke records the high priest Gamaliel also referring to Judas [a zealot who revolted against the census/taxation] and the census revolt. . . . Luke says the census at the time of Jesus’s birth was the ‘first’ census while Quirinius was governing Syria. If the date of AD 6 is accepted for the census described by Josephus (*Ant. 18.4*) and Gamaliel, and knowing that Roman censuses took place every fourteen years, there would have been one around approximately 8 BC. We know from Egyptian sources that there was indeed a census between 10 and 9 BC. Being a frontier province, it is not impossible that a census ordered by Caesar in Rome would take a period of time to reach Judea. Further, there is evidence that Roman rulers at times attempted to delay a number of edicts due to his fear of inciting the Jews.<sup>169</sup>

Geisler concurs, “Now Quirinius did take a census in A.D. 6, too late for Jesus’s birth, and Herod died before Quirinius became governor. Was Luke confused? No; in fact, he mentions Quirinius’ later census in Acts 5:37. It is most likely that Luke is distinguishing this census in Herod’s time from the more well-known census of Quirinius.”<sup>170</sup> What, though, is the archaeological evidence? It comes from perhaps the greatest of Christian archaeological apologists, Sir William Ramsay, who had been an atheist. Ramsay had been a classics and archaeology professor at Oxford in the late nineteenth century. At the behest of nagging Christian students, he started a journey to prove the historical inaccuracy of the New Testament, especially the Book of Acts. Because of his findings, he was converted. He states, “Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy. . . . this author should be placed along with the very greatest historians.”<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Randall Price and H. Wayne House, *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 265-66.

<sup>170</sup> Norman L. Geisler and Ronald Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask: A Handbook on Christian Evidences* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 200-201.

<sup>171</sup> William Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New*

Price notes of Ramsay's archaeological findings,

Quirinius's presence in Syria is evidenced by archaeological finds . . . Sir William Ramsey . . . discusses in length two stone inscriptions that were discovered in and near Pisidian Antioch. . . . The inscription uses the title "Quirinius duumvir," meaning (he) was co-ruling with Gaius Caristanius. One final inscription . . . is found on the tombstone of Q. Aemilius Secundus, who conducted Quirinius' census in Apamea, just south of Antioch . . . dated to 20 A.D . . . if the inscription of the first stone is dated before 4-5 B.C., then it is entirely correct that he was governing in Syria. Ramsey dated the inscription to ca. 8 B.C . . . occasioned by the victory of Rome over Homonadenses in 8 B.C. Moreover, Luke uses the participle form of the Greek word *hegemoneuo* ("ruling," "governing") . . . if Luke is saying he is governing in Syria rather than the official governor of Syria, he was correct in his facts.<sup>172</sup>

Biblical scholar Jack Lewis adds, "Ramsey argued on the basis of evidence from an inscription at Antioch in Pisidia that Quirinius held office in 11 or 10 to 8 or 7 B.C. The inscription describes him as *Dummvir* (honorary mayor) of Antioch."<sup>173</sup>

These three examples of archaeology in the recent past are confirming the historicity of the Bible, and more is being uncovered every year. As Pastor Emeritus at MBC, Lon Solomon, has said many times, "The more we dig out of the ground, the more the Bible is proven correct." Unfortunately, this evidence is not covered in many textbooks of history in the post-modern era. It is imperative to spread this kind of hard evidence, which not only correlates to, and corroborates, ancient history by non-biblical sources, but many times, corrects it. Christian apologists must be knowledgeable of this history as it is but another subject that can bring the lost to a path where evangelism and conversion can be effected. Groothuis notes, "But the biblical evidence . . . indicates that arguments in favor of Christianity are one way by which God reaches those in need of God's provision. The claim that no one is argued into Christianity is simply false."<sup>174</sup>

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*Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1915), 22, quoted in McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, 63.

<sup>172</sup> Price and House, *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology*, 266-67.

<sup>173</sup> Jack P. Lewis, *Historical Backgrounds of Bible History* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1971), 147.

<sup>174</sup> Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 29.

## **Apologetics Arguments and Law: Arming Christians For Engagement**

### **Legal and Socio-Political Arguments Christians Must Know**

The legal and socio-political arguments need to be a fronted apologetics message. These arguments affect not only how Christians must address the issues of Christianity in the public square, but also the use of government facilities, the practice of teaching the Bible in the public schools, and the underlying move toward collectivist philosophies, which are wrought by an absence of God for a worship of the state. In covering the thoughts of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Christian historian Tony Lane remarks that Bonhoeffer “was concerned about how to confront secular religion-less man. Since . . . the thirteenth century, humanity has moved steadily towards independence from God. God has been progressively excluded from science, art, and even ethics . . . increasingly, man runs his affairs without reference to God.”<sup>175</sup>

Many in the “DC reality” constantly harp upon religion as being separate from culture and society; truly, the theme has become “freedom *from* religion” vice “*of* religion,” sliding toward the failures of the French Revolution. Religious discourse within the political realm, which affects all other socio-economic strata and decisions, has been associated with fanaticism in the words “evangelical” and “fundamentalism.” These words have perceptions of negative connotations, especially theological legalism, contrary to the Founder’s wishes. In one glaring example, Carson notes, “After the destruction of the World Trade Center, Andrew Sullivan wrote an article for the *New York Times* comparing Christian fundamentalists with Muslim terrorists in the ground that both hold to exclusivist beliefs.”<sup>176</sup> Sullivan is a professed “married gay Catholic.” In another example, Carson notes just how far the judiciary has become involved in even making

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<sup>175</sup> Tony Lane, *A Concise History of Christian Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 283.

<sup>176</sup> Carson, *The Intolerance of Tolerance*, 45.

theological observations as courts have also become infected with scientism. In a court case involving *Americans United for The Separation of Church and State vs Prison Fellowship Ministries* (2006), Carson writes, “Judge Pratt complains, ‘The evangelical Christian stance towards religious institutions is one of suspicion . . . contemptuous of Roman Catholic reliance on papal authority, Marian devotion, and veneration of the saints. . . . They believe in the literal bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.’”<sup>177</sup> Why is a federal judge commenting on theological concerns, let alone using those kinds of false theological premises in a secular case? William Watkins notes, “Through their judicial decisions, black-robed judges have put religion in serious trouble . . . between the *American Civil Liberties Union, People for The American Way, Americans United for the Separation of Church and State* . . . religious freedom has taken a real beating over the last several decades.”<sup>178</sup> The issue for congregants is having a knowledge of some of the legal issues, as not knowing these arguments promotes a fertile ground for Secular Humanism. Whereas, Secular Humanism is indeed a favored religion, currently, which will be explained later in this section.

### **Separation of Church and State: A False Meme**

The most notable argument for Christians to understand is the false meme of “separation of church and state.” This phrase does not appear in the Constitution. It has been used as a wedge to deny schools the ability to teach creationism or even ID science in the classroom. Until the middle of the twentieth century, the Bible was welcomed into classrooms and schools. The phrase was first uttered by Thomas Jefferson in 1802, when responding to a letter to him from the Danbury Baptist Association in Connecticut, which feared the Congregationalist Church’s driving to make their denomination a state-

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<sup>177</sup> Carson, *The Intolerance of Tolerance*, 142-43.

<sup>178</sup> William D. Watkins, *The New Absolutes: How They Are Being Imposed on Us* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1996), 49, emphasis original.

sponsored church. Indeed, there were many “state churches” until 1851. Fea notes, “In Massachusetts, the Congregational establishment would hold on until 1833. . . . Maryland’s overtly Christian 1776 constitution would remain in place until 1851.”<sup>179</sup> The actual letter states,

Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that *their* legislation should “make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,” thus building a wall of separation of church and state.<sup>180</sup>

While secularists make the claim that this phrase in the letter proves the impetus for removal of religions from the public discourse and anything government related, except scientism through Secular Humanism, even at the state level, Fea postulates, “On January 3, 1802, Jefferson decided to attend religious services at the House of Representatives. . . . Thus, two days after he wrote his reply to the Danbury Baptists, which included the infamous ‘wall of separation’ phrase, Jefferson was attending religious worship in, of all places, a federal building.”<sup>181</sup> Jefferson’s own intention was not freedom *from* religion. This phrase was never cited until 1878, and, it had no real effect until 1947. Carson notes that the phrase “wall of separation between church and state”

entered the vocabulary of the Supreme Court in 1878 (*Reynolds vs. United States*), though it probably played little if any role in that decision. The climax came in the landmark *Everson vs. Board of Education* [1947] in which Justice Hugo L. Black, reading the majority opinion and citing no precedent other than *Reynolds*, famously argued that in the words of Jefferson, “The First Amendment, itself, has erected it a wall of separation between church and state. . . . That wall must be kept high and impregnable. We could not approve the slightest breach.”<sup>182</sup>

Jefferson’s language in the famous letter states, “The legitimate powers of government

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<sup>179</sup> Fea, *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation?*, 145.

<sup>180</sup> “Jefferson to Danbury Baptist Association,” January 1, 1802, cited in Dreisbach, *Thomas Jefferson*, 148, quoted in Fea, *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation?*, 164.

<sup>181</sup> Fea, *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation?*, 165-66.

<sup>182</sup> Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, 175.

reach *actions only, and not opinions.*” One must ask, is not Black’s use of Jefferson’s opinion contradicting Jefferson’s own words? There was never a precedent for this in the language of the Constitution nor any legal cases—it was Jefferson’s opinion; however, it began to affect cases from then on.

It is helpful for the Christian to know some of the cases in recent contexts. To give some historical context, Nazism and Communism had become recognized and practiced in the early twentieth century in America before World War II, despite the horrors associated with it, much of it un-reported by the media. With these two collectivist ideas came the accompanying secularism and rejection of religion in lieu of Secular Humanism. Historians Fred Schwartz and David Noebel note that the “German poison,” as mentioned by R. C. Sproul, was becoming prominent in American universities, they state,

Frederick A. Hayek’s, *The Road to Serfdom* [1944], observed the mental collectivizing of students in Germany: “Many a university professor during the 1930’s has seen English and American students return from the continent uncertain whether they were Communists or Nazis and certain that they hated Western liberal (in the traditional sense) Civilization.”<sup>183</sup>

Schwartz and Noebel go on to cite,

Secular Humanism is the only worldview allowed in public schools. Humanist Charles Francis Potter wrote in his 1930 tome, *Humanism: A New Religion*, that, “Education is the most powerful ally of Humanism, and every public American school is a school of Humanism. What can the theistic Sunday Schools, meeting for an hour once a week, and teaching only a fraction of the children, do to stem the tide of a five-day program of humanistic teaching?” . . . The US Supreme Court designated Secular Humanism a religion in 1961, yet has made sure that Secular Humanism is still allowed to be taught in the classroom.<sup>184</sup>

Many secularists believe that Secular Humanism is not a religion, but when vying for the benefits, such as tax-exemption, they do. However, to back Schwartz and Noebel’s claim, even the Secular Humanist Tom Flynn cites,

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<sup>183</sup> Fred C. Schwartz and David C. Noebel, *You Can Still Trust the Communists . . . to Be Communists (Socialists and Progressives too)* (Manitou Springs, CO: Prentice-Hall and Christian Anti-Communist Crusade, 2010), 255.

<sup>184</sup> Schwartz and Noebel, *You Can Still Trust the Communists*, 270-71.

In a footnote to *Torcaso v. Watkins* (1961), Justice Hugo L. Black wrote: “Among religions in this country which do not teach what would generally be considered a belief in the existence of God are Buddhism, Taoism, Ethical Culture, Secular Humanism, and others.” Justice Black just had his facts wrong. . . . That didn’t keep then-Justice Antonin Scalia and then-Chief Justice William Rehnquist from citing the footnote in their pro-creationist dissent to 1987’s *Edwards vs. Aguillard*.<sup>185</sup>

The legal precedents are solid for Secular Humanism being a religion, despite their efforts, especially noting Justice Black, who first cited “the wall,” akin to “enemy attestation.”

The philosophical foundations for their arguments are built from decades past. Carson cites Christian author and university professor, Robert Benne:

Much as German Lutherans in the 1930’s separated the two kingdoms (government under law separated from Christianity under the Gospel) and allowed the Nazi movement to go unchecked by appeal to the intellectual and moral content of the Christian vision, so this approach would allow modern secular learning to go unchallenged by that vision.<sup>186</sup>

As stated in this nexus, “Progressives,” who absorbed this notion despite Western countries fighting a costly World War, still acceded to the notion that the “state” gives rights, not God. Schambra and West note,

In (Progressives’) view, human beings are not born free. John Dewey, the most thoughtful of the (early 20th century) Progressives, wrote that freedom is not “something that individuals have as a ready-made possession.” It is “something to be achieved.” In this view, freedom is not a gift of God or nature. It is a product of human making, a gift of the state. Man is a product of his own history, through which he collectively creates himself. He is a social construct. Since human beings are not naturally free, there can be no natural rights or natural law. Therefore, Dewey also writes, “Natural rights and natural liberties exist only in the kingdom of mythological social zoology.”<sup>187</sup>

Consequently, from this history, the stage was set for the acceptance of Black’s decision in 1947, and the following cases will note that justices are somewhat perplexed in their interpretations, owing to the un-Constitutional nature of the phrase. Richard Neuhaus

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<sup>185</sup> Tom Flynn, “Secular Humanism Defined,” 2002, accessed August 5, 2018, <https://secularhumanism.org/what-is-secular-humanism/secular-humanism-defined/>.

<sup>186</sup> Robert Benne, *Quality with Soul: How Six Premier Colleges and Universities Keep Faith with Their Religious Traditions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 133, quoted in Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, 212.

<sup>187</sup> William Schambra and Thomas G. West, “The Progressive Movement and the Transformation of American Politics,” July 18, 2007, <https://www.heritage.org/political-process/report/the-progressive-movement-and-the-transformation-american-politics>.

states,

In 1952, in a dispute over students getting off from public schools in released time for religious instruction, Justice Douglas, hardly a religiously observant man, wrote, “We are a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being” (*Zorach v. Clauson*). As time went on, however, the court’s references to religion had less and less to do with what is usually meant by religion. . . . Religion no longer referred to those communal traditions of ultimate beliefs and practices ordinarily called religion. Religion, in the court’s meaning, became radically individualized and privatized. . . . *After having excluded traditional religion, then, the legal and political trick is to address questions of right and wrong in a way that is not “contaminated” by the label “religious.” . . . It places a burden upon the law to act religiously without being suspected of committing religion.*<sup>188</sup>

The court continued to “slide” toward the “wall” in a case that would become the impetus for the infamous case of Madelyn Murray O’Hair, which gained national notoriety. In *Abington School District vs. Schempp* (1963), Edward Schempp, a Unitarian Universalist, objected to the reading of Scripture every morning per school policy. As Neuhaus notes, the Supreme Court of the United States went somewhat tentatively toward ruling in favor of the “wall,” but with “misgivings”:

Justice Potter Stewart in his dissenting opinion: “And a refusal to permit religious exercises thus is seen, not as the realization of state neutrality, but rather as the establishment of a religious secularism, or at least, as government support of the beliefs of those who think that religious exercises shall only be conducted in private.” . . . Although agreeing with the decision, Justices Goldberg and Harlan also had grave misgivings: “But the unilateral devotion to the concept of the neutrality can lead to invocation or approval of results which partake simply of that noninterference and noninvolvement with the religious which the Constitution commands, but of a brooding and pervasive devotion to the secular and a passive, or even active, hostility to the religious.”<sup>189</sup>

The last phrase of Justice Goldberg’s and Harlan’s commentary is notable, and one would hope that these words could be levied as precedent in future cases.

### **The Case That Changed All: Madelyn Murray O’Hair**

The notorious case that removed God and prayer from the schools was brought

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<sup>188</sup> Richard Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1984), 80-81, emphasis added.

<sup>189</sup> Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square*, 102.

by atheist and communist Madelyn Murray O’Hair. As Rabbi Daniel Lapin notes,

On June 17, 1963, in an act of judicial fiat that went against the will of the majority of the Americans, the Supreme Court, with only Justice Potter Stewart dissenting, awarded victory to O’Hair and defeat to millions of Americans. . . . [Her] victory marked one of these changes today. The removal of prayer from the public schools is generally regarded as an enlightened move that spoke against bigotry and with compassion to all Americans whatever their faith or lack thereof. . . . Few Americans are aware that O’Hair actually harbored a maniacal hatred for America and tried to emigrate to the Soviet Union.<sup>190</sup>

History proves that, unfortunately, societies cannot escape, nor attempt to separate, the concatenation of collectivist movements and the eradication of religion. They are inexorably tied; however, the more recent objections of any religious speech, even in the public square, as “offensive,” have reinforced the meme while *hiding* the socialist underpinnings. “Politically-correct” speech, or being “offended,” has become the de facto objection, with any relation to political theories relegated to “conspiracy theory.”

“Sensitivity training” is needed: “re-education.” R. Albert Mohler concludes,

To understand how the new moral regime uses sensitivity training, it is useful to think back to iconic works of the twentieth century, such as Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* and George Orwell’s *1984*. These sensitivity training programs represent efforts to bring intellectual cleansing. And now, in some jurisdictions, they can be inflicted upon religious believers who dare oppose the morality of the new regime.<sup>191</sup>

Neuhaus cites this political correctness in the rejection of freedom of religion in any public forum in another case example:

After-school meetings on school property can deal with any subject—political, philosophical, sexual, social—except religion. . . . The public exercise of religion is prohibited as an “establishment” of religion. . . . In *Lubbock Independent School District v. Lubbock Civil Liberties Union* (1983) . . . the public school permitted students to gather for prayer and Bible study on school property after school hours. . . . The LCLU won. . . . The court said, “such religious meetings might give the ‘impressionable student’ that ‘the state has placed its imprimatur on a particular religious creed.’” The court wrote, “an adolescent may perceive ‘voluntary’ school prayer in a different light if he were to see [student leaders] . . . participating in the ‘captive audience’ setting of a school.” Elliot Wright comments: “Maybe the captain

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<sup>190</sup> Daniel Lapin, *America’s Real War* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1999), 32-33.

<sup>191</sup> R. Albert Mohler, Jr., *We Cannot Be Silent* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2015), 129.

of the public school football team should be prohibited from all communal prayer in the ‘captive audience’ setting of small towns.”<sup>192</sup>

The courts, in reality, are also violating the taxpayer’s rights in the use of public facilities. That said, what happened to the free will for one to abstain from prayer as the LCLU is citing coercion? Is the “group-think” fear not also present in Secular Humanism, to which there seems to be no objection? Religion, except Secular Humanism, is all but barred from the school due to the misuse of Jefferson’s letter, which was, again, *only an opinion in a letter*, and not from a substantive treatise and commentary on the contexts of the original meanings and intents of the Founders, such as *The Federalist Papers*. Fea cites, in what could be noted as a very close historical distance to the Founders, that “in ‘Commentaries on the Constitution,’ written by Supreme Court Justice Joseph Story [1833] . . . [he] argues: ‘The real object of the First Amendment was not to countenance, much less to advance, Mahometanism, or Judaism, or infidelity, by prostrating Christianity; but to exclude all rivalry between *Christian* sects.’”<sup>193</sup> Fea later writes, “The ‘no-establishment’ clause applied only to the national government. The First Amendment also forbids the national government from inhibiting the ‘free exercise’ of religion. . . . It was not meant as a means of protecting government from the religious beliefs of its citizens.”<sup>194</sup>

### **The “Keepers of The Wall”**

So, from where do the present objections come? Who or what organization is the definitive “keeper of the wall”? There are many organizations who espouse the false “separation meme” like the Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, run by an ordained minister, Barry Lynn, in the liberal Church of Christ. One of the more

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<sup>192</sup> Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square*, 147.

<sup>193</sup> Fea, *Was America Founded As a Christian Nation?*, 72. The 1833 date does not appear in Fea’s book. I researched the date, which can be noted for *Story’s Commentaries* at Belcher Foundation, “Justice Joseph Story on Church and State and the Federal Bill of Rights (1833),” accessed November 10, 2018, [http://belcherfoundation.org/joseph\\_story\\_on\\_church\\_and\\_state.htm](http://belcherfoundation.org/joseph_story_on_church_and_state.htm).

<sup>194</sup> Fea, *Was America Founded As a Christian Nation?*, 163.

notorious is Mickey Weinstein, who runs the Military Religious Freedom Foundation. While Weinstein proclaims a Jewish heritage, a Republican lineage, and was an officer in the Judge Advocate General in the US Air Force, he is truly a leftist secularist, as seen in the biography on his website: “Mikey Weinstein is the undisputed leader of the national movement to restore the obliterated wall separating church and state in the most technologically lethal organization ever created by humankind: the United States armed forces.”<sup>195</sup> Weinstein is infamous for suing the Department of Defense in removing Christian crosses from government furnished cemeteries, sometimes successfully. He is not about “freedom of religion” whatsoever. That said, all these “separation of church and state” themed-organizations ground themselves in the American Humanist Association (AHA), which promotes the “wall” above all else. The AHA mission statement reads,

Free exercise rarely requires the intervention of legislators. When they do intervene, it tends to result in special rights for the religious that discriminate against the nonreligious. The AHA treats the support for government policies that bolster the secular foundations of law and culture in the United States as a continuous struggle. Accordingly, we work to defeat proposed legislation and eliminate existing laws that harm the Jeffersonian wall between church and state; we litigate and participate in other legal advocacy through the AHA’s legal organization, the Appignani Humanist Legal Center; and we mobilize members to speak out against governmental religious favoritism.<sup>196</sup>

The AHA cites the Humanist Manifesto II of 1933, and in the summation, they explain, “We urge that parochial loyalties and inflexible moral and religious ideologies be transcended.”<sup>197</sup>

What is especially curious is that the AHA has the just recently codified

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<sup>195</sup> Military Religious Freedom Foundation, “Michael L. ‘Mikey’ Weinstein, Esq.—MRFF Founder & President,” accessed November 12, 2018, <https://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/about/michael-l-mikey-weinstein/>.

<sup>196</sup> American Humanist Association, “Key Issues > Religious and Government Separation,” accessed November 12, 2018, <https://americanhumanist.org/key-issues/religion-government-separation/>.

<sup>197</sup> American Humanist Association, “Humanist Manifesto II,” accessed November 12, 2018, <https://americanhumanist.org/what-is-humanism/manifesto2/>.

Humanist Manifesto III on their website and has only one reference to the “supernatural.” The language is much more irenic towards religion; however, the same “collectivist” language appears. Paragraph 9 states, “We seek to minimize the inequities of circumstance and ability, and we support a just distribution of nature’s resources and the fruits of human effort so that as many as possible can enjoy a good life.”<sup>198</sup> Overall, however, why does the AHA need a *manifesto*, or guide, to enable what humanists and atheists think is already in the human from evolution? Why does the AHA equate such a document with a communist term like Karl Marx’s *The Communist Manifesto*? The AHA’s stated goal is the removal of anything that relates to the Judeo-Christian basis of Western culture, which, they unfortunately *need* to operate *inside* Western culture as well as “stealing” God, moreover, established Judeo-Christian morality into their own ethics at times, fashioning it as “reason.” It is meant to be deceptive.

The “wall” has become the foundation, and all Christians should understand the ramifications of this false premise. The Rutherford Institute interviewed noted legal analyst and historian Daniel Dreisbach, who is a professor in the Department of Justice, Law and Society at American University in Washington, DC, and editor of *Religion and Political Culture in Jefferson’s Virginia* (2000) and *Religion and Politics in the Early Republic* (1996), and reported,

Do you think the average religious person is really restricted by the wall of separation metaphor?

The metaphor emphasizes the concept of separation, unlike the First Amendment which speaks in terms of disestablishment, or non-establishment to be more precise, and of the free exercise of religion. *Furthermore, the wall of separation metaphor, unlike the First Amendment, imposes restrictions on religion and religious perspectives.* The literal text of the First Amendment restricts government only; whereas a wall, given its bilateral nature, restricts the role of religion and faith communities as well. The wall metaphor implies that the First Amendment *restricts* people of faith, religious spokesmen, and religious leaders also, but *that’s far beyond the requirement of the text of the First Amendment.*

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<sup>198</sup> American Humanist Association, “Humanism and Its Aspirations: Humanist Manifesto III, a Successor to the Humanist Manifesto of 1933,” accessed February 16, 2019, <https://americanhumanist.org/what-is-humanism/manifesto3>.

Do you think the average religious person is really restricted by the wall of separation metaphor?

Oh, absolutely. I think there is much evidence to support this both in rhetoric and in judicial opinions. *Quite often the courts have embraced this wall metaphor as a substitute for the First Amendment.* It has been used to silence people speaking from a religious perspective in the public marketplace of ideas. We see this in court cases limiting the rights of students to express their faith in public school settings. We see this in public forum cases where *religious groups want to use public forums on the same terms and conditions as secular groups. The courts are restricting that ability.*<sup>199</sup>

Christians are being silenced in the public square, and Secular Humanism is not; whereas, it is the *defacto* “religion” in the public square and in the schools. Equal time, in meaning Christianity should be allowed in the public dialogue, and in legal terms, is warranted. The incremental continuance of the slow squelching of Christianity is noted by Mohler:

Even while religious liberty is supposedly recognized and affirmed, it is often being transformed and minimized. The Obama administration provides a classic example of this. Numerous representatives of the administration, including President Obama himself, have shifted their language from “freedom of religion” to “freedom of worship.” Though these two phrases may appear to be very similar, “freedom of worship” is a severe and deadly reduction of freedom of religion. Religious freedom is not limited to what takes place in the confines of a church building and its worship. Freedom of worship marginalizes and ghettoizes Christian speech so that its liberties only exist within the confines of a church facility—but it does not guarantee a right to a public voice. Freedom of worship essentially muzzles the Christian in the public square.<sup>200</sup>

All Christians must understand these legal arguments because they block the freedom of religion as well as the Great Commission. They block any intellectual pursuit of intelligent design theory being taught in the public schools, as it is deemed “scientifically irrational.” Scientism, a quasi-religion of its own disguised in the recognized religion of Secular Humanism, is the politically correct teaching. The issue of free speech being squelched, coupled with the nearly violent rhetoric of scientism through Darwinism, is at a frenzied pitch, as noted in Professor Richard Dawkins’ quote in the introduction. John

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<sup>199</sup> John W. Whitehead and Casey Mattox, “Thomas Jefferson and the Wall of Separation between Church and State: An Interview with Author Daniel Dreisbach,” *The Rutherford Institute*, October 28, 2002, [https://www.rutherford.org/publications\\_resources/oldspeak/thomas\\_jefferson\\_and\\_the\\_wall\\_of\\_separation\\_between\\_church\\_and\\_state](https://www.rutherford.org/publications_resources/oldspeak/thomas_jefferson_and_the_wall_of_separation_between_church_and_state), emphasis added.

<sup>200</sup> Mohler, *We Cannot Be Silent*, 127.

West cites an example:

Darwinists . . . routinely apply the label of “Taliban” to anyone who supports teaching students about scientific criticisms of Darwinian theory. Biology professor P. Z. Myers at the University of Minnesota, Morris . . . has demanded the “public firing and humiliation of some teachers” who express doubts about Darwin. He says that evolutionists should “screw the polite words and careful rhetoric. It’s about time for scientists to break out the steel-toed boots and brass knuckles, and get out there and hammer on the lunatics and idiots.”<sup>201</sup>

Myers’ tempestuous words bring forth an important apologetic point:

Christians cannot resort to this type of rhetoric. Grace matters. Each Christian is responsible for pressing these issues in each school district and university, and likewise, *each* Christian is responsible for speaking out in the public square—*not* as a church or institution, but as a believer, despite the consequences, as the Christian’s prize lies with Him. Christ and all the apostles, as well as the patristic fathers, suffered as believers must. Not only are fellow creations in need of hearing the truth, but this country is sliding slowly toward the nullification of the individual worth of each person via collectivism and its “fruits” of euthanasia, abortion, and other atrocities. Terry Mortenson writes,

Dangerous ideas have always had negative consequences, as it is tragically seen in the 20th century, which reaped so much bitter fruit in the wake of philosophies which implemented Darwin’s ideas. Few more chilling examples of the fallout of Darwinism can be found than Nazism and communism, which consciously applied Darwinian principles, and radically affected millions of lives. Our Western world, once so firmly grounded on Judeo-Christian principles, is now deeply into its post-Christian phase illustrated by partial birth abortion, marriage radically redefined, euthanasia, etc. This decline shows no sign of abating.<sup>202</sup>

Even if one eschews the intra-US politics involved, the totality of the argument can be summarized as this: will God be forsaken as He was many times throughout all history, and, will Christians succumb to God being a forbidden topic in a free society? Believers can surmise the nexus of all this by one of the more famous trials in United States history—The Alger Hiss spy trial. The main witness, Whitaker Chambers, gives an

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<sup>201</sup> John G. West, *Darwin Day in America: How Our Politics and Culture Have Been Dehumanized in The Name of Science* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2007), 369.

<sup>202</sup> Terry Mortenson and Thane H. Urey, *Coming to Grips with Genesis: Biblical Authority and the Age of The Earth* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2008), 425.

interesting look at both God and Communism:

In the early fifties ex-Communist Whittaker Chambers said, “in this century within the decades it will be decided for generations whether all mankind is to become Communist, whether the whole world is to become free, or civilization as we know it to be, completely destroyed. . . . [I have] been in turn a witness to each of the two great faiths of our time—God and communism.” . . . “Communism,” he said, “is the vision of man without God.” It was man’s second oldest faith: “its promise was whispered in the first days of the Creation under the tree of the knowledge of good and evil: ‘ye shall be as GODs.’ These were the ‘irreconcilable opposites’ - GOD or Man, Soul or Mind, Freedom or Communism.”<sup>203</sup>

### Conclusion

In summation of this chapter, it is helpful to repeat the thoughts of agnostic mathematics and philosophy professor at Princeton, David Berlinski, which are a favorite for Christian apologist Ravi Zacharias in his lectures to college students. Berlinski’s answers to his own questions are in italics:

Has anyone provided a proof of God’s inexistence? *Not even close*. Has quantum cosmology explained the emergence of the universe or why it is here? *Not even close*. Have the sciences explained why our universe seems to be fine-tuned to allow for the existence of life? *Not even close*. Are Physicists and biologists willing to believe in anything so long as it is not religious thought? *Close enough*. Has rationalism in moral thought provided us with an understanding of what is good, what is right, and what is moral? *Not close enough*. Has secularism in the terrible twentieth century been a force for good? *Not even close to being close*. Is there a narrow and oppressive orthodoxy of thought and opinion within the sciences? *Close enough*. Does anything in the science or in their philosophy justify claim that religious belief is irrational? *Not even ballpark*. Is scientific atheism a frivolous exercise in intellectual contempt? *DEAD ON*.<sup>204</sup>

Berlinski’s words cover the entire spectrum of this chapter. These are but a few examples of issues that must be pressed in apologetics to effect evangelism. Likewise, I truly believe that this country’s future will be decisively harmed if God is not a part of the public square and the education system. Bible-believing Christians have seen this

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<sup>203</sup> Ann Coulter, *Treason: Liberal Treachery from the Cold War to the War on Terrorism* (New York: Crown Forum, Random House, 2003), 8, quoting Whitaker Chambers, *Witness* (New York: Random House, 1952), 7, 16.

<sup>204</sup> David Berlinski, *The Devil’s Delusion: Atheism and Its Scientific Pretensions* (New York: Crown Publishing, 2008), flap cover, emphasis original.

historically and are not immune. Historian William Federer states, “In 1909, Theodore Roosevelt warned: ‘I believe that the next half century will determine if we will advance the cause of Christian civilization or revert to the horrors of brutal paganism. . . . The choice between the two is upon us.’”<sup>205</sup> How right he was, and currently, still is.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who experienced the horrors of which Roosevelt predicted, said in his Templeton Prize Lecture Address in 1983,

But if I were asked today to formulate as concisely as possible the main cause of the ruinous Revolution that swallowed up some sixty million of our people, I could not put it more accurately than to repeat: Men have forgotten God; that’s why all this has happened. . . . And if I were called upon to identify briefly the principal trait of the entire twentieth century, here too, I would be unable to find anything more precise and pithy than to repeat once again: Men have forgotten God.<sup>206</sup>

Solzhenitsyn’s Nobel lecture in 1970 also recounts life-inexperienced youth believing that communism and scientism would be the future during the Russian revolution, and this country has seen a resurgence in that youthful vigor of failed collectivism.

Solzhenitsyn states,

Young people, being at an age when they have no experience except sexual, when they have as yet no years of personal suffering and personal wisdom behind them, enthusiastically repeat our discredited Russian lessons of the nineteenth century and think that they are discovering something new. They take as a splendid example the Chinese Red Guard’s degradation of people into non entities. A superficial lack of understanding of the timeless essence of humanity, a naïve smugness on the part of their inexperienced hearts--We’ll kick out those fierce, greedy oppressors, those governors, and the rest (we!), we’ll then lay down our grenades and machine guns, and become just and compassionate. Oh, of course! Of those who have lived their lives and have come to understand, who could refute the young, many DO NOT DARE argue against them; on the contrary, they flatter them in order not to seem “conservative,” again a Russian phenomenon of the nineteenth century, something which Dostoevsky called SLAVERY TO HALF-COCKED PROGRESSIVE IDEAS.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> William Federer, “If Christian Civilization Were to Disappear,” *World News Daily*, August 13, 2018, <https://www.wnd.com/2018/08/if-christian-civilization-were-to-disappear/>.

<sup>206</sup> Alexander Solzhenitsyn, “Godlessness: The First Step to the Gulag,” Templeton Prize Lecture, May 1983, London, quoted in Chris Banescu, “Alexander Solzhenitsyn: ‘Men Have, Forgotten God,’” July 5, 2011, <https://www.sott.net/article/386089-Alexander-Solzhenitsyn-Men-Have-Forgotten-God>.

<sup>207</sup> Alexander Solzhenitsyn, “Alexander Solzhenitsyn Nobel Lecture (1970),” accessed February 6, 2018, <https://www.scribd.com/document/118907026/Aleksandr-Solzhenitsyn-Nobel-Lecture-1970>, 7,

The re-insertion of God into the schools and the public square must be forefront.

Schwartz and Noebel note,

In America, the Secular Humanist worldview of Margaret Sanger and John Dewey monopolizes public education. It is a worldview held by thousands and thousands of professors and teachers and entertainers and professional organizations. “The secular humanistic system of values has now become the predominant way of thinking in most of the power centers of society,” says James C. Dobson and Gary L. Bauer. . . . The 20th century has been the century in which various humanistic worldviews vigorously and systematically eradicated the biblical Christian worldview from the public square. If this continues, we can expect the same results—heartache, death, and destruction.<sup>208</sup>

History inevitably repeats itself, and just as happened in the Old Testament many times, recent events in society have proven that when God has been historically vacated, chaos ensues.

As Dobson’s and Bauer’s remarks of “power centers,” Washington, DC, can rightly be stated as *the* power center. A vigorous apologetics program can change the dialogue here and emigrate to other centers, which precipitates Christian discourse inserted into the public square.

In closing, one might ask why I do not give examples of Bible inerrancy and other textual issues dealing directly with the Bible? The simple answer is that atheists and skeptics do not believe in the Bible, might never explore it, and the issue is for the targeted audience to question their current “religion”—scientism and Secular Humanism—by directly challenging what they currently have learned or have been told. Once a wedge is inserted into their worldview, evangelism has fertile ground, and the Bible can be shown for its truth, and the Holy Spirit can render action—not that He cannot do this on His own—He wants all Christians involved. As Ravi Zacharias points out, “facts are indispensable to justify belief, and that is where a solution to the problem begins.”<sup>209</sup>

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emphasis original.

<sup>208</sup> Schwartz and Noebel, *You Can Still Trust the Communists*, 252.

<sup>209</sup> Ravi Zacharias, *The Real Face of Atheism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 13-14.

As a means to evangelism, with a winsome approach and a Christian walk, truly caring for that person's eternal destiny, apologetics is the answer, especially in the heart of secularist thought: Washington, DC, home of Mclean Bible Church. America benefits as a consequence, but all, as always, is left to Him.

## CHAPTER 4

### PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION TO ASSESS THE APOLOGETICS KNOWLEDGE OF MCLEAN BIBLE CHURCH CONGREGANTS

#### **Research Problem—Knowledge Assessment**

The issue for this chapter was to test what knowledge the congregants actually have so as to ascertain a road forward for effecting evangelism by way of apologetics in the secular Washington, DC environment. Many congregants of churches are unable to engage agnostics and atheists as the latter adhere to the false notion that science and Christianity are incompatible. “Scientism,” which is the latter’s “religion,” is propagated by media, academia, and populist notions. These false notions are the current meme of the “New Atheists,” as discussed in chapter 1. In trying to evangelize, many well-meaning Christians are stymied by this attitude and are ill-equipped to engage them with moral, evidential, and cumulative-case arguments to bring them to a point of evangelism. Most Christians know little of the scientific, historical, and archaeological evidence for attempting to dispel notions that the Bible was a compilation of wonderful philosophical tales developed by humans. They have no knowledge of historical context in the Ancient Near East and thus have a hermeneutical understanding that is completely devoid of historical understanding brought forth today.

Training and knowledge in basic apologetics matter as a pre-evangelistic pursuit. Many persons, if shown through apologetics evidence in archaeological, physical, and environmental science, as well as moral arguments and biblical inerrancy, can be brought to a point where the gospel, first, becomes logical and the truth. That said, a diagnosis of congregants’ knowledge was needed to assist understand what they know and why they believe. Evangelism can only be truly effective if the heart is opened, and

in many cases, apologetics can “lead the brain” of unbelievers to not only assist evangelists per the Great Commission but strengthen Christians’ own faith in times of doubt. The questions for the surveys were attuned to these concerns.<sup>1</sup>

### **Methodology Design Review**

As discussed in chapter 1, the research methodology utilized a Likert form with questions that includes demographics in age, questions of biblical knowledge, and what respondents’ knowledge was on the historical and scientific arguments with respect to the Bible. A pre-survey was administered to assess this knowledge. Following that, three examples of scientific and historical apologetics in lessons were sent by e-mail to the participants, followed by a post-survey to address the worth of the lessons and whether these would be valuable in their evangelism and for their own spiritual maturation. Participants were also asked if they would like to have additional apologetics in sermons and Bible studies as well as formal classes offered by seminary professors, well-versed in apologetics. An un-paired t-test was attempted and was successful.<sup>2</sup> There was a statistically significant difference:  $(t(85)) = 3.89, p = .0001$  in the pre-survey to the post survey. The overall reaction to the efficacy of the lessons was heartening; moreover, the evidence for both need and want of apologetics was even more significant.

The original agreements from the interim pastor in March 2017, at the beginning of my studies at SBTS, were unfortunately untenable to the new staff, the lessons of which were to be adjuncts to sermons during service. Recently, and subsequently, MBC initiated four “geographical regions,” each with a pastor to minister to his area who promulgates a “newsletter” per month on issues and events in those respective regions. I attempted to use these in consultations with the pastors. Pushback from the church in

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix 1.

<sup>2</sup> See raw data in appendix 4.

utilizing these electronic newsletters stymied my attempts at an audience for the surveys and lessons.

My last attempt to find an audience for the surveys and lessons was realized: MBC has four campuses, each with its own security team comprised of congregants who are, or were, law enforcement officers, military, and active members of the US government trained in surveillance and security. In total, this group is just over 80 persons. Since I am the volunteer operations manager for these teams, I used our “Weekly Update” e-mail to request participation. Additionally, a small church-sponsored “apologetics team” of just under 30 persons was also sent the surveys and lessons. Both groups are involved in evangelism. The security team, dubbed “The First Responder Team,” does what MBC deems “Congregational Care,” so their input was especially relevant. They are in constant contact with all their congregations as a matter of practice as they gauge the congregations’ demeanor, individually, for security and ministering, if needed. They often refer persons in spiritual quandary to the counseling pastors.

Demographics were kept to a minimum to encourage more respondents; however, demographics such as age, marital status, and spiritual maturity were asked to gauge information, especially on the influence of generational and socio-cultural variables on apologetics knowledge. The data assumed one set of Likert responses per e-mail; however, since the responses were gathered via a link to Qualtrics survey tools, there was a chance of more responses outside the original e-mails by it being forwarded to others, which I encouraged. The three apologetic lessons with survey hyperlinks can be found in appendix 2.

This study is transferable to other apologetics research or for use in further research. Any church could use this framework in appendices 1 and 2 for assessment of apologetics knowledge. The lessons, themselves, will afford many congregants the knowledge that resources exist to answer questions from unbelievers.

## **Initial Findings**

The surveys and lessons were administered over a two-week period sent in one e-mail with directions on taking the pre-survey, reading the lessons, and then taking the post-survey. The leader of the First Responder Team also sent reminders in our “Weekly Update,” which is sent via the same e-mail stream to 80+ members of the team and some of the church staff. It was encouraged that family members take the surveys and lessons as well. The survey metadata only noted one “spam,” so the transmission was successful. Fifty responses were received for the first survey, and thirty-seven responses were received for the second survey.<sup>3</sup> Some recipients said that they did not see the post-survey, which led to reminders, even though e-mails to cajole persons to finish and participate in both surveys was done. While I would have preferred more respondents in the post-survey, I received several e-mails on the efficacy of the lessons, all of which were positive. I only received one complaint, or suggestion, during a service, from one of the church staff members that some of the technical language was difficult. As she leads a women’s Bible study, some of her students remarked that they had a difficult issue with the technical language, while their husbands and males who took the surveys and lessons enjoyed it. While the demographic questions did not ask for male to female ratios, this might be something to be asked in future surveys.

The research, through a pre-survey, three apologetics lessons, and post-survey was an overall success in gauging the knowledge of the respondents, appetite for more apologetics, and want of apologetics to be included in both sermons, studies, and formal classes.

### **Analyzing and Interpreting the Data: Pre-Survey**

To briefly summarize the demographics, the majority of participants were married and between the ages of 34 to 65 and over. This would fit with the initial context

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<sup>3</sup> See appendix 2.

of those who received the surveys and lessons. Forty-seven of 48 persons considered themselves as being saved.

Item 5 was, “I have been challenged by agnostic or atheist acquaintances, saying that the Bible is unsupported by science and/or history.” While 16 persons of 48 stipulated that they had not been “challenged” in this respect, 32 persons said they had been, and in item 6, in being able to “respond,” 42 were able to respond, while 6 were not. This statistic may be a legacy of the Pastor Emeritus’s insistence on apologetics in sermons.

Item 7 was, “My inability to respond to atheist or agnostic opposition hinders my ability to move people to evangelism.” This item led to a mixture of answers; however, there was nearly an even split. In contrast to the two previous items that would lead one to believe that response was “easy,” this item shows that their knowledge may not be as qualitative as needed to move persons to evangelism. These answers show a glaring gap. I purposely worded the item to “inability” vs. a question with “ability,” which seemed to foster a more honest answer.

Item 8 was, “I believe the Holy Bible is inerrant.” Of the 48 respondents, only 2 disagreed with 41 strongly agreeing. This statistic may be attributed to the respondents all being members, to which they must sign an agreement on biblical inerrancy as part of the faith statement.

Item 9 was, “The Bible is fully supported by science.” While 40 respondents agreed with the statement, 8 did not. While this number is seemingly positive, this again shows a gap that must be rectified in the scientific apologetics, again, combatting “scientism.” A factor to be considered is whether the negative responses were due to a “Young Earth Creationism” versus an “Old Earth Creationism” viewpoint or bias.

Item 10 was, “The Bible is fully supported by history.” Of the 48 respondents, only 1 “somewhat disagreed.” While positive, I must again levy a legacy theory to this as the pastor emeritus was a proponent of explaining Ancient Near East contexts to biblical

accounts in most sermons. I can then account for these answers in the further evidence of question 11, about “archaeology supporting the Bible,” as all were favorable.

Item 12 was, “A lack of the knowledge of the science/history with respect to Christianity inhibits my ability to discuss Christianity with non-Christians.” I inserted this item as a repetition to many of the previous items, especially item 7, to then gauge the authenticity of the respondents’ answers previously. As hoped, this was nearly an even split; however, the negative responses were prominent. That said, item 7 used the words “moved to evangelism,” while item 12 was simply “discussing Christianity.” People may be moved to speak about their faith; however, what is the reaction to this item? The post-survey somewhat showed that they may not be as prepared as they thought, which will be discussed in chapter 5. Does the discussion “about Christianity” lend to further discussions? The preceding may be a needed follow-on item in a future survey. I discuss these issues in chapter 5.

### **Analyzing and Interpreting the Data: Post-Survey**

There were 37 respondents to the post-survey. While the response numbers do not parallel the pre-survey and is still somewhat a mystery to me given the reminder notices, adequate responses were noted for discussion.

The demographics compared to the pre-survey were relatively the same. All persons also noted that they were saved through repentance and acceptance of Christ. All but 6 were married of the 37 responses. The ages remained nearly the same per mean with 35 of 37 being between 35 and 65-over. Again, the demographic represents those who have attended for many years, especially through the transition of pastors. The Pastor Emeritus was somewhat tuned to providing apologetics in sermons, while the current pastor is more focused on expository preaching and application. This is not to slight the current pastor, as he is excellent—David Platt is renowned for his exposition of the Bible—rather, this is to posit the noticeable changes in informational apologetics being lessened in priority in sermons. Platt exhorts evangelism and the Great Commission

in each service as the final prayer is Matthew 28. My contention is that evangelism in the context of Washington, DC, is hindered, in fact blocked, in many instances, by scientism. This is a socio-contextual reality as evidenced at the outset of chapter 1.

Item 5 was, “My knowledge was enhanced by the apologetic lessons.” This was a goal fulfilled. All respondents replied in the positive, with 18 of the 37 “strongly agreeing.” I was pleased that these lessons were well-received.<sup>4</sup>

Item 6 was, “I would like to study apologetics similar to the lessons.” Again, one of the goals was to explore the current apologetics knowledge of the congregants and to assess their appetite for more of the same. Thirty-six of the 37 respondents reported in the positive. I am quite pleased with these results. Anecdotally, I received e-mails from some respondents as to the efficacy of the lessons and wanting more.

Item 7 was, “This knowledge enhances my own faith.” All 37 respondents reported in the positive, with only 7 reporting in the “somewhat agree.” One of the more prominent reasons for the study of apologetics was to assist the individual whose faith is waning because of evil or a tragedy. Cognitive knowledge can assist each with knowing the Bible is true and God is there. Christian brothers and sisters can assist each other and reinforce their convictions during times of trouble with this knowledge, returning them to knowing He is there. Gary Habermas reflected on this in debate with the late Antony Flew, that what he had learned during his Resurrection studies helped him greatly when his first wife succumbed to cancer. “As the doubts came,” he had to reflect on what he had learned.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, I have faced the same, and I immediately reflect on knowing He has a plan.

Item 8 was, “I believe the Holy Bible is inerrant.” All but 1 respondent answered in the positive as juxtaposed to the pre-survey. The mean for the pre-survey

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<sup>4</sup> See appendix 2.

<sup>5</sup> See *The John Ankerberg Show*, “Did Jesus Rise from the Dead—Gary Habermas vs Anthony Flew,” accessed October 22, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ksa8uGe21rw>.

was 5.79. The mean for the post-survey with respect to this item was 5.84, so a positive trend is observed.

Item 9 was, “This knowledge would enable my family and friends to begin a walk in faith.” Thirty-four of the 37 respondents were positive, with 9 being “somewhat agree.” Only 3 answers were negative; of those, 1 was in the “disagree” category and none were in the “strongly disagree” category. These surveys and lessons were sent a few days before the Thanksgiving holidays, purposefully. I asked respondents to discuss faith issues during Thanksgiving table discussions in lieu of the usual political debates to render any relevant information for the post-survey. I was given some anecdotal evidence in e-mails sent to me by respondents in the positive.

Item 10 was, “Apologetics knowledge of the science/history with respect to Christianity increases my ability to discuss Christianity with non-Christians.” All responses were positive, with only 4 of the 37 responses being in the “somewhat agree” category. In juxtaposition to the pre-survey item 12, “A lack of the knowledge of the science/history with respect to Christianity inhibits my ability to discuss Christianity with non-Christians,” I found these answers to be a trending item to the positivity of the lessons as a whole. The pre-survey question 12 levied a 2.90 mean, while this item had a mean of 5.35. This was heartening to observe and can be directly attributed to the lessons.

Item 11 was, “I would like apologetics in all the scientific and historical fields to be a part of every sermon and Bible study.” Thirty-two of 37 responded in the positive, 3 responded in the “somewhat disagree,” and 2 in the “disagree.” This item was asked to ascertain any appetite for apologetics presented in direct studies and inserted in sermons. This overall positive response will assist me in presenting the want for this type of information to the church teaching pastor-staff, as well as additional evidence for a plan in obtaining classes and/or, in the least, reviving the apologetics classes. This class, taught once per week during the 11:00 service, was fairly well-attended. It was discarded by the staff during our pastor transition, even though they were taught by volunteers,

some of whom had some seminary training in apologetics. Overall, the trend to eliminate some of the classes, including apologetics, is a systemic problem in our church, unfortunately. This response is evidence to further discussions with elders and the staff in reviving volunteer-led classes, but item 12 solidifies my premise that congregants want to be given the best training and information with respect to apologetics training that is available.

Item 12 was, “I would like MBC to offer formal classes in apologetics by the staff or qualified professors.” All responses were positive, with 20 of the 37 in the “strongly agree” category, 11 in the “agree” category, and 6 in the “somewhat agree” category. This result is self-explanatory—the evidence for congregants to receive formal training to fulfill this current pastor’s exhortation to Matthew 28 is clear.

### **Conclusions**

This deficiency in apologetics training and knowledge, evidenced in this brief study, affects evangelistic pursuits per the inherent secular nature of Washington, DC. The pastor’s emphasis on missions, rightly, and per his background of being the International Missions Board Executive, can be enhanced by this plan for MBC. More persons in the DC Metro area, unfortunately adhering to scientism, or being “blocked” by it, can be brought to the cross, here in the DC Metro area, first, before being “sent.” “Mission” starts at home, but the strengthening of faith and the ability to break the philosophical and scientific blocks to evangelism via apologetics also assist in overseas missions, which is the new pastor’s primary focus. Evangelism and apologetics, simply, are symbiotic, leading to effect mission here and abroad.

CHAPTER 5  
PROJECT EVALUATION, LESSONS LEARNED,  
AND IMPROVEMENTS

**Evaluation of the Project Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to assess and increase the apologetics knowledge of the congregants at McLean Bible Church to possibly effect training in apologetics. Mclean Bible Church represents a large segment of the Washington, DC population with 15,000 to 18,000 congregants. Mclean Bible Church is a Bible-based, Christ-centered church, adhering to the Southern Baptist Convention and Chicago Statement; this church is very conservative. This research afforded an opportunity to ascertain substantive knowledge of apologetics sans liberal theological rationalizations of Scripture, which most times rejects pure theology, substituting syncretic philosophies aligning with, unfortunately, current populist memes and scientism. Measuring the ability of congregants to defend their faith per 1 Peter 3:15-17 in the context of Metropolitan Washington, DC, which is fraught with scientism, politics, and the false theology of many local churches, was of first importance for this study. Overall, this project accomplished this primary goal with the targeted audience, most of whom are also conservatives in “practice” due to their former and current occupations—military, law enforcement, government operations officers—and service as security members, and all have been thoroughly vetted for their church volunteer service. Their personal contexts lend credence to the authenticity of the results as their membership also warrants an adherence to strict biblical principles. This audience’s responses would be naturally authentic. Chapter 4’s pre- and post- surveys showed the efficacy of the administered lessons in positive trends in the post-survey and reflected a need for more apologetics

knowledge and training efforts by the church through both volunteers and formal classes, as well as insertion into sermons and studies.

Chapter 2 gives the biblical position for the need for apologetics, while chapter 3 gives credence to the notions of scientism and secular humanism affecting evangelism as many unbelievers are stymied by the socio-cultural context of the geographic area. Chapter 3, while extensive, covers each area of apologetics except a thorough review of the defense of Scripture. Most unbelievers will immediately disengage. Evangelism, especially scriptural readings in proselytization, is deemed inconsequential to unbelievers' current lives, pure mystery, or philosophical rambling. Moreover, they deem it incompatible with science and reality in their epistemological worldview. Breaking into that paradigm by using their own scientific naturalism against their arguments, especially in a grace-filled and winsome Christian manner and approach, can then insert a wedge into their thinking.

To summarize the intentions of this project, apologist Douglas Groothuis says, "Apologetics can be used to remove or diminish intellectual obstacles that hinder people from embracing Christ's Lord; thus, it serves as pre-evangelism. In some cases—especially in academic stings where unbelief has become secondary nature for so many—'all this philosophy' is required for evangelism to become even a possibility."<sup>1</sup> Groothuis goes on to cite the great biblical scholar and apologist J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937):

God usually exerts power for conversion in connection with certain prior conditions of the human mind, and it should be ours to create, so far as we can, with the help of God, those favorable conditions for the reception of the Gospel. False ideas are the greatest obstacles to the reception of the Gospel. We may preach with all the fervor of a reformer and yet succeed only in winning a straggler here and there, if we permit the whole collective thought of the nation or of the world to be controlled by

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011), 28.

ideas which, by restless force of logic, prevent Christianity from being regarded as anything more than a harmless delusion.<sup>2</sup>

Gresham's statement is parallel to my purpose for this project in challenging false ideas and setting the conditions for evangelism. In finality, as Groothuis again says, and which has been stated in this project, "The claim that no one is argued into Christianity is simply false."<sup>3</sup> Believers must have a gracious and loving attitude for unbelievers. Many times the peace exhibited by the apologist can be in itself an example to which persons may admit, "I want what you have." This project covered the arguments, biblical exposition, and positive survey results from the lessons given.

### **Evaluation of Project Goals**

The first goal was to measure the current apologetics knowledge of the congregants of McLean Bible Church. A comprehensive assessment of congregants' knowledge was effected in the pre-survey.

The second goal was to compose a training lesson of three apologetics lessons citing the evidential and moral apologetics. After the pre-survey, three apologetics lessons, written for the targeted audience, were administered to that targeted audience via e-mails. These lessons were written in conjunction with chapter 3 so as to parallel them for any pastor using this project. These lessons were also utilized in the SBTS Applied Empirical Research class advanced project as a test of both the collection software and learning what interrogatives should be adjusted.

The third goal was to deliver the apologetic lessons to increase the current apologetics knowledge of congregants of McLean Bible Church. This goal was met; however, the post-survey results did not match the pre-survey numbers, although an

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<sup>2</sup> J. Gresham Machen, "Christianity and Culture," in *Christianity, Education, and the State*, ed. John W. Robbins (Jefferson, MD: Trinity Foundation, 1987), 51, quoted in Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 28.

<sup>3</sup> Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 29.

unpaired t-test was administered for questions as noted which marked the success. Raw data is available per appendix 4 and of value.

The fourth goal was to measure the impact of the apologetic lessons to the congregation and assess the want of more training. The data reflected a positive want, and moreover, a need for increasing the apologetics knowledge of the congregants.

Each goal was met. This project assessed the appetite for apologetics training for the congregants for their own faith and as a precursor for evangelism as discussed in chapters 1 and 3. This was met as evidenced in the surveys.

### **Strengths of the Project**

As this project is geared to be transferable to other churches in the area or other urban areas where scientism is the undergirding philosophy and main stumbling block to evangelism, two strengths are chapter 2 in giving pastors the biblical mandate, and chapter 3 in giving pastors and teachers a sturdy grasp of the issues, both in the scientific/historical/archaeological arguments, but also in the legal arguments and awareness of entities promoting secular humanism, especially in schools. While chapter 3 is lengthy, the arguments are evidenced by PhDs in their respective fields. In my experience in discussions with atheists, *they want to hear what top experts in their fields say, and not what I have to say*. It is vital that Christians are able to give credibility in arguments from those experts, many of whom became believers because of the evidence for Christianity being true. The number one argument I have been told by scientism advocates is that if I do not cite an expert, especially a PhD, then “you have no background in discussing this,” even when they, themselves, do not have an answer per their own context or field of expertise. They will parrot the memes which they have heard, oftentimes never having researched the matter for themselves. Politely challenging them with expert’s knowledge has been very fruitful and usually leads to more discussion. If nothing else, we “leave a stone in their shoe.” In summation, I find this the strength and purpose of this project.

## **Weaknesses of the Project**

In analyzing the surveys, I found that some of the items may have been phrased in a more comprehensive manner. Likewise, I could have added items that would have given better insight to a preceding question. A first weakness, for example, in retrospect, was that I could have asked, “How many times in the past year have you been challenged by atheists in your faith?” This may have gauged how many times a person has been challenged, but also the frequency. In addition, “How many times have you, as a believer, been actually pursuing evangelism, and, were apologetics needed?”

A second weakness was to the items included on both surveys as to biblical inerrancy so as to establish efficacy in the lessons and trending data. I could have asked, “Did the lessons change your mind on biblical inerrancy?” Third, I found the comment from the women’s study group curious, as noted in chapter 4, “Women are not interested in the science with the Bible.” I would add a demographic question as to gender. Would women be more attuned to a moral apologetics lesson?

Last, I may have been too attuned or mindful of people’s time. Many asked how long and how many questions would be in the surveys, and, how long the lessons were. To enable responses, I was purposefully brief.

## **What I Would Do Differently**

As discussed in chapter 4, the agreement between the interim pastor and I was not obliged when the time for conducting surveys and apologetic sermon inserts came. As such, I resorted to using the security team as the audience. In retrospect, this was the work of the Holy Spirit. I could not have asked for a better audience for authenticity and compliance with the format. In retrospect, I may have attempted some qualitative interviews, leading to more evidence, but the quantitative methodology was, and will be, more effective in showing the gaps in knowledge en-masse. Smaller churches may choose to conduct qualitative interviews with evangelism leaders, which may be more effective in their given contexts; however, for this project, it would not have given the

bulk data needed to demonstrate gaps in knowledge, need, and want for apologetics. Statistical data is oftentimes primary when potential resources in money, staff, time, and church space are needed. If doing this again, the only addition would be to do qualitative interviews with some of the staff evangelism trainers and those of the Young Adult group that travel some Friday nights into Washington, DC, to conduct evangelism on the street. These interviews would have accentuated the need for apologetics; however, the time constraints and unfortunate late start due to the mentioned problems prevented this.

### **Theological and Personal Reflections**

I cannot express how much the Holy Spirit has affected all my studies and this project. I owe each night of reading to His illumination of the gospel and knowledge to me, and His ability to assist me in writing this project. This has been overwhelming. Words literally flowed from Him to the pages. He turned my head to the exact books needed to evidence all writings when my pride intended to do it alone.

Since my conversion only 6.5 years ago, which has led to peace through Christ and the instruction of the Holy Spirit, things which I never thought possible have happened as He showed me the path and The Way. I can only imagine what He has planned for me at the conclusion of my studies. I am excited and not the least bit unnerved by the possibilities as He has done it all and will continue to do it all. A verse in reflection, personally and theologically, and in summation says, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” (Phil 4:6)

### **Conclusions and the Way Ahead**

This project taught me much and was guided by the Holy Spirit—I await further guidance, patiently. In the interim, I intend to ask our teaching pastors to read this project to begin a renewed effort to teach apologetics in sermons, studies, and in formal classes to congregants and to the public, in an effort to rekindle an enthusiasm for

evangelism by apologetics as the prerequisite. Believers need to bring Christ back to the public forum and public square. Every person, God's Creation, should know the truth. All Christians are commanded to spreading the gospel. Apologetics, in the definitively secular Washington, DC, metro area, is needed to effect evangelism.

## APPENDIX 1

### APOLOGETICS SURVEY

#### **Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the current knowledge of apologetics of the participant. The central issue is “why” you believe in Biblical Inerrancy, and the moral, scientific, historical, and archaeological lessons that are derived from Scripture. This research is being conducted by John “Sandy” Pidgeon for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and you will answer the some of the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. *By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.* All instrumentation complies with the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary ethics protocols.

#### **Pre-Survey**

1. Do you consider yourself a Christian?  
 A. Yes  
 B. No
2. Have you repented of your sin and trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation?  
 A. Yes  
 B. No
3. Are you married?  
 A. Yes  
 B. No
4. What is your age in years?  
 A. 18-24  
 B. 25-34  
 C. 35-44  
 D. 45-54  
 E. 55-64  
 F. 65 and over

Directions: Respond to the statements based on the following scale:  
 SD= strongly disagree, D = disagree, DS = disagree somewhat,  
 AS = agree somewhat, A = agree, SA = strongly agree  
 Please circle or press on the appropriate answer.

5. I have been challenged by agnostic or atheist acquaintances that the Bible is unsupported by science or history. SD D DS AS A SA
6. I am able to respond to atheist or agnostic secular philosophical/scientific/historical challenges to my faith. SD D DS AS A SA
7. My inability to respond to atheist or agnostic opposition hinders my ability to move people to evangelism. SD D DS AS A SA
8. I believe the Holy Bible is inerrant. SD D DS AS A SA
9. The Bible is fully supported by science. SD D DS AS A SA
10. The Bible is fully supported by history. SD D DS AS A SA
11. The Bible is fully supported by archaeology. SD D DS AS A SA
12. A lack of knowledge of the science/history with respect to Christianity inhibits my ability to discuss Christianity with non-Christians. SD D DS AS A SA
13. I have been exposed to scientific/historical apologetics during sermons and Bible studies. SD D DS AS A SA

## Post-Survey

### Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the current knowledge of apologetics of the participant. The central issue is “why” you believe in Biblical Inerrancy, and the moral, scientific, historical, and archaeological lessons that are derived from Scripture. This research is being conducted by John “Sandy” Pidgeon for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and you will answer the some of the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. *By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.* All instrumentation complies with the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary ethics protocols.

1. Do you consider yourself a Christian?  
 A. Yes  
 B. No
2. Have you repented of your sin and trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation?  
 A. Yes  
 B. No
3. Are you married?  
 A. Yes  
 B. No  
 B. Yes
4. What is your age in years?  
 A. 18-24  
 B. 25-34  
 C. 35-44  
 D. 45-54  
 E. 55-64  
 F. 65 and over

Directions: Respond to the statements based on the following scale:

SD= strongly disagree, D = disagree, DS = disagree somewhat,

AS = agree somewhat, A = agree, SA = strongly agree

Please circle or press on the appropriate answer.

5. My knowledge was enhanced by the apologetics lessons. SD D DS AS A SA
6. I would like to study apologetics similar to the lessons. SD D DS AS A SA
7. This knowledge enhances my own faith. SD D DS AS A SA
8. I believe the Holy Bible is inerrant SD D DS AS A SA

9. This knowledge would enable my family and friends to begin a walk in faith. SD D DS AS A SA
10. Apologetics knowledge of the science/history with respect to Christianity increases my ability to discuss Christianity with non-Christians. SD D DS AS A SA
11. I would like apologetics in all scientific and historical fields to be a part of every sermons and devotions. SD D DS AS A SA
12. I would like MBC to offer formal classes in apologetics by the staff or qualified professors. SD D DS AS A SA

APPENDIX 2  
APOLOGETIC LESSONS

If you have not filled out the “Pre-Survey”, I respectfully request your participation before reading the first lesson. If the link does not open, “hover” over it, and you can press “control + ‘click’ to follow” to open. You can also “cut/paste” it into your browser. Thanks much!

[https://sbtsjohnpidgeon.iad1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_9FZMuGB89IT897f](https://sbtsjohnpidgeon.iad1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9FZMuGB89IT897f)

**Lesson 1**

This first apologetics lesson will deal with the exact evidence which began my journey to belief. My first experience with the truth of biblical archeology was “Sennacherib’s cylinder,” also referred to as the “Assyrian Prism” or “Taylor Prism,” which is documented in the Bible in Isaiah 36 and 37, 2 Kings 19, and 2 Chronicles 32.

To give a brief summary, Sennacherib in 705 BC began a conquering of all the cities in Israel. Remember that Israel had been “split” into two Kingdoms: Israel (the Northern Kingdom) and Judah, (the southern kingdom) with Jerusalem in the south being the capital – “the prize”, or what we would call in military terms, “the center of gravity”. Take Jerusalem, and you take the kingdom! The northern kingdom had returned to idol worship and Canaanite practices, and God was using Assyria with King Sennacherib to punish them. By this time, the northern kingdom had been destroyed and the inhabitants taken as slaves to Assyria (then Nineveh and the surrounding area).

While King Hezekiah of Judah had been paying tribute to forestall the inevitable invasion, he also built a water tunnel to supply the city of Jerusalem during any siege as well as new broad walls. Hezekiah was also hoping for Egypt’s help, which

never came. Assyrian King Sennacherib in 701 BC, after surrounding Jerusalem while his army besieged the city of Lachish to the southwest, sent an ultimatum to Hezekiah. Hezekiah appealed to the prophet Isaiah, who advised him to seek the Lord in the Temple. He laid Sennacherib's letter in the Holy of Holies and pleaded with God that he left Judah's fate to HIM. Isaiah prophesized that victory would be Jerusalem's despite Hezekiah's "earthly preparations." The Lord was not happy as Hezekiah relied NOT on GOD, but himself.

As noted in both Scripture and the cylinder, 185,000 Assyrian troops surrounded Jerusalem. This number is more than the authorized strength of the entire US Marine Corps! Sennacherib had been used by the Lord to punish all Israel; however, as 2 Kings 18:19-35 and Isaiah 36 note, Sennacherib began to defy God and boast that it was by his own hand that these conquests had been undertaken. 2 Kings 19:20-34 and Isaiah 37:21-35 then both recount Isaiah's prophecy to Hezekiah as both rebuke and promise of victory over the Assyrians. Both Isaiah 37:36-38 and 2 Kings 19:35-37 end with the Assyrians being destroyed.

The two notable pieces of archaeology described by Scripture are, first, the strengthened "broad walls" constructed by Hezekiah, and second, the "water tunnel", and both are still found in Jerusalem. Fortifications at Lachish are also notable. Noted Christian apologists and historians Dr. Joseph Holden and the late Dr. Norman Geisler write,

Hezekiah appears to have stopped paying the Assyrian vassal taxes (2 Kings 18:14-16) . . . reflecting what many believe to be an economic revolt by the remaining cities in Judea, including Lachish (2 Kings 18:13-14). Hezekiah understood that in order for Jerusalem to survive the coming Assyrian siege, he would need to strengthen his fortification defenses and make sure the people had access to water. According to 2 Chronicles 32:5, Hezekiah strengthened the walls that had been broken down and built another outer wall to reinforce the existing wall structure. In addition, he stopped the flow of water that came from the Gihon spring, which lay outside the city walls, and diverted its water to the west side of the City of David. (Holden and Geisler 2013, 265)

Isaiah 37:36-38 reads, "Then the angel of the Lord went out and put to death 185,000 men in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning, there were

all the dead bodies!” The siege had been broken by God. It should be noted that the Book of Sirach, although in the Apocrypha, also describes this. Historian Mark Link notes, “The Book of Sirach simply says, ‘God struck the camp of the Assyrians and routed them with a plague.’ Herodotus, the ancient Greek historian, also recorded the event. Some historians, taking their lead from Sirach, suggest “the disaster was triggered by a sudden wildfire epidemic of bubonic plague.” (Link 1975, 171)

Holden and Geisler also note, “Excavations at Lachish have exposed earthen siege ramps piled against the city walls and high quantities of Assyrian arrowheads. One mass grave contains nearly 1,600 skeletal remains, testifying to the carnage experienced.” (Holden and Geisler 2013, 265n.) The aforementioned cylinders document this history, just as the Bible does.

Holden and Geisler summarize,

Neither the Bible nor the annals record that Jerusalem was conquered. If in fact Sennacherib had conquered Hezekiah at Jerusalem, he surely would have written about it, as he did the lesser 46 cities . . . challenges to the historicity of Hezekiah and his position among the kings of Judah have largely vanished due to these extra-biblical sources. . . . The discovery of Hezekiah’s broad wall, the Siloam [water] tunnel, the Annals of Sennacherib, and more recently, Hezekiah’s royal clay seal impression (bullae) has solidified his historical place alongside other ancient figures. (Holden and Geisler 2013, 268)

Ladies and Gentlemen, these artifacts are here today, now! This is the kind of evidence which made me question the populist notion of the Bible being separate from history. This was the first evidence that questioned my own knowledge. Let me give you two more examples from Christ’s time. Another tangible archaeological example is the marker that Pontius Pilate planted near Caesarea Marittima, which proves that Pilate was not some mystical figure. David Dockery writes, “In 1961, an Italian archaeologist, Antonio Frova, discovered an inscription at Caesarea Marittima on a stone slab. . . . The inscription in Latin: Tiberium . . . Pontius Pilate . . . Prefect of Judea. . . . This inscription is the only archaeological evidence of both Pilate’s name and this title.” (Dockery 1999 in McDowell, 67) Pilate also minted unique coins that held the image of Emperor Tiberius’s image as he was his mentor. Lastly, the tomb of the High Priest of the

Sanhedrin, Caiaphas, who went to Pilate to have Christ beaten and crucified, was uncovered during an excavation for new settlements in Israel by accident in 1990. There are various legitimate sites to explore that.

I have attached pictures of “Sennacherib’s Cylinder” and “Pilate’s marker”. If they did not attach, these pictures can be found with a search using those “tags”. I have attached the books for your continued investigation below.

As a side note, I love the Book of Isaiah. It is 66 chapters, just like the 66 books in the Bible. The first half of the book deals with Israel’s continued fall and redemption, then Christ’s coming in Isaiah 53, then the promises of GOD throughout the rest. Coincidence? There are no coincidences! It is almost the Bible within the Bible.

I hope this has been helpful for our first look into apologetics! GOD Bless!

David Dockery, quoted in Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999.

Joseph M. Holden and Norman L. Geisler, *The Popular Handbook of Archeology and the Bible*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2013.

Mark Link, *These Stones Will Shout: A New Voice for The Old Testament*. Niles, IL: Argus, 1975.



Pilate's Marker which also notes his mentor and the Caesar, Tiberius. This is outside Caesarea Maritima just above Tel Aviv.

"Tangible" artifacts in archaeology for the historicity of the Bible.



Sennacherib's Cylinder. Two of these identical stones exist, which indicates event historicity. One is the Taylor Stone, and the other is in the British Archaeological Museum. 2 King's 18 and Isaiah 39.

## Lesson 2

This apologetic's lesson will cover a feature of science that we call "fine-tuning". The atheist scientists all claim that the universe was caused by "an accident" or by "chaos". That said, if there was chaos in this accidental creation, how is it that we see stability in all creation? How is it that we are able to do science without "chaos" or "randomness" entering into our scientific fields of study? Would we also not worry about "something" popping into your living room from "nothing" from "chaos"?

I will cite Ph.D.s in their fields in this lesson, which will deal with facts from physics and one from biology, and, I will try not get technical; rather, I believe the evidence will be thought-provoking.

GOD has created all things with stability and for a reason, sometimes reasons for which we are still discovering. The universe is "fine-tuned" and could not have been created by anything but an intelligent designer – GOD. The physics facts of "fine tuning", which are mathematically staggering, when presented to the atheist, can leave them with a doubt about their own philosophy. For example, Astrophysicist Dr. Hugh Ross explains the "fine tuning" of the precise number of electrons, protons, and neutrons needed for both life and a stable universe:

Not only must the universe be fine-tuned to get enough nucleons, a precise number of electrons [in the universe] must exist. Unless the number of electrons is equivalent to the number of protons to an accuracy of 1 part in 10 to 37th or better, electromagnetic forces in the universe would have so overcome gravitational forces that galaxies, stars, and planets never would have formed... One part in 10 to the 37th is such an incredibly sensitive balance that it is hard to visualize: Cover the entire North American continent in dimes all the way up to the moon, a height of about 239,000 miles. Next, pile dimes from here to the moon on a million other continents the size of North America. Paint one dime red and mix it into the billion piles of dimes. Blindfold a friend and ask him to pick out [that] one dime – the odds are 10 to the 37th. (Ross 2001, 150 summarized)

Now that you have let that "sink in", consider another observation by Dr. Ross:

For the universe to produce all the stars and planets necessary to explain the possibility of Earth sustaining physical life, the value of the cosmic mass density must be fine-tuned to better than 1 in 10 to 60th, and the value of the space energy density to better than 1 in 10 to 120th . . . in the words of [atheist physicist] Lawrence Krauss, this one part in the 10 to 60th and 10 to 120th is by far 'the most extreme fine-tuning yet discovered in physics.' An analogy that does not even come close to describing the precarious nature of this cosmic balance would be a billion

pencils all simultaneously positioned upright on their sharpened points on a smooth glass surface with no vertical supports. (Ross 2001, 151)

Ladies and Gentlemen, keep in mind that the best estimates for the number of atoms in the universe is 10 to the 78th! You can see that the likelihood from these two examples that this all happened by “accident” is patently false. When we confront an atheist with this, as said, it gives them pause. If they reject this, we must be gracious – we have “left a stone in their shoe.” We hope to keep talking with this person in the future. The Holy Spirit then has the beginnings of “fertile ground”.

The same can also be said of the “fine-tuning” we see in the human form, and, it is presented by an atheist who has been critical of theism and Christianity as quoted by Dr. Gary Habermas of Liberty University:

Atheistic astronomer, Sir Fred Hoyle, and agnostic mathematician Chandra Wickramasinghe studied enzyme development. They found the likelihood of spontaneous processes accounting for the chance formation of the information content in life, such as the development of enzymes, is only one chance in 10 to the 40,000th ! These scientists concluded that, ‘Indeed, such a theory is so obvious that one wonders why it is not widely accepted as being self-evident. The reasons are psychological rather than scientific.’ Later in the symposium, Hoyle said that there was simply not enough time in the history of the universe for the evolution of life...Hoyle stated that he could not understand why biologists would not want to deny this...Even more incredible is the amount of information contained in DNA. Scientist Robert Gange explains that “270 million of these hemoglobin proteins molecules of just the right combination reside in each of the 30 trillion red blood cells in your body. Did this just happen by chance? Some people have enough faith to believe it did...but where is the evidence that this came into being by chance? There is none. (Habermas 2003, 57-58 summarized)

This last quote deals with the physics associated with biology in creation; however, you can see that “fine-tuning” in these examples proves that an intelligent agent is responsible, not “chance”. The “Big Bang Theory” is accepted science, and it actually makes the case for a Creator; however, atheists are hard-pressed to explain how the universe was created “from nothing.” They present several theories which you might encounter like “multiverse” and “bounce-back”; however, every one of these theories requires a “first cause”. Everything has a cause, as the 13th century Christian theologian St. Thomas Aquinas noted. Noted Christian apologist Dr. William Lane Craig made famous the kalam cosmological argument, which apologist Ken Boa explains, “The

kalam cosmological argument...is essentially a philosophical, deductive proof:

- “1) Whatever begins to exist has a cause.
- 2) The universe began to exist.
- 3) Therefore, the universe has a cause.” (Boa 2001, 118)

I hope these examples have been helpful in giving you a glimpse of just how untenable the arguments of “chance” are. The “fine-tuning” of all creation, even seen in your back-yard in plants, proves that all creation had a “cause”, and all things have a function in our world, even sharks, which was an unpleasant thing to ponder when doing night combat swimming!

Please, though, be cautious and present these examples with a humble attitude. As a retired SEAL, I am constantly praying for graciousness when confronted by some pretty “loud” unbelievers! The problem is not their “head”, it is their “hearts”, as the evidence is undeniable. Graciousness in our beliefs and our “Christian walk” are the most important aspects when getting an unbeliever to open his mind, while, the Holy Spirit opens his or her heart! GOD Bless!

Boa, Ken and Robert Bowman. *Faith Has Its Reasons: An Integrative Approach to Defending Christianity*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001.

Habermas, Gary. *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003.

Ross, Hugh. *The Creator and The Cosmos: How the Latest Discoveries Reveal God*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001.

### Lesson 3

In this next lesson in this short series, which, I hope has whetted your appetite, we will look at Darwinism, or what atheists today call “Neo-Darwinism”, as they have been trying to rationalize their arguments in the 21st century. I touched on this briefly in the last lesson, but let’s dive into it a bit more.

To begin, Neo-Darwinists claim that creation was an “accident”, but they also claim that all life after the “Big Bang” came from a “warm little pond that was hit by lightning”, thus creating life. They call this “abiogenesis”, or, “life was created by itself.”

So, I ask you, if this is true, why have we not seen this happen again? Would there not be a “market” for this? The answer, my friends, is that this has been tried in the lab and has failed. Please do not be lured by some scientists who have claimed they have produced life in the lab by this process or another. ANY and ALL creations of self-replicating cells, for example, have required an intelligent agent, a scientist, to do this. It has never happened on its own!

The first attempt at this was by Miller and Urey in 1953. Noted scientist Dr. Jonathan Wells relates the story:

Although Darwin did not pretend to understand the origin of life, he speculated that it might have started in some warm little pond. . . . Russian scientist A.I. Oparin and British scientist J.B.S. Haldane hypothesized that chemicals produced in the atmosphere dissolved in the primordial seas to form a ‘hot dilute soup’ from which the first living cells and merged. (Wells 2000, 9)

Wells continues,

But it remained an untested hypothesis until the early 1950s when graduate student Stanley Miller and his Ph.D. advisor, Harold Urey, produced some of the chemical building blocks of life by sending an electric spark through the mixture of gases they thought simulated the earth’s primitive atmosphere. The experiment generated enormous excitement in the scientific community and soon found its way into almost every high school and college biology textbook as evidence that scientists had demonstrated the first step in the origin of life. (Wells 2000, 11)

Wells goes on to note that all that was produced was “a few worthless acids”. Unfortunately, every high school biology textbook still uses abiogenesis, unexplored and ill-explained, as truth, and it has perpetuated an entire generation of scientists who cling

to this notion, for many reasons. There are many simple arguments for Christians who lack a scientific background, and one of the most understandable is the need for, or lack of, oxygen in the early earth environment to even foster abiogenesis. William Dembski gives a simpler explanation that all can understand:

All experiments simulating the atmosphere of the early Earth have excluded free oxygen, because oxygen acts like a wrench in a gear box, actively hindering the chemical reactions that produce organic compounds. If any such compounds did happen to form, free oxygen would quickly destroy them in a process called oxidation. That's why many food preservatives are anti-oxidants—they protect food from the effects of oxidation. . . . If oxygen had been present in the early Earth's atmosphere, organic compounds could not have formed and accumulated the way they did in the Miller-Urey experiment . . . yet without oxygen . . . organic compounds may not have accumulated either. Significant levels of oxygen would have been necessary to produce ozone. Ozone shields the Earth from levels of ultra-violet radiation lethal to biological life. (Dembski 2015, 49-50)

Dembski is correct, and all one needs to do is see the new “ultra-violet” water purifiers on the market today. Lightning produces ozone, which is the ‘sweet smell’ one can recognize after a lightning storm. Ozone eliminates atmospheric pollutants and bacteria. Lightning is God’s way of renewing the atmosphere, neutralizing natural pollutants. Scientists took this cue to invent electrostatic precipitators in coal-fired electrical generation facilities, which neutralize the produced air-pollution before ejection to the atmosphere. So, also, lightning as a “cause” would have “killed” the first one-celled organisms if they had “self-assembled”, which they did not.

Life has never been produced in a lab unless there have been scientists engineering (adding or changing) already existing “life”. GOD created life. The problem, my friends, is that science still clings to any notion of GOD or a supernatural “cause” as “simple thinking”. Isn't that “unscientific”? Lastly, let me give you a quote from 2018 from the world's leading scientist who has studied this for many years:

Dr. James Tour is a leading origin-of-life researcher with over 630 research publications and over 120 patents. He was inducted into The National Academy of Inventors in 2015, listed in ‘The World’s Most Influential Scientific Minds’ by Thomas Reuters in 2014, and ‘Scientist of the Year’ by R&D Magazine. Here is how he described the state of the field: “We have no idea how the molecules that compose living systems could have been devised such that they would work in concert to fulfill biology’s functions. . . . From a synthetic chemical perspective, neither I nor any colleagues can fathom a prebiotic molecular route to construction

of a complex system. We can not even figure out the prebiotic routes to the basic building blocks of life: Carbohydrates, nucleic acids, lipids, and proteins . . . no chemist understands prebiotic synthesis of the requisite building blocks, let alone assembly into a complex system . . . so if your professors say it's all worked out, they don't know what they are talking about. (Leisola and Witt 2018, 36-37)

The skeptic may reply, “well, you are applying the ‘God of the Gaps Theory.’”

This is a common reply by skeptics who will assert that Christians will put GOD “in the gap” of anything that science doesn't understand. The odds, as we have seen, are for a “cause” other than “something from nothing” or “self-assembly”. Dr. Hugh Ross replies to this,

In the 20th century we see the reverse of the ‘God of the Gaps’. Non-theists, confronted with problems for which ample research leads to no natural explanations and instead points to the supernatural, utterly reject the possibility of the supernatural and insist on a natural explanation even if it means resorting to absurdity. (Ross 2001, 100)

To close our brief session together, Dr. David Berlinski wrote a book in reply to the very “loud” atheist Professor of Zoology at Oxford, Richard Dawkins. Dawkins’ book is entitled, “The GOD Delusion”. Berlinski’s book is entitled “The Devil’s Delusion”. Berlinski is a Ph.D. in mathematics and philosophy, and, he is an agnostic, but he rejects Dawkins’ notion that religion is superstitious because of Dawkins’ assertion that science and religion are incompatible. I have underlined his own responses:

Has anyone provided a proof of God’s inexistence? Not even close. Has quantum cosmology explained the emergence of the universe or why it is here? Not even close. Have the [atheist] sciences explained why our universe seems to be fine-tuned to allow for the existence of life? Not even close. Are Physicists and biologists willing to believe in anything so long as it is not religious thought? Close enough. Has rationalism in moral thought provided us with an understanding of what is good, what is right, and what is moral? Not close enough. Has secularism in the terrible twentieth century been a force for good? Not even close to being close. Is there a narrow and oppressive orthodoxy of thought and opinion within the sciences? Close enough. Does anything in the [atheist] science or in their philosophy justify claims that religious belief is irrational? Not even ballpark. Is scientific atheism a frivolous exercise in intellectual contempt? DEAD ON. (Berlinski 2008, flap cover)

Please remember that all these facts, when presented to an un-believer, must be presented with graciousness and humility. We as believers know the truth – we must help unbelievers to know that truth. Our Christian walk is very important! Our goal is not to be argumentative. We present the evidence with kindness and real concern for that

person's eternal destiny. If it becomes contentious, then leave the conversation and ask for the person to simply consider the evidence. The Holy Spirit convicts them, not us!

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you again for this privilege. If you would please fill out the "Post-Survey" from the hyperlink below, I would sincerely appreciate it. This will give me an idea of the efficacy of these lessons. It should take under 1 minute. If the link does not open, "hover" over it, and you can press "control + 'click' to follow" to open. You can also "cut/paste" it into your browser.

Thank you, and May GOD Bless you! Sandy.

[https://sbtsjohnpidgeon.iad1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_a4bBmJzV4fL58hL](https://sbtsjohnpidgeon.iad1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_a4bBmJzV4fL58hL)

Berlinski, David. *The Devil's Delusion: Atheism and Its Scientific Pretensions*. New York: Crown Publishing, 2008.

Dembski, William, and Jonathan Wells. *How to Be an Intellectually Fulfilled Atheist (or Not)* Dallas: Foundation for Thought and Ethics, 2015.

Leisola, Matti, and Jonathan Witt. *Heretic: One Scientist's Journey from Darwin to Design* Seattle: Discovery Institute Press, 2018

Ross, Hugh. *The Creator and The Cosmos*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001.

Wells, Jonathan. *Icons of Evolution*. Washington, DC: Regeneray Publishing, 2000

APPENDIX 3  
CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

<b>Spiritual Leadership Curriculum Evaluation Tool</b>					
<b>Lesson One Evaluation</b>					
<b>1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary</b>					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The lesson is clearly relevant to the sermon and supports it.					
The material is faithful to the Bible's teaching.					
The material is theologically sound.					
The thesis of the lesson is clearly stated.					
The points of the lesson clearly support the thesis.					
The lesson contains points of practical application for presenting apologetics knowledge.					
The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.					
Overall, the lesson is clearly presented.					

APPENDIX 4  
SURVEY RESULTS

**Q1 - Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the current knowledge of apologetics of the participant. The central issue is “why” you believe in Biblical Inerrancy, and the scientific, historical, and archaeological lessons that are derived from Scripture. This research is being conducted by John “Sandy” Pidgeon for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and you will answer the some of the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project. All instrumentation complies with the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary ethics protocols.

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Agreement to Participate The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the current knowledge of apologetics of the participant. The central issue is “why” you believe in Biblical Inerrancy, and the scientific, historical, and archaeological lessons that are derived from Scripture. This research is being conducted by John “Sandy” Pidgeon for the purpose of	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	46

collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and you will answer the some of the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project. All instrumentation complies with the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary ethics protocols.

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	100.00%	46
4	No	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	46

**Q1 - Do you consider yourself a Christian?**

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Do you consider yourself a Christian?	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	48

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	100.00%	48
3	No	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	48

**Q2 - Have you repented of your sin and trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation?**

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Have you repented of your sin and trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation?	1.00	3.00	1.04	0.29	0.08	48

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	97.92%	47
3	No	2.08%	1
	Total	100%	48

**Q3 - Are you married?**

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Are you married?	1.00	3.00	1.25	0.66	0.44	48

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	87.50%	42
3	No	12.50%	6
	Total	100%	48

**Q4 - What is your age in years?**

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	What is your age in years?	2.00	6.00	4.21	1.21	1.46	48

#	Answer	%	Count
1	18-24	0.00%	0
2	25-34	8.33%	4
3	35-44	22.92%	11
4	45-54	25.00%	12
5	55-64	27.08%	13
6	65-over	16.67%	8
	Total	100%	48

**Q5 - I have been challenged by agnostic or atheist acquaintances, saying that the Bible is unsupported by science and/or history.**

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	I have been challenged by agnostic or atheist acquaintances, saying that the Bible is unsupported by science and/or history.	1.00	6.00	4.10	1.75	3.05	48

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Disagree	14.58%	7
2	Disagree	8.33%	4
3	Somewhat disagree	10.42%	5
4	Somewhat agree	10.42%	5
5	Agree	31.25%	15
6	Strongly agree	25.00%	12
	Total	100%	48

**Q6 - I am able to respond to atheist or agnostic secular challenges to my faith.**

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	I am able to respond to atheist or agnostic secular philosophical/scientific/historical challenges to my faith.	2.00	6.00	4.65	1.09	1.19	48

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
2	Disagree	6.25%	3
3	Somewhat disagree	6.25%	3
4	Somewhat agree	27.08%	13

5	Agree	37.50%	18
6	Strongly agree	22.92%	11
	Total	100%	48

**Q7 - My inability to respond to atheist or agnostic opposition hinders my ability to move people to evangelism.**

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	My inability to respond to atheist or agnostic opposition hinders my ability to move people to evangelism.	1.00	6.00	3.08	1.27	1.62	48

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Disagree	12.50%	6
2	Disagree	25.00%	12
3	Somewhat disagree	16.67%	8
4	Somewhat agree	35.42%	17
5	Agree	8.33%	4
6	Strongly agree	2.08%	1
	Total	100%	48

**Q8 - I believe the Holy Bible is inerrant.**

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	I believe the Holy Bible is inerrant.	3.00	6.00	5.79	0.58	0.33	48

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
2	Disagree	0.00%	0
3	Somewhat disagree	2.08%	1
4	Somewhat agree	2.08%	1
5	Agree	10.42%	5

6	Strongly agree	85.42%	41
	Total	100%	48

**Q9 - The Bible is fully supported by science.**

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	The Bible is fully supported by science.	1.00	6.00	4.90	1.37	1.88	48

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Disagree	4.17%	2
2	Disagree	4.17%	2
3	Somewhat disagree	8.33%	4
4	Somewhat agree	8.33%	4
5	Agree	31.25%	15
6	Strongly agree	43.75%	21
	Total	100%	48

**Q10 - The Bible is fully supported by history.**

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	The Bible is fully supported by history.	3.00	6.00	5.46	0.71	0.50	48

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
2	Disagree	0.00%	0
3	Somewhat disagree	2.08%	1
4	Somewhat agree	6.25%	3
5	Agree	35.42%	17
6	Strongly agree	56.25%	27
	Total	100%	48

**Q11 - The Bible is fully supported by archaeology.**

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	The Bible is fully supported by archaeology.	4.00	6.00	5.56	0.61	0.37	48

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
2	Disagree	0.00%	0
3	Somewhat disagree	0.00%	0
4	Somewhat agree	6.25%	3
5	Agree	31.25%	15
6	Strongly agree	62.50%	30
	Total	100%	48

**Q12 - A lack of the knowledge of the science/history with respect to Christianity inhibits my ability to discuss Christianity with non-Christians.**

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	A lack of the knowledge of the science/history with respect to Christianity inhibits my ability to discuss Christianity with non-Christians.	1.00	6.00	2.90	1.42	2.01	48

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Disagree	16.67%	8
2	Disagree	35.42%	17
3	Somewhat disagree	6.25%	3
4	Somewhat agree	29.17%	14
5	Agree	8.33%	4
6	Strongly agree	4.17%	2
	Total	100%	48

**Q13 - I have been exposed to scientific/historical apologetics during sermons and Bible studies.**

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	I have been exposed to scientific/historical apologetics during sermons and Bible studies.	1.00	7.00	5.54	1.68	2.83	48

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Disagree	2.08%	1
2	Disagree	8.33%	4
3	Somewhat disagree	8.33%	4
5	Somewhat agree	10.42%	5
6	Agree	37.50%	18
7	Strongly agree	33.33%	16
	Total	100%	48

## Post-Survey

### **Q1 - Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the current knowledge of apologetics of the participant. The central issue is “why” you believe in Biblical Inerrancy, and the scientific, historical, and archaeological lessons that are derived from Scripture. This research is being conducted by John “Sandy” Pidgeon for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and you will answer the some of the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project. All instrumentation complies with the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary ethics protocols.

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Agreement to Participate The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the current knowledge of apologetics of the participant. The central issue is “why” you believe in Biblical Inerrancy, and the scientific, historical, and archaeological lessons that are derived from Scripture. This research is being conducted by John “Sandy” Pidgeon for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and you will answer the some of the same	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	36

questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project. All instrumentation complies with the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary ethics protocols.

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	100.00%	36
4	No	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	36

**Q2 - Have you repented of your sin and trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation?**

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Have you repented of your sin and trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation?	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	37

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	100.00%	37

3	No	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	37

**Q3 - Are you married?**

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Are you married?	1.00	3.00	1.32	0.74	0.54	37

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	83.78%	31
3	No	16.22%	6
	Total	100%	37

**Q4 - What is your age in years?**

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	What is your age in years?	2.00	6.00	4.41	1.20	1.43	37

#	Answer	%	Count
1	18-24	0.00%	0
2	25-34	5.41%	2
3	35-44	21.62%	8
4	45-54	21.62%	8
5	55-64	29.73%	11
6	65-over	21.62%	8
	Total	100%	37

**Q5 - My knowledge was enhanced by the apologetic lessons.**

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	My knowledge was enhanced by the apologetic lessons.	4.00	6.00	5.27	0.79	0.63	37

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0

2	Disagree	0.00%	0
3	Somewhat disagree	0.00%	0
4	Somewhat agree	21.62%	8
5	Agree	29.73%	11
6	Strongly agree	48.65%	18
	Total	100%	37

**Q6 - I would like to study apologetics similar to the lessons.**

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	I would like to study apologetics similar to the lessons.	3.00	6.00	5.11	0.83	0.69	37

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
2	Disagree	0.00%	0
3	Somewhat disagree	2.70%	1
4	Somewhat agree	21.62%	8
5	Agree	37.84%	14
6	Strongly agree	37.84%	14
	Total	100%	37

**Q7 - This knowledge enhances my own faith.**

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	This knowledge enhances my own faith.	4.00	6.00	5.19	0.73	0.53	37

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
2	Disagree	0.00%	0
3	Somewhat disagree	0.00%	0
4	Somewhat agree	18.92%	7

5	Agree	43.24%	16
6	Strongly agree	37.84%	14
	Total	100%	37

**Q8 - I believe the Holy Bible is inerrant.**

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	I believe the Holy Bible is inerrant.	3.00	6.00	5.84	0.55	0.30	37

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
2	Disagree	0.00%	0
3	Somewhat disagree	2.70%	1
4	Somewhat agree	0.00%	0
5	Agree	8.11%	3
6	Strongly agree	89.19%	33
	Total	100%	37

**Q9 - This knowledge would enable my family and friends to begin a walk in faith.**

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	This knowledge would enable my family and friends to begin a walk in faith.	2.00	6.00	4.89	1.01	1.02	37

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
2	Disagree	2.70%	1
3	Somewhat disagree	5.41%	2
4	Somewhat agree	24.32%	9
5	Agree	35.14%	13
6	Strongly agree	32.43%	12

Total

100%

37

**Q10 - Apologetics knowledge of the science/history with respect to Christianity increases my ability to discuss Christianity with non-Christians.**

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Apologetics knowledge of the science/history with respect to Christianity increases my ability to discuss Christianity with non-Christians.	4.00	6.00	5.35	0.67	0.44	37

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
2	Disagree	0.00%	0
3	Somewhat disagree	0.00%	0
4	Somewhat agree	10.81%	4
5	Agree	43.24%	16
6	Strongly agree	45.95%	17
	Total	100%	37

**Q11 - I would like apologetics in all the scientific and historical fields to be a part of every sermon and Bible study.**

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	I would like apologetics in all the scientific and historical fields to be a part of every sermon and Bible study.	2.00	7.00	5.38	1.36	1.86	37

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
2	Disagree	5.41%	2

3	Somewhat disagree	8.11%	3
5	Somewhat agree	40.54%	15
6	Agree	21.62%	8
7	Strongly agree	24.32%	9
	Total	100%	37

**Q12 - I would like MBC to offer formal classes in apologetics by the staff or qualified professors.**

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	I would like MBC to offer formal classes in apologetics by the staff or qualified professors.	5.00	7.00	6.38	0.75	0.56	37

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
2	Disagree	0.00%	0
3	Somewhat disagree	0.00%	0
5	Somewhat agree	16.22%	6
6	Agree	29.73%	11
7	Strongly agree	54.05%	20
	Total	100%	37

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## ABSTRACT

### A PLAN FOR MCLEAN BIBLE CHURCH TO INCREASE APOLOGETICS KNOWLEDGE FOR THE CONGREGANTS IN THE CONTEXT OF SECULAR WASHINGTON, DC

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This project sought to assess and expose members of the McLean Bible Church (MBC) in Washington, DC, with the knowledge of apologetics so as to adequately defend their faith and bring those who have evidential “stumbling blocks” to the cross. This project covered the scientific knowledge of God’s existence, the historical accuracy of the Bible from archaeology, and the legal arguments for assisting Christians in promoting Christianity in the public square. Chapter 2 provides the exegesis of four passages of Scripture (1 Pet 3:15; 1 Cor 9:19, 22-23; 1 Cor 15:3-38; 2 Cor 10:1,5). Chapter 3 discusses the scientific and cultural biases that seek to eliminate Christianity from the public discourse and examples of arguments Christians can use in engagement. Chapter 4 describes the project itself, which entails developing apologetic lessons for empirical measurement by surveys for efficacy. Chapter 5 discusses the efficacy of these lessons based upon the completion of the goals measured in surveys given before and after these lessons. Also discussed are the lessons-learned of the project. This project exposes the need for evidential and cumulative case apologetics to be taught in formal settings by qualified pastors and professors in coordination with MBC’s mission statement, “to bring the Gospel to secular Washington, DC” in conjunction with Matthew 28, The Great Commission. This project can be assimilated by other churches as a model for providing the basis for stressing the need for apologetics.

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