

APOLOGETICS

Teacher's Manual

Contents

Session 1 – INTRODUCTION TO APOLOGETICS	3
Session 2 – TWO PROMINENT AREAS OF EVIDENTIAL APOLOGETICS.....	15
Session 3 – CHRISTIANITY AND WORLD RELIGIONS	27
Session 4 – ROMAN CATHOLICISM AND SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST	37
Session 5 – RELIGIOUS CULTS AND PHILIPPINE CULTS	42
Session 6 – HANDLING COMMON OBJECTIONS	58

Helpful Headings in this Teacher's Manual

OBJECTIVES

OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

NOTE TO TEACHER

BACKGROUND

EXPLANATION

ACTIVITY

ASSIGNMENT

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this course, the participants should:

- understand apologetics, the Evidentialist approach, and the basic tenets of world religions and Christian cults
- examine and compare basic knowledge of world religions and cults, to help them more effectively present the gospel to anyone from these groups
- be more confident to present the gospel to people belonging to those religious groups

OVERVIEW

Session 1: **Introduction to Apologetics**

Session 2: **Two Prominent Areas of Evidential Apologetics**

Session 3: **Christianity and World Religions**

Session 4: **Roman Catholicism and Seventh-Day Adventist**

Session 5: **Religious Cults and Philippine Cults**

Session 6: **Handling Common Objections**

SESSION 1 – INTRODUCTION TO APOLOGETICS

INTRODUCTION

“There is indeed the danger of falling into a proud intellectualism. But there is also the danger of lacking a love and compassion for men great enough to inspire the hard work needed to understand men's questions and to give them honest answers.”¹

Apologetics

1 PETER 3:15

... 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 . . .

EXPLANATION

“This verse suggests that the manner in which one does apologetics is as important as the words expressed.”²

1. Apologetics is the branch of theology⁽¹⁾ that is concerned with defending or proving the truth of Christian doctrines.

EXPLANATION

The term “apologetics” comes from the Greek word *apologia*, which means “to give a verbal defense, a reasoned statement, or argument” (1 Pet. 3:15).³ It was originally defined as a defendant’s reply to the speech of the prosecution in a court of law.

It is important here to make sure the students do not confuse the word “apologetics” with the word “apology.”

The word *apologia* is used several times in the New Testament.

“Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense.” (Acts 22:1)

Paul’s defense that follows this verse (Acts 22:3-21) is primarily his testimony. Apologetics does not imply or require lofty, intellectual arguments. Often it can be as simple as giving a testimony.

¹ Francis Schaeffer, *The Complete Works of Francis Schaeffer*, Volume 1

² James F. Williams, *Apologetics and Evangelism*, www.leadershipu.com

³ <http://classic.net.bible.org/strong.php?id=627>

“This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me.” (I Corinthians 9:3)

“I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.” (Philippians 1:16)

There are two aspects of Apologetics:

The **positive aspect** is presenting the gospel in a relevant manner to the current age.
The **negative aspect** is defending the gospel against current attacks.

2. The more we understand a person, the better equipped ⁽²⁾ we are to minister to that person.

EXPLANATION

“Every generation of Christians has this task of learning how to speak meaningfully to its own generation. If we are to communicate the Christian faith effectively, we must know and understand the thought forms of our generation.” ⁴

Just as a missionary would learn the language, customs, and beliefs of the nation where he ministered, so we must understand those basic things about our own culture.

A doctor studies for many years to diagnose accurately the patients who come to him for help. The same generic prescription, “take two aspirin and call me in the morning,” is unsatisfactory for most of the people he sees. He must know the right questions to ask to obtain the information he needs, so he can prescribe the remedy that is right for each patient. Similarly, we need to know the right questions to ask in our culture to arrive at the correct diagnosis, and to have the wisdom to present this diagnosis in a way that will be accepted, understood, and applied.

“If I preach every part of the Gospel of Christ except that part which the world is at that moment challenging, I am not preaching the Gospel of Christ no matter how fervently I think I am preaching Christ.” ⁵

3. It will take a wholehearted commitment ⁽³⁾ and a great deal of hard work and study to reach our world.

⁴ The Complete Works of Francis Schaeffer, Volume 1, p. 207

⁵ Martin Luther, Quoted in, The Complete Works of Francis Schaeffer, Volume 1, p. 11

EXPLANATION

“If all the world were Christians it might not matter if all the world were uneducated. But to be ignorant now—not to be able to meet our enemies on their own ground—would be to throw down our weapons.”⁶

Apologetic Strategies

EXPLANATION

Before we examine many of the specific arguments found in the study of apologetics, we will first look at the Apostle Paul’s apologetic strategies in Acts 17.

1. Paul used one apologetic strategy when he was in the synagogue (Acts 17:1-3).

EXPLANATION

¹Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. ²And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.” (Acts 17:1-3)

Paul’s starting point when speaking in the synagogue was the Scriptures. This was because his audience shared his presupposition that the Bible was the inspired Word of God.

When confronted with unsaved people who share our presuppositions (i.e., the Bible is the inspired and inerrant Word of God), we have no need of any apologetic tools beyond the Scriptures. But, unfortunately, the vast majority of unsaved people do not share our presuppositions and do not resemble the Jews in the synagogue at Thessalonica.

Paul’s method in the synagogue was reasoning⁽⁴⁾, explaining, giving evidence, and proclaiming—all from the Scriptures.

2. Paul used a different apologetic strategy when he was in the Areopagus (Acts 17:16-34).

⁶ C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*, p. 50

EXPLANATION

“And Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.’ What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things; and He made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His offspring.’ Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. Therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.” Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer, but others said, “We shall hear you again concerning this.” So Paul went out of their midst. But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.” (Acts 17:16-34)

Although there was not a large-scale revival at Athens, “some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.” Those were good results considering who the audience was!

Paul’s starting point was the common ground ⁽⁵⁾ shared by all people as human beings created in the image of God.

There are at least three areas of **common ground** listed in this passage.

3. The first area of common ground is the nature ⁽⁶⁾ of man (Acts 17:22).

“I observe you are very religious in all respects.” (Acts 17:22)

This is called the *Imago Dei* (Latin for “the image of God”) and it consists of these three things:

- Man is compelled⁽⁷⁾ by something deep within himself to seek after a transcendent reality—something bigger than himself.

EXPLANATION

In his book, *The Quest for God*, Paul Johnson illustrates this point by referring to what he considers one of the most remarkable events of the twentieth century: the fact that belief in God survived and even prospered. The scientific discoveries (Darwin) and the philosophical writings (Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche) of the nineteenth century had led a large percentage of the intelligentsia to predict the death of religion. However, the very opposite occurred.

“The most remarkable thing about the twentieth century was the failure of God to die. The collapse of mass religious belief, especially among the educated and prosperous, had been widely and confidently predicted. It did not take place. Somehow, God survived, flourished even. At the end of the twentieth century, the idea of a personal, living God is as lively and real as ever, in the minds and hearts of countless millions of men and women throughout our planet.”⁷

Even when the philosophical presuppositions of a particular culture predispose that culture away from a belief in God, the innate motivation that man feels eventually leads him back to belief.

Another facet of human nature is this:

- Every human society has a code of law⁽⁸⁾ and a sense that some things are right and some things are wrong.

EXPLANATION

“Virtually every human society has some form of myth to explain the origin of morality. In the Louvre in Paris, there is a black Babylonian column with a relief showing the sun god Shamash presenting the code of laws to Hammurabi. The Old Testament account of God giving the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mt. Sinai might be considered another example. In Plato's *Protagoras* there is an avowedly mythical account of how Zeus took pity on the hapless humans, who, living in small groups and with inadequate teeth, weak claws, and lack of speed, were no match for the other beasts. To make up for these deficiencies, Zeus gave humans a moral sense and the capacity for law and justice, so that they could live in larger communities and cooperate with one another.”⁸

The third aspect of the nature of man:

⁷ Paul Johnson, *The Quest for God*, p. 6

⁸ Peter Singer, *Ethics*, Britannica 2003 Reference Suite

- The impulse in man to create⁽⁹⁾ is but a partial reflection of the eternal Creator.

EXPLANATION

When J.R.R. Tolkien first met C.S. Lewis, Lewis was an atheist. Tolkien's evangelistic approach to Lewis was to prove the existence of an eternal Creator by reflecting on the creative impulse resident in every man. Humphrey Carpenter, in his book, *The Inklings*, describes Tolkien's reasoning: "Therefore, not merely the abstract thoughts of man but also his imaginative inventions must originate with God, and must in consequence reflect something of eternal truth. In making a myth and peopling the world with elves and dragons and goblins, a storyteller, or "subcreator" as Tolkien liked to call such a person, is actually fulfilling God's purpose, and reflecting a splintered fragment of the true light."⁹ This argument provided the last push Lewis needed to commit his life to Christ.

Another area of common ground with those who do not share the same beliefs:

4. The second area of common ground is the creation⁽¹⁰⁾ of the universe (Acts 17:24).

EXPLANATION

"The God who made the world and all things in it . . ." (Acts 17:24)

This is also known as Natural Theology. **Natural Theology** is the body of knowledge that may be obtained by human reason alone without the aid of revelation.¹⁰

For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. (Romans 1:20)

There are two main aspects of Natural Theology: the **external Creation** and the **internal Moral Law**. Paul first refers to the external aspect in the above verse about nature. He then refers to the internal aspect in the following chapter: ¹⁴*For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law.* ¹⁵*They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them . . .* (Romans 2:14,15)

⁹ Humphrey Carpenter, *The Inklings*

¹⁰ The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, p. 1132

“A young atheist cannot guard his faith too carefully. Dangers lie in wait for him on every side.” ¹¹

5. The third area of common ground is culture ⁽¹¹⁾ (Acts 17:28).

EXPLANATION

“For in Him we live and move and have our being.” As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are His offspring.’” (Acts 17:28)

Paul quotes two noted Greek poets: Epimenides of Crete and Aratus of Soli, authors that the Areopagites were familiar with and could relate to. Paul does not condemn their views (although they were both pagans), but accords them a certain degree of inspiration. The concept presented here is that all truth is God’s truth – even in the mouth of unredeemed pagans.

Epimenides was a 6th century BC Cretan poet and seer. Paul quotes a line from a quatrain (a poem with four lines) in which Epimenides condemns his fellow Cretans for their lack of reverence concerning the Greek god Zeus:

They fashioned a tomb for thee, O holy and high one
The Cretans, always liars, evil beasts, idle bellies!
But thou art not dead: thou livest and abidest forever,
For in thee we live and move and have our being.

Aratus was a 3rd century Stoic philosopher and poet from Cilicia. Paul quotes from Aratus’s poem *Natural Phenomena*, a paeon to Zeus.

It is with Zeus that every one of us has to do, for we are his offspring. ¹²

Culture provides us with a relevant ⁽¹²⁾ means of presenting the truth, not from the Bible—a source that unbelievers distrust—but from their own poets.

EXPLANATION

Luke tells us that while Paul waited at Athens for Timothy and Silas he spent time observing the city.

¹¹ C.S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*

¹² F.F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, p. 242

Acts 17:16: *Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was beholding the city full of idols.*

The word 'beholding' (Gr. *theoreo*) is used of one who looks at a thing with interest and for a purpose, usually indicating the careful observation of details (Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words).

Acts 17:23: *"For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'To An Unknown God.' What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you."*

The word 'examining' (Gr. *anatheoreo*) means to look at attentively, to consider well, to observe accurately (Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words). It is unlikely that Paul was merely sightseeing. It is more likely that he was evaluating the spiritual climate of the city and preparing himself for an effective apologetic, one that would get the attention of the philosophers who ". . . used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new." And few things are more effective than using a people's own sources to confirm the truth one is proclaiming.

SUMMARY

Apologetics is the branch of theology that is concerned with defending or proving the truth of Christian doctrines.

The study of apologetics is important because it helps us understand people, and it equips us to better minister to them.

When speaking to a religious audience with biblical presuppositions, we can use the Bible as a starting point for presenting Christ to them.

When speaking to a non-religious audience, we will be more effective if we appeal to the areas that are common to all men.

One approach to Apologetics is the Evidentialist approach.

The Evidentialist Approach

1. The Evidentialist Approach presents scientific⁽¹³⁾ evidence and historical evidence for the Christian faith in an attempt to persuade the unbeliever of the truth of Christianity.

EXPLANATION

Paul presented evidence for the resurrection in both the synagogue and the Areopagus.

²And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to

suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.” (Acts 17:2,3)

The word ‘explaining’ (Grk. *dianoigo*) originally means, “to completely open up the mind to understand a thing.” It means to open one’s soul to stir in one the faculty of understanding or the desire of learning.¹³

“ . . . because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.” (Acts 17:31)

Jesus presented evidence of His resurrection to His disciples.

“After His suffering, He showed Himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive.” (Acts 1:3)

2. There are some potential problems⁽¹⁴⁾ with this approach.

- An astonishing amount of facts⁽¹⁵⁾ is necessary to answer all possible questions of skeptics.

EXPLANATION

My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh. (Ecclesiastes 12:12)

“I once attended a seminar hosted by the brilliant Christian apologist John Warwick Montgomery. I listened in awe as he presented a steady flow of scholarly evidence for the truth of the resurrection, the existence of God, the reliability of the Scriptures, the fulfillment of prophecy, and a plethora of other fascinating topics. He spoke for two days with eloquence and confidence and showed no signs of slowing down or exhausting his store of information. Then, during a question and answer session, he mentioned that he had six earned PhDs! I left the seminar very discouraged. I realized that very few believers had the capacity, motivation, or time to arm themselves with enough information for every situation.” – Paul Barker

Presenting the evidence from a scientific or rational approach allows the unbeliever to dictate the ground rules. *The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.* (1 Corinthians 2:14)

¹³ <http://classic.net.bible.org/strong.php?id=1272>

True information about God is not received through an empirical or rational approach (i.e., the scientific method). True information about God is received through revelation: *“Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.”* (Luke 24:45)

Another problem with the Evidentialist approach:

- Fallen men cannot objectively ⁽¹⁶⁾ examine differing viewpoints and then make a rational decision to choose the best (Romans 1:18-20).

EXPLANATION

¹⁸For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. (Romans 1:18-20)

Most people in the modern world believe that the solution to our social problems is education. If man receives the proper education, they believe, all social problems will be eliminated. But man's problem is not intellectual. He does not suffer from a shortage of information. His problem is moral. He knows what to do, he just does not want to do it. He suppresses the truth he already knows about God to avoid culpability. Therefore, merely presenting the facts in a clear and cogent manner will not guarantee a positive response.

One more barrier to the Evidentialist approach:

- There are no neutral ⁽¹⁷⁾ facts in a world where men are inherently hostile to the truth (Colossians 1:21).

EXPLANATION

For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. (Colossians 1:21)

These potential concerns can be avoided by understanding that man's fall was total and complete, affecting every area of his being. He is not only morally dead in sin, but also intellectually dead. This does not mean he cannot think or reason, but that he can never get to God through his mind.

The combination of wisdom, evidence, and convincing arguments cannot draw people to God. The Holy Spirit draws people to God. Romans 8:7: “. . . *because the mind set*

on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so.”

3. While presenting the evidence, look for a “God”⁽¹⁸⁾ moment” to break through. A “God moment” is a time in the conversation when:

- The person becomes tender⁽¹⁹⁾ and open to the possibility that he is wrong.
- The person is convicted⁽²⁰⁾ about sin in his life.
- The person is given a demonstration⁽²¹⁾ of the Holy Spirit’s power that confronts him with the truth.

The information is not sufficient to lead a person to Christ. But it may open the door to a conversation where the gospel can be presented!

ACTIVITY

1. C.S. Lewis once said, “An atheist can never be too careful for God has littered the creation with evidence of Himself.” How do you think that quote relates to the common ground of creation and Paul’s statement in Romans 1:20?

For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. (Romans 1:20)

2. Do most of the people you speak with about Jesus have more in common with the people in the synagogue or the people on the Areopagus? Do you generally use a different strategy from those used with the different groups? What have you found effective in sharing with people who are like those from the Areopagus?
3. Paul Johnson, in his book, *The Quest for God*, said, “The most remarkable thing about the twentieth century was the failure of God to die. The collapse of mass religious belief, especially among the educated and prosperous, had been widely and confidently predicted. It did not take place. Somehow, God survived, flourished even. At the end of the twentieth century, the idea of a personal, living God is as lively and real as ever, in the minds and hearts of countless millions of men and women throughout our planet.”
What does this say about man’s need for something bigger than himself?
How could you use this idea to talk with people who are like those from the

Areopagus?

4. What are some of the most powerful “God moments” you have experienced in your preaching of the gospel?

Session 2 – TWO PROMINENT AREAS OF EVIDENTIAL APOLOGETICS

INTRODUCTION

In this session we will examine two of the most prominent areas of Evidential Apologetics: **the reliability of the Bible** and **the Resurrection**.

The Reliability of the Bible

NOTE TO TEACHER

The entire text of the following material is reprinted in **Supplement #1 – The Reliability of the Bible**. You may want to give your students copies as a resource for evangelism. You can also teach from the Supplement if you want to turn this session into an extended lecture. The Student Notes for this section are greatly reduced.

EXPLANATION

There are three tests commonly used to measure the reliability of ancient manuscripts:

1. The Bibliographical Test
2. The Internal Evidence Test
3. The Historical Test

These three tests are generally applied to all ancient documents, whether the book of Isaiah or Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*. The Bible not only passes all these tests, but also far exceeds any other ancient document.

1. The Bibliographical ⁽¹⁾ Test examines the quantity of manuscripts, the quality of manuscripts, the number of corroborating sources, and the time lapsed between original and extant manuscripts.
 - The Bible has more manuscript ⁽²⁾ evidence of authenticity than any ten pieces of classical literature and is superior to all classical texts in all four areas.

EXPLANATION

Quantity of manuscripts: There are 24,000 portions of the New Testament in existence: 5,300 Greek manuscripts, 10,000 Latin manuscripts, and 9,300 other manuscripts. Homer's *Iliad* is second with only 643 extant manuscripts. ¹

¹ Josh McDowell, *A Ready Defense*, p. 43

Furthermore, the number of extant manuscripts is far greater for the New Testament than for any other classical work.² For other ancient works, manuscript attestation is poor in comparison. For example, of the seven surviving plays of Sophocles, four manuscripts exist that are of any value, the earliest being written in the eleventh century, 1400 years after the poet's death.³ For Plato, eleven manuscripts exist, the earliest being written about 1250 years after his death.⁴ The History of Thucydides has eight manuscripts, the earliest being from the tenth century, 1300 years after his death.⁵ Herodotus has eight manuscripts, the earliest being from the tenth century, 1300 years after his death.⁶ Yet there is no classical scholar who will doubt the authenticity of these works, despite the paucity of extant manuscripts and despite the gap of over 1,000 years between the time of authorship and the time the earliest extant manuscript was written.⁷

Quality of manuscripts: Only 40 lines of the New Testament (about 400 words) are in doubt, or, one-half of 1%. Homer's *Iliad* (one of the most attested works of antiquity) has 5% textual discrepancy. The few textual questions do not touch one area of significant doctrine.⁸

"To be skeptical of the text of the New Testament is to allow all classical antiquity to slip into obscurity, for no documents of the ancient period are as well attested bibliographically as the New Testament."⁹

- John W. Montgomery

John W. Montgomery was a former professor of law and humanities at the University of Luton, England. He is the author of more than 140 books and journal articles.

Number of corroborating sources: If the New Testament had been lost or destroyed by the end of the third century, it could have been collected together again from the 36,000 specific references in the writings of the Church Fathers of the second and third centuries.¹⁰

There are at least seventeen writings from non-Christian sources that refer to Jesus and the early Church. These sources detail at least fifty facts concerning Christ, his life, death and resurrection, and were written between 20 to 150 years after Christ's death.

² Frederic G. Kenyon, *Handbook to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, p. 4

³ F. W. Hall, *A Companion to Classical Texts*, pp. 270-271

⁴ *ibid.* pp. 259-260

⁵ *ibid.* pp. 279-280

⁶ *ibid.* pp. 237-238

⁷ Richard M. Riss *Apologetics*, p. 25

⁸ Norman Geisler / William Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, p. 367

⁹ John W. Montgomery, *History and Christianity*, p. 29

¹⁰ All but eleven verses.

“The student of the history of Jesus is, from the point of view of textual criticism, on vastly safer ground than the student of the life of Julius Caesar or indeed of any other figure of ancient history.” ¹¹

Time elapsed between the original and the extant copy: The average gap in classical literature between the original composition and the earliest copy is over 1,000 years. The New Testament, however, has a fragment within one generation from its original composition, whole books within about 100 years, most of the New Testament in less than 200 years, and the entire New Testament within 250 years from the date of its completion.

“ . . . that last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and integrity of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established.” ¹²

- Sir Frederic Kenyon

Sir Frederic Kenyon was a classical scholar and the former director and principal librarian of the British Museum.

For a comparative charts of the Bible with other ancient literature, you can go to this site:

<https://evidencetobelieve.net/reliability-of-the-bible/>

- The Bibliographical Test proves incontrovertibly that the New Testament we have today is essentially what was originally written.
- 2. The Internal ⁽³⁾ Evidence Test determines if a manuscript which is reliable is also credible, and to what extent.
 - Did the authors have the ability ⁽⁴⁾ to tell the truth—were they in a position, geographically and chronologically, to give an accurate report?

EXPLANATION

In the New Testament accounts, the answer is a resounding “yes.”

“Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.” (Luke 1:1-4)

¹¹ R.T. France, Quoted in The Textual Reliability of the New Testament, J. P. Holding, p. 1

¹² Sir Frederic Kenyon, *The Bible and Archeology*, p. 288

For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. (2 Peter 1:16)

“We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard . . .” (1 John 1:3)

- Did the authors deliberately⁽⁵⁾ spread falsehood?

EXPLANATION

The New Testament authors did not because . . .

- They were confronted with other followers of Jesus who would challenge their accounts if they were not accurate.
- They were confronted with hostile opponents who would challenge every detail of their accounts and use any falsehood (no matter how small) to disparage their testimony.

“It was not only friendly eyewitnesses that the early preachers had to reckon with; there were others less well disposed who were also conversant with the main facts of the life and death of Jesus. The disciples could not risk inaccuracies or willful manipulations which would at once be exposed. On the contrary, one of the strong points in the original apostolic preaching is the confident appeal to the knowledge of the hearers; they not only said, ‘we are witnesses of these things,’ but also, ‘As you yourselves know.’” (Acts 2:22) ¹⁴

“Despite the prejudices and theological preconceptions of the evangelists, they recorded many incidents that mere inventors would have concealed – the competition of the apostles for the high places in the kingdom, their flight after Jesus’ arrest, Peter’s denial, the failure of Christ to work miracles in Galilee, the references of some of His listeners to His possible insanity, His despairing cry on the cross; no one reading these scenes can doubt the reality of the figure behind them. That a few simple men should in one generation have invented so powerful and appealing a personality, so lofty an ethic, and so inspiring a vision of human brotherhood, would be a miracle far more incredible than any recorded in the gospels. After two centuries of higher criticism the outlines of the life, character, and teaching of Christ remain reasonably clear, and constitute the most fascinating feature in the history of Western man.” ¹⁵

- Will Durant

Will Durant (1885-1981) was an American historian and philosopher, author of *The Story of Philosophy* and *The Story of Civilization*. Many consider him one of the greatest

¹⁴ F.F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable*, p. 43

¹⁵ Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization*, vol. 3, p. 557

historians of the twentieth century. Durant was trained by Jesuits and studied for the priesthood; but after reading Darwin, Huxley and Spencer, he grew skeptical and, in 1905, exchanged his faith for Socialism.

Although he never renounced his basic skepticism, he did later moderate his atheistic views and become more open to the ameliorating influences of all the world religions. His quote on the influence and character of Christ is all the more remarkable given his religious presuppositions.

- The Internal Evidence Test proves incontrovertibly that the New Testament is a reliable account of what actually happened.
3. The Historical ⁽⁶⁾ Test determines if the manuscript contradicts that which is already known about its historical time frame.

EXPLANATION

“For the Acts of the Apostles, the confirmation of history is overwhelming and any attempt to reject its basic historicity even in matters of detail must now appear absurd.”¹⁶

- Many facts once disputed ⁽⁷⁾ in Luke or Acts have now been proven by historical and archeological research.

The Census. (Luke 2:1) Critics argued for years that there was no census, but recent archeological discoveries have shown that the Romans held a regular census of all taxpayers every fourteen years and that it began in the reign of Augustus.

Quirinius. (Luke 2:2) Quirinius was known to be the governor of Syria in 6 AD, but not during Christ’s birth as Luke states. However, it was later discovered that he was governor not once but twice – confirming Luke’s account.

Politarchs. (Acts 17:8) Luke uses this term to denote the leaders in Thessalonica. Since there was no term in the classical writing using that word, Luke was thought to have gotten it wrong. Since then, archeologists have found nineteen inscriptions for that title, including five of them referencing Thessalonica.

“Luke’s history is unsurpassed in respect of its trustworthiness. He is an historian of the first rank; this author should be placed among the very greatest of historians.” ¹⁷
- Sir William Ramsay

¹⁶ A.N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society*, p. 189

¹⁷ Sir William M. Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*, p. 81

Sir William Mitchell Ramsay (1851-1939) was a classical scholar and archaeologist and the foremost authority of his day on the topography, antiquities, and history of Asia Minor in ancient times. The value of his New Testament studies is enhanced by the fact that he approached the subject not as a theologian, but as a Roman historian versed in the working of Roman institutions in the provinces and possessing an intimate knowledge of the country which figured so prominently in the early history of the church.¹⁸ When he began his research of Luke's historical acumen, he was skeptical of the accuracy of his writings. But he became convinced through his exhaustive study of the facts.

- The Historical Test proves incontrovertibly that the New Testament is a historically reliable document that can be trusted.

4. The reliability of the Bible is confirmed in the fulfillment ⁽⁸⁾ of prophecy. The following are two examples from the Scripture. ¹⁹

- a. Isaiah's prediction concerning Cyrus ⁽⁹⁾ (Isaiah 44:28-45:6).

EXPLANATION

Isaiah 44:28-45:6

"It is I who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd! And he will perform all My desire.' And he declares of Jerusalem, 'She will be built,' and of the temple, 'Your foundation will be laid.'" Thus says the Lord to Cyrus His anointed, whom I have taken by the right hand, to subdue nations before him, and to loose the loins of kings; to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut: "I will go before you and make the rough places smooth; I will shatter the doors of bronze, and cut through their iron bars . . . in order that you may know that it is I, the Lord, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name. For the sake of Israel My chosen one, I have also called you by your name; I have given you a title of honor though you have not known Me. I am the Lord, and there is no other; besides Me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known Me; that men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun that there is no one besides Me. I am the Lord, and there is no other."

Cyrus the Great (600-530 BC) became king of Persia in 550 BC and reigned for twenty years. After Cyrus, the Persian Empire remained the most powerful state in the world until its conquest two centuries later by Alexander. Cyrus was an able and merciful ruler. Significant among his deeds was his granting of permission to the Jews to return from their exile in Babylon to their native Israel to rebuild the Temple of Solomon. ²⁰

¹⁸ J.G.C. Anderson, *Biography of Sir William M. Ramsay*, p. 1

¹⁹ Adapted from Josh McDowell, *A Ready Defense*, pp. 56-63

²⁰ From Microsoft Encarta Reference Library 2002.

Although Cyrus was an uncircumcised, pagan king, God called him, “My shepherd.” This is a testimony to God’s sovereignty in the earth. He raises up whomever He wills, and puts down whomever He chooses. (Other example: Nebuchadnezzar and the seven years of dementia.)

- Isaiah wrote this prophecy around 700⁽¹⁰⁾ BC. At that time the temple was still standing and Jerusalem was fully built.
 - Over 100⁽¹¹⁾ years later (586 BC), the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem and destroyed the temple.
 - In 539⁽¹²⁾ BC, the Babylonians were conquered by the Persians. The next year, the Persian king, Cyrus, gave the decree to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem—160 years after the prophecy of Isaiah.
- b. Ezekiel’s prediction concerning Tyre⁽¹³⁾ (Ezekiel 26:3-14).

EXPLANATION

Ezekiel 26:3-14

“Therefore, thus says the Lord God, ‘Behold, I am against you, O Tyre, and I will bring up many nations against you, as the sea brings up its waves. And they will destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers; and I will scrape her debris from her and make her a bare rock. She will be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea, for I have spoken,’ declares the Lord God, ‘and she will become spoil for the nations. For thus says the Lord God, “Behold, I will bring upon Tyre from the north Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, king of kings, with horses, chariots, cavalry, and a great army. He will slay your daughters on the mainland with the sword; and he will make siege walls against you, cast up a mound against you, and raise up a large shield against you. Also they will make a spoil of your riches and a prey of your merchandise, break down your walls and destroy your pleasant houses, and throw your stones and your timbers and your debris into the water. And I will make you a bare rock; you will be a place for the spreading of nets. You will be built no more, for I the Lord have spoken, declares the Lord God.”

There are five predictions against Tyre in this passage.

Prediction #1: Nebuchadnezzar will destroy the mainland city.

Prediction #2: Many nations will come against Tyre as the sea brings up its waves.

Prediction #3: Tyre will become a bare rock where fisherman spread their nets.

Prediction #4: The debris of the city will be thrown in the water.

Prediction #5: It will never be rebuilt.

- In 573 BC, approximately sixteen⁽¹⁴⁾ years after the prophecy,

Nebuchadnezzar broke the gates of Tyre and destroyed the mainland city while the majority of the inhabitants escaped to the island city. (Prediction #1)

- In 333 BC, Alexander⁽¹⁵⁾ the Great attacked the island city. He demolished the old city and used the debris to form a 200-foot stone wall in the sea to lay siege to the city. (Prediction #4)
- The island city countered⁽¹⁶⁾ with an attack with its many sea vessels. Alexander needed ships to defeat the city and so he called for them from nine other nations. (Prediction #2)
- The site of the once great city is now bare rock⁽¹⁷⁾—a place where the fishermen who still frequent the spot spread their nets to dry. (Prediction #3)
- After many different conquerors⁽¹⁸⁾, at last Tyre was abandoned (even though there were springs of fresh water that emptied 10,000,000 gallons of water daily—plenty for a large modern city), and was never rebuilt. (Prediction #5)

The second prominent area of Evidential Apologetics:

The Resurrection

1. The fact of the resurrection is the foundation⁽¹⁹⁾ upon which the entire Christian faith rests (1 Corinthians 15:17).

EXPLANATION

“And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.”
(1 Corinthians 15:17)

“Christ Himself deliberately staked His whole claim to the credit of men upon His resurrection. When asked for a sign He pointed to this sign as His single and sufficient credential.”²¹

Every evangelistic sermon preached by every believer in the New Testament centers on the resurrection. “The resurrection is either one of the most wicked hoaxes ever foisted upon people, or it is the most important fact of history.”²²

²¹ B.B. Warfield, *The Risen Jesus*, <http://www.ondocrine.com>

²² Josh McDowell, *A Ready Defense*, p. 215

Christianity is an historic religion. That means that the primary events related to it really happened at empirically verifiable locations to actual historical people. “The doctrines of Christianity are doctrines only because they are facts.”²³

2. History⁽²⁰⁾ testifies to the truth of the resurrection.

EXPLANATION

“Taking all the evidence together, it is not too much to say that there is no historic event better or more variously supported than the resurrection of Christ.”²⁴

Dr. Simon Greenleaf, the Royal Professor of Law at Harvard University and author of the classic forensic textbook *A Treatise on the Laws of Evidence*, examined the resurrection of Jesus applying the principles of his work. His conclusion was that, according to the laws of legal evidence used in law courts, there is more evidence for the historical fact of the resurrection than just about any other event in history.

3. The empty tomb⁽²¹⁾ testifies to the truth of the resurrection.

EXPLANATION

The disciples began to preach the resurrection in the one place where it was the easiest to discount their assertions: Jerusalem. All their opponents would have to do was produce the dead body of Christ and all preaching would have ended.

The Jews’ explanation that the disciples had stolen the body was an admission that the tomb really was empty.

4. Living witnesses⁽²²⁾ testified to the truth of the resurrection.

The accuracy of a document about a historical event is based on how many witnesses are available to confirm or deny the document (1 Corinthians 15:6).

EXPLANATION

Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. (1 Corinthians 15:6)

²³ B.B. Warfield, *The Journal of Christian Philosophy*, vol. III, 1884, p. 305

²⁴ Brooke Foss Wescott, *The Gospel of the Resurrection*, p. 4

Paul claims that of the more than 500 disciples to whom Christ appeared at the same time, most were still alive at the time Paul wrote 1 Corinthians — only twenty-five years after the resurrection.

William Lillie, head of the Department of Biblical Study at the University of Aberdeen, said: “What gives a special authority to the list in I Corinthians 15:6 as historical evidence is the reference to ‘most of the five hundred brethren being still alive.’ St. Paul says in effect, “If you do not believe me, you can ask them.” Such a statement in an admittedly genuine letter written within thirty years after the event is almost as strong evidence as one could hope to get for something that happened nearly two thousand years ago.”²⁵

It is significant that the first witnesses of the resurrection were women. According to Jewish principles of legal evidence, women were invalid witnesses. No one attempting to manufacture a resurrection story would ever include women in the story and certainly not as the first witnesses. “Further, it is difficult to explain how a story that grew up late and took shape merely in accord with the supposed demands of apologetic came to be framed in terms almost exclusively of women witnesses, who, as such, were notoriously invalid witnesses according to Jewish principles of evidence.”²⁶

5. Changed lives⁽²³⁾ testify to the truth of the resurrection.

What could have changed fearful, selfish, and unlearned men into bold and heroic preachers and martyrs?

6. There are only five possible explanations for the overwhelming evidence⁽²⁴⁾ that the resurrection actually happened.

- #1 Swoon Theory: Jesus did not die on the cross but merely swooned and was resuscitated later.

EXPLANATION

No one survived Roman crucifixion, especially when it was preceded by a Roman flogging.

A half-dead, staggering sick man in need of medical attention is not generally worshiped as a divine savior.

²⁵ D. E. Nineham et al., *Historicity and Chronology in the New Testament*, p. 125

²⁶ C. F. D. Moule, *The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection for Faith in Jesus Christ*, p. 9

Heinrich Paulus in his *Life of Jesus* (1828) suggested that Jesus was not dead when taken from the cross. The coolness of the tomb revived him. After exchanging his grave wrappings for the gardener's clothes, Jesus spoke to his disciples for forty days and then walked into a cloud on a mountain and went off somewhere to die. The implausibility of this reconstruction was recognized by Strauss, who wrote: "It is impossible that one who had just come forth from the grave half dead, who crept about weak and ill, who stood in need of medical treatment . . . and who at last succumbed to suffering, could ever have given to the disciples that impression that He was a conqueror over death and the grave . . ."

If Jesus awoke from a swoon, where did He go? Why did He disappear from history? The Swoon Theory turns into the Conspiracy Theory because the disciples testified that Jesus rose from the dead.²⁷

- #2 Conspiracy Theory: The disciples stole the body and fabricated the entire resurrection story.

EXPLANATION

If this is true, the disciples willingly died for their "conspiracy."

Conspiracies are always advanced for some selfish gain. What did the disciples get but scorn, persecution, exile, and ill-treatment?

- #3 Hallucination Theory: The disciples, in a state of spiritual fervor, genuinely believed they saw the resurrected Christ; but it was just a figment of their overworked imagination.

EXPLANATION

There were too many witnesses for this to be true: five hundred saw Christ together.

If it had been a hallucination, what happened to the body in the tomb?

"Any theory of hallucination breaks down on the fact (and if it is invention it is the oddest invention that ever entered the mind of man) that on three separate occasions this hallucination was not immediately recognized as Jesus: Luke 24:13-31; John 20:15, 21:4."²⁸

²⁷ Quoted in Wilbur Smith, *The Supernaturalness of Christ*, p. 208

²⁸ C.S. Lewis, *Miracles*, p. 153

- #4 Myth Theory: The resurrection was a myth—not true historically but true spiritually or symbolically.

EXPLANATION

Stated by Rudolf Bultmann in saying that the resurrection was a myth:

“If the bones of the dead Jesus were discovered tomorrow in a Palestinian tomb, all the essentials of Christianity would remain unchanged.”²⁹

It has become common in circles that find the supernatural aspects of the Resurrection incredible to place an existential interpretation on the Easter event. According to Rudolf Bultmann, “Jesus ist auferstanden ins Kerygma” - Jesus arose in the faith and the preaching of the disciples. For Emil Brunner, the Resurrection is not an event that “can be fitted into the succession of historical events”; it is a fact only if it has taken place “for us.”

The eyewitnesses, however, specifically claimed that they were testifying to actual historical events and not myths. “*We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.*” (2 Peter 1:16)

- #5 Christianity ⁽²⁵⁾ is the only remaining possibility: Jesus was crucified, buried, and raised from the dead on the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3,4).

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” (1 Corinthians 15:3,4)

ACTIVITY

1. What are the main reasons people usually give for challenging the reliability of the Bible? Is there any validity in their reasons? What do you think are the underlying spiritual reasons people challenge the reliability of the Bible?
2. What are some of the possible evasion tactics an unbeliever might use when confronted with the evidence of the resurrection? Why do you think would he or she use these tactics? What would be the most effective response to these tactics?
3. Select a group member to defend one of the four resurrection fallacies.

²⁹ Rudolf Bultmann, Quoted in, Kreeft & Tacelli, *Handbook of Christian Apologetics*, p. 176

Select another group member to challenge the position with the biblical position. Have the other group members analyze the defense and offer suggestions.

ASSIGNMENT

Read Supplement #1 – “The Reliability of the Bible.” Commit to memory two or three ideas, facts, or quotes that will help you when you present the gospel.

SESSION 3 – CHRISTIANITY AND WORLD RELIGIONS

INTRODUCTION

“But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned.” (Galatians 1:9)

Islam

1. There are over one billion⁽¹⁾ Muslims in the world.

EXPLANATION

There were 1.6 billion Muslims in the world as of 2010 – roughly 23% of the global population – according to a Pew Research Center estimate. But while Islam is currently the world’s second-largest religion (after Christianity), it is the fastest-growing major religion.³⁰

Islam is challenging Judaism as the second largest religion in the United States.

Since the US Census Bureau does not collect data on religious identification, the actual number of Muslims in the United States is unknown, and various institutions and organizations have produced some widely varying estimates about how many Muslims

³⁰ <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/22/muslims-and-islam-key-findings-in-the-u-s-and-around-the-world/>

live in the USA.³¹ The numbers vary from 1.2 million to 7 million. The number of Jews in America is estimated at around 4 million.

Islam is already the second largest religion in Europe.

2. Muhammad was born in AD 570 in Mecca⁽²⁾ (modern Saudi Arabia).

EXPLANATION

The city of **Mecca** was a major trading town, and a center for the worship of many gods. There was a building in Mecca called the Ka'ba that housed the spirits worshipped by the Arab tribes and visiting traders. These included the Sun, Venus, Fortune, Apollo, al-Lat (the Goddess), and al-Uzza (the Mighty One).

When Muhammad was four, he was seized with fits of epilepsy, and subjected to severe headaches and feverish convulsions, sometimes falling on the ground like a drunken man and snoring like a camel.

After his parents' death, his grandfather and then his uncle Abu Talib, a merchant who took his nephew with him on his many travels, raised Muhammad.

Muhammad worked for a wealthy widow named Khadijah and eventually married her, although she was fifteen years his senior.

Muhammad had numerous wives: 15 officially, but probably dozens more. His favorite was Aisha, with whom he consummated marriage when she was nine. He took another man's wife as his own more than once, and he also kept many concubines.

• Around AD 610⁽³⁾, Muhammad began having revelations.

EXPLANATION

He thought he was hearing from demons, but his wife convinced him otherwise.

When asked how the revelations were delivered to him, Muhammad replied, "Sometimes like the sound of a bell—a kind of communication which was very severe for me; and when the sounds ceased, I found myself aware of the instructions. And sometimes the angel would come in the form of a man, and converse with me, and all his words I remembered."³²

³¹ www.answers.com/topic/islam-in-the-united-states

³² Quoted in Philip Schaaf, History of the Christian Church, Vol IV, Life and Character of Mohammed

The angel Gabriel appeared to Muhammad urging him to preach the worship of Allah, one of the many gods worshipped at Mecca.

Muhammad believed he was a messenger of God, called to warn his countrymen to escape judgment by forsaking idolatry and worshipping the only true God. The revelations continued for the remaining 22 years of his life.

- Many opposed his message of Monotheism ⁽⁴⁾. This forced him to flee to Medina in AD 622.

This is called the Hegira, the “Flight,” and is the official beginning of Islam.

- In AD 630 ⁽⁵⁾, Muhammad conquered Mecca and devoted the temple of Ka’ba to Allah alone.

EXPLANATION

Progressively, Muhammad’s forces dominated all of the Arabian Peninsula for the cause of Allah. Within a century, Islam dominated most of the Middle East, Northern Africa, the Near East, and parts of Asia.

The doctrines of Islam (the word *islam* means ‘submission’) come from the Koran and include the Six Articles of Faith, the Five Pillars of Faith, and Jihad.

3. The Koran ⁽⁶⁾ contains the sayings of Muhammad that were compiled after his death from memory.

EXPLANATION

The other Muslim holy books are Hadith (“Sayings of Muhammad”) and the Sunnah (“Guidelines to Muslim Life”). Often Mohammed spoke these sayings in a religious trance. Muslims believe the Koran corrects errors in the Bible.

The **Six Articles of Faith** are:

1. God – the all-powerful Creator.
2. Angels – Each person has two recording angels, one for good deeds and one for bad deeds.
3. Scripture – the Koran, the Torah, the Zabin (Psalms), and the Injil (Gospel of Jesus).

4. Prophets – Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed, the “Seal of the Prophets.”

5. The Last Days – Paradise or Hell.

6. Kismet – Islamic doctrine of Allah’s control. *Kismet* is another word for word for fate, expressing the attitude that human effort cannot change the predestined course of events.

4. There are five pillars⁽⁷⁾ of faith in Islam.

- Accepting the creed⁽⁸⁾, “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet.”
- Praying five times a day toward Mecca⁽⁹⁾.
- Giving alms⁽¹⁰⁾ for charitable purposes.

EXPLANATION

A Muslim is to give one fortieth of his wealth to charity.

- Fasting⁽¹¹⁾ from sunrise to sunset during the month of Ramadan.
- Making at least one pilgrimage⁽¹²⁾ to Mecca.

EXPLANATION

Jihad means “struggle” or “Holy War.”

There are four Jihads: the tongue, the hand, the heart, and the sword.

Muslims are encouraged to fight the infidels, those who do not believe in Islam.

Allah’s Apostle was asked, “What is the best deed?” He replied, “To believe in Allah and His Apostle (Muhammad).” The questioner then asked, “What is the next in goodness?” He replied, “To participate in Jihad in Allah’s Cause.”³³

Hinduism

³³ Hadith, Vol 1, book 2, number 25; the Hadith is a chief source of Islamic belief second in authority to the Koran.

1. Hinduism originated around 1500⁽¹³⁾ BC in the Indus River valley of Northern India.

EXPLANATION

Hinduism has over 1.08 billion adherents worldwide (15% of world's population) with about 95% living in India.³⁴ However, Hinduism is growing more rapidly in the formerly Christian west than it is anywhere else. There are approximately 2.2 million Hindus in America.

Hinduism was popularized in the West by the Beatles and by films like *Star Wars*, *Gandhi*, and *A Passage to India*. It has also entered the West in a sanitized form through Transcendental Meditation and Yoga.

India is the second largest nation in the world and the vast majority of its people are held in bondage to Hinduism. For example, Hindus revere cows and will not eat them. As a result, cows proliferate throughout India. If India were to convert to Christianity, the cows in India could feed over 2 billion people for decades, yet many in India are starving. The starving in India are rarely helped by their countrymen because it is believed that each man has his role to play and his circumstances should not be changed by anyone else.

2. Hinduism is a complex⁽¹⁴⁾ religion with several major versions, but the following concepts summarize the general beliefs.

- Maya⁽¹⁵⁾: the world is an illusion

EXPLANATION

Maya is the transitory appearance of the world of the senses, which obscures the spiritual reality from which it originates.³⁵

Hindus believe that what is called reality is real only in the same way a dream is real. It exists, but it does not describe ultimate reality or truth. This life is a thin veil of unreality that obscures the truth.

- Samsara⁽¹⁶⁾: the cycle of reincarnation

³⁴ <http://www.pewforum.org/files/2012/12/globalReligion-tables.pdf>

³⁵ Adapted from the Houghton Mifflin dictionary

EXPLANATION

Hindus believe that the soul travels through a series of lives, human or non-human, one after another. **Samsara** is known in the West as the transmigration of the soul or reincarnation. The soul that is now a man may next be a horse. This cycle of Samsara is viewed as a punishment.

Moksha. Hindus believe that liberation from Samsara comes from the weary, punishing cycle of existence.

- **Karma** ⁽¹⁷⁾: the sum total of your actions in every incarnation

EXPLANATION

Hindus believe that there is a system of good deeds that one must do in each incarnation in order to be liberated from that existence.

These actions are attached to the soul as it transmigrates, and each new body (and each event experienced by that body) is determined by previous karma.

Two other beliefs are **yoga** and **caste**.

Hindus believe that practicing yoga will enable them to merge with **Brahm**, the ultimate nothingness of reality.

Yoga means “union” and is usually performed while chanting **mantras**, the names of Hindu deities.

Hindus believe that part of the role assigned to a human soul is the caste assigned to him. The castes range from beggars to rulers, and each person is fixed in their caste.

When Mother Theresa tried to help beggars in India, she was opposed by many Hindus who insisted that beggars must fulfill their caste in order to achieve Moksha.

Buddhism

EXPLANATION

Buddhism begins with the story of Siddhartha Gautama, born the son of a wealthy man in India in 566 BC. His father was afraid that Prince Gautama would become a spiritual seeker, so he enclosed him in his palace and gave him every worldly pleasure.

Siddhartha eventually left home, and went through many extremes of asceticism until he finally achieved enlightenment. To help others achieve enlightenment, he developed the **Four Noble Truths**.

1. Enlightenment⁽¹⁸⁾ is found through the Four Noble Truths.
 - First Noble Truth: Suffering⁽¹⁹⁾ exists.

This seems obvious to people in the West, but Siddhartha was speaking in a Hindu context where suffering was sometimes not viewed as real (Maya).

- Second Noble Truth: Suffering is caused by human⁽²⁰⁾ desire.
- Third Noble Truth: Eliminate desire⁽²¹⁾, abolish suffering.

If there are no longer any cravings, there will no longer be any suffering.

- Fourth Noble Truth: Abolish desire by following⁽²²⁾ the eightfold path.
2. The Eightfold Path:
 - Perfected View—understand the Four Noble Truths
 - Perfected Intentions—become unattached to this world
 - Perfected Speech—avoid malice, gossip, and negativity
 - Perfected Actions—produce good karma
 - Perfected Livelihood—avoidance of work harmful to others
 - Perfected Effort—set forward the good
 - Perfected Mindfulness—think right about the body, feelings, and mind
 - Perfected Concentration—achieve freedom from desire

EXPLANATION

There are many schools of Buddhism that range from the strongly monastic Theravada Buddhism to Zen Buddhism, the most liberal type that focuses on meditating in the “Lotus position” and chanting.

Buddhism, in a much sanitized form, has become popular in the West largely because it is, at root, a form of humanism with a philosophy of non-materialism and politeness attached.

There are approximately 2.5 million Buddhists in the United States.

Animism

1. Animism is the belief that spiritual beings⁽²³⁾ or forces inhabit the world and everything in it.

EXPLANATION

Animism in primitive cultures is a direct result of natural events shaping the lives of primitive people. Animists deify the forces that shape their lives: stars, wind, rain, animals, trees, water, etc. They create rituals to control or pacify these forces.

The word Animism comes from the Latin word *anima*, which means ‘breath or soul.’

2. Animism is the foundational⁽²⁴⁾ belief of witchcraft, spiritism, voodoo, and all superstitions that regard the natural world as the “clothing” of the spiritual.

EXPLANATION

Many of the spiritual movements in the West, i.e., witchcraft, etc., are simply the study of how to manipulate the spiritual power within the natural world.

Animism is what a people tend towards when they “worship creation,” or view the natural world as containing spiritual power.

Christians understand that man is made for worship and that demons draw unredeemed men into believing that objects contain spiritual power for those who know how to access it.

Demonic forces play on the reality that every object in creation reveals God. There is a divine imprint on every created thing, but demonic forces twist that imprint into an evidence of divinity.

3. Animism has spread in the West⁽²⁵⁾ largely due to the New Age Movement and Neo-Paganism.

EXPLANATION

In 1973, Peter Tompkins published *The Secret Life of Plants*, a bestseller that argued that plants have a soul life. This revitalized the ancient pagan ideas about the spirituality of natural life.

The Green and Environmental movements have also encouraged this thinking, drawing from the Greek idea that the earth is a living being, called 'Gaia.'

ACTIVITY

1. Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world. Why do you think that is? What is the appeal of Islam? What does the gospel offer that far exceeds the best that Islam has to offer?
2. Hinduism is growing more rapidly in the formerly Christian West than it is anywhere else. What are some of the reasons Eastern religions would appeal to someone from the West?
3. Select a group member to pretend to be a Muslim. Select another group member to try to win that person to Christ. Have the other group members analyze the exchange and offer suggestions.

ASSIGNMENT

Read Supplement #4 – "How to Witness to Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus."
Commit to memorize two or three ideas, facts, or quotes that will help you when you present the gospel.

SESSION 4 – ROMAN CATHOLICISM AND SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST

INTRODUCTION

Several religious groups came out of catholic Christianity, developing their own beliefs that were opposed to orthodox faith. The word *catholic* here does not refer to the Roman Catholic Church institution, but to the universal Church scattered over different continents, having the same foundational faith laid down by the apostles since the first century.

Roman Catholicism

1. During the early days of Christianity, there was no⁽¹⁾ Roman Catholic Church, but a local church in Rome located in the West along with the churches in other centers, such as Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Constantinople based in the East.

- The church in Rome grew in stature and prominence⁽²⁾, especially when Constantine embraced the faith and made Christianity as the official religion of his empire.

EXPLANATION

The word "catholic" was said to be introduced by Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, in the early part of the second century. This is due to the universality of Christianity which started in Jerusalem when Alexander the Great conquered Persia, Egypt, Syria, and Mesopotamia, not knowing that the common Greek language would pave the way for the gospel to spread.

In time, the local church in Rome grew in stature and prominence, especially after Emperor Constantine embraced Christianity and made it the official religion of his empire. At this time too, the divinity of Christ was put to trial after Arius promoted a subordinationist view. Arius taught that Jesus Christ was inferior to God, who remains innately superior among the Godhead. This brought Arius into a trial where the eastern bishops met the western at the infamous Council of Nicea in AD 325. The meeting concluded with Arius and some of his supporters banished for a time from Nicea. As a result, the orthodoxy of Christ's nature was reaffirmed.

- Roman Catholicism began in the fifth⁽³⁾ century when the predecessor of Pope Leo the Great died.

EXPLANATION

This tolerance over the Christian faith became an advantage on the part of the church leaders in Rome. This local church in Rome evolved to become the Roman Catholic church known today, beginning in the fifth century.

- Pope Leo the Great entered as the supreme⁽⁴⁾ head of the whole Christian Church using Matthew 16:13-19; Luke 22:31,32; and John 21:15-17 as supporting biblical passages.

EXPLANATION

After the death of his predecessor, **Leo the Great** suddenly assumed the papacy, claiming his being the supreme head of the whole Christian Church using Matthew 16:13-19, Luke 22:31-32, and John 21:15-17 as supporting biblical passages. This was not received well by the other centers, especially the church in Constantinople. Even Irenaeus and Cyprian, bishops of Lyons and Carthage respectively, disagreed with the patriarch of Rome.

The doctrines and practices of the Roman Catholic Church did not happen overnight. These human traditions were carefully fused as their teachings progressed. Some of the doctrines that were added are the following:

2. The doctrines and practices of Roman Catholics:

- Prayers for the dead⁽⁵⁾ (AD 300)
- Making the sign of the cross⁽⁶⁾ (AD 300)
- Wax candle (AD 320)
- Veneration⁽⁷⁾ of angels and dead saints, and use of images (AD 375)
- The Mass (AD 394)
- Beginning of the Exaltation of Mary (AD 431)
- Extreme Unction (AD 526)
- Doctrine of purgatory⁽⁸⁾ (AD 593)
- Prayers directed to Mary⁽⁹⁾, dead saints, and angels (AD 600)

- The rosary⁽¹⁰⁾, invented by Peter the Hermit (1090)
- Sale of indulgences⁽¹¹⁾ (1190)
- Purgatory⁽¹²⁾ proclaimed as dogma by the Council of Florence (1439)
- Apocryphal⁽¹³⁾ books added to the Bible by the Council of Trent (1546)
- Immaculate conception⁽¹⁴⁾ of virgin Mary, proclaimed by Pope Pious IX (1854)
- Mary proclaimed Mother of the Church by Pope Paul VI (1965)
- Good works⁽¹⁵⁾ are necessary to experience future salvation

EXPLANATION

The Roman Catholics also believe that good works are necessary to experience salvation. They often quote James 2:24 to explain that faith alone is not enough; one has to couple it with good works.

You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.
James 2:24

However, a careful study of James 2 in context will reveal that *good works* is the evidence that can be seen by people, resulting in justification in their eyes. On the other hand, what really justifies a believer, resulting in salvation, is his faith in Jesus Christ. One's faith in Christ is necessary for him to be justified in the eyes of God, resulting in good works that will also justify him in the eyes of the people around him.

Many ask, is the Roman Catholic Church a Christian church? Consider these questions:

1. Does the Roman Catholic Church believe in Mary being the Mediatrix of all grace?
2. Do Roman Catholic Church members have the assurance of salvation when they die?
3. Do Roman Catholic Church members have the freedom to interpret the Scripture?
4. Does the Roman Catholic Church believe in the equal authority of Scripture and tradition?

Seventh-Day Adventist (Sabbatarianism)

1. Seventh-day Adventist was founded by Ellen G. White⁽¹⁶⁾.

It started after a group of individuals came together after the Great Disappointment⁽¹⁷⁾ in 1844 where many were expecting for Jesus Christ's

Second Coming as a result of William Miller's eschatological teaching.

EXPLANATION

The Seventh-day Adventist movement traces its founder to **Ellen Gould Harmon White**, who had a major role in the movement. She had written a number of pieces that discussed theology, creation, health, and prayer, among others. The formation of this new religious group was due to the Great Disappointment that happened after Miller's failed prophecy.

William Miller. William Miller was a devout Christian believer. After his conversion from deism, he did a serious study of the Scripture for two years with the help of a concordance. He began preaching at the age of fifty years old while supporting himself through farming, and became involved in discussions on end-time teachings. Miller and his students earned a number of critics who did not agree with his teachings, and he was accused of peddling the Word of God.

When the prophecy of the Lord's return either in 1843 or 1844 turned out to be a failure, many were disappointed, and this event was dubbed the **Great Disappointment**. The end-time prophetic teachings came in an era when people did not even talk about the visible coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Miller, along with his associates, carried a burning passion to study this topic, but did not go through a formal study of theology, instead using their own understanding for biblical interpretation.

Hiram Edson. After the death of Miller, Hiram Edson, a follower of Miller's end-time teachings, took his own interpretation to the next level. According to his testimony, he had seen a vision after the failed prophecy. He concluded that Miller was right with the prophetic time of October 22, 1844, but had missed the actual place, which was not on earth but in a heavenly sanctuary. This new understanding about Miller's failed prophecy was not totally abandoned by some end-time prophetic groups. They embraced the conclusion of Edson by promoting a foreign term, *heavenly sanctuary*.

The idea of the word "Adventist" came in connection with the October 22, 1844 incident, in view of their understanding of atonement.

Joseph Bates and Ellen G. White. This incident was followed by a legalistic teaching on the doctrine of the Sabbath which was started by **Joseph Bates**. His booklet on the Sabbath, published in 1847, was read by husband and wife **James S. White** and **Ellen G. Harmon**. Convinced by Bates' teaching on the Sabbath, along with Miller's view of the Second Advent, they formed a new religious organization known today as the **Seventh-Day Adventist**.

2. The doctrines and practices of Seventh-day Adventists:

- They believe worship must only ⁽¹⁸⁾ be done during Saturday, a reason they are called Sabbath-keepers.

- They observe strict dietary ⁽¹⁹⁾ laws like not eating pork and shellfish, which are necessary for believers to follow.

- Though they say that it is only by grace through faith in Jesus that we are saved, legalism ⁽²⁰⁾ still has a great hold on them.

EXPLANATION

There are some Seventh-day Adventist members who have truly experienced a genuine transformation through a personal relationship with Christ without relying on Sabbatarian legalism. This is also true for the Seventh-day Baptist who differs with many evangelical believers because of their view on the Sabbath.

Is the Seventh-day Adventist a Christian group or a religious cult group? Consider these questions:

1. Are the biblical interpretations of their founder Ellen G. White always correct and accurate?
2. Are the dietary laws and Sabbath observation essential to one's salvation?
3. Are the heavenly sanctuary and investigative judgment doctrines needed to review the sins of men?

ACTIVITY

1. Why is salvation by works so appealing to people? What is the best way to communicate the truth to people who believe in such an erroneous teaching?
2. Select a group member to pretend to be a Roman Catholic or a Seventh-Day Adventist. Select another group member to try to win that person to Christ. Have the other group members analyze the exchange and offer suggestions.

SESSION 5 – RELIGIOUS CULTS AND PHILIPPINE CULTS

INTRODUCTION

The term 'cult' is pejorative in many Western countries. However, when we define and use the term *cult* in this lecture we are always leaning towards a theological definition. The word came from the Latin *cultus* (colere), which means 'worship of deity'.

Since this is a general definition, many apologists involved in the study of comparative religion narrow down its meaning to those who worship another "god", thereby embracing the unorthodox Christian faith. As Dr. Walter Martin, the modern-day father of Christian apologetics, defines it, a cult is "a group of people gathered about a specific person or person's misinterpretation of the Bible."¹ A cult claims to believe the Bible as its authority, but it is the leader who has the right to interpret it. Once this happens, they are at the mercy of a manipulative and authoritative cult leader who dictates what to believe and wear, how they should think and live, and where they should go. This is spiritually dangerous and could put lives in peril.²

Religious Cults

1. A cult is any group that claims to be Christian⁽¹⁾ but is not.

EXPLANATION

A genuine Christian is somebody who adheres to the orthodox faith. A cult member, however, will not embrace sound doctrine although he continues to claim that he is a Christian.

2. A cult will accept the Bible⁽²⁾, but will use other books to "interpret" the Bible correctly (Matthew 7:15).

¹ Walter R. Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*, (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2003), 17.

² There are a number of religious groups like the Children of God, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Church of Christ, Scientist that were involved at times in legal battles.

EXPLANATION

A number of cult groups have additional literature written by their founder in order to understand the Scripture. The **Jehovah's Witnesses** have the *Studies in the Scripture*, *Awake!*, and *Watchtower magazines*. The **Children of God** have their own *Mo Letters* while the **Iglesia ni Cristo** and **PMCC 4th Watch** have their *Pasugo* and *The Word* magazines respectively. These magazines help the members to understand the Bible's teaching about certain topics. The respective founder of each group is the sole interpreter and authoritative leader who claims to be the heaven-sent messenger for this generation.

3. There are at least four reasons people join cults.

- Spiritual emptiness⁽³⁾

EXPLANATION

This condition happens to individuals who are not spiritually satisfied with their ongoing relationship with God.

- Depression⁽⁴⁾ and the absence of personal identity

EXPLANATION

This is a situation when an individual is trapped in a compounding set of problems that he thinks has no end. It is also possible that this major problem hinders an individual from doing any volunteer church work, stripping him of his identity in the local body of Christ.

- The charm and magnetism of cult leaders⁽⁵⁾ and the promise of present and future power

EXPLANATION

The authoritative voice and firm interpretation of a leader is very enticing and deceiving, especially if a person does not learn to embrace the authority of the Word of God. An individual can also be attracted by eschatological promises which are not often discussed in local churches.

- Susceptibility produced by a significant change⁽⁶⁾ in life circumstances (new job, divorce, broken relationship)

EXPLANATION

Any major adjustment like a relational dysfunction, work termination, or an immediate healing could serve as a starting point in a person's life, making them susceptible to embracing a cult's teaching. This is probably due to a false understanding about God either "punishing" them or blessing them.

4. Most, if not all, of the following traits can be observed in a cult:
 - They pervert the doctrine of the Godhead.

EXPLANATION

There are many cults who clearly pervert the nature and role of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They either embrace the Arian subordinationism or Sabellian modalism. Some even end up promoting pagan tritheism or binitarianism, dividing the Godhead into three or two divine persons and elevating the Father as supreme above all.

- They lower the status of Jesus Christ.

EXPLANATION

The usual interpretation on the person of Christ by cult groups is His being inferior to the Father. They believe that Jesus was a creature created by His Father. Some subordinationist groups like the *Iglesia ni Cristo* believe that Jesus is a human not to be compared with other humans, since He is called uniquely as the Son of God. Others, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, while calling Jesus God, maintain Him to be inferior due to His title as the Mighty God but *not* the Almighty God.³

- They dismiss the personality of the Holy Spirit.

EXPLANATION

The cults of Christianity have a weak stand on the subject of Pneumatology. Most of the major cult groups did not spend an exhaustive study on the Holy Spirit. They believe that the Holy Spirit is not a person but a force proceeding from God (as proposed by Jehovah's Witnesses), or a manifestation (as argued by the Oneness Pentecostal cult).

³ This understanding that the term *Mighty God* is by nature different from *Almighty God* is inaccurate. In the Old Testament, Yahweh is also called Mighty God, but this does not mean His nature was diminished. (See Isa. 10:21; Jer. 32:18) On the other hand, Jesus also claimed to be the Almighty God. (See Rev. 1:8)

- They add good works to the finished work of Christ.

EXPLANATION

This is not to say that good works is not important, because how you conduct yourself as a result of your doctrinal belief is evidence of that belief (see 1 Timothy 4:16). However, the cults rely so much on good works that they spend large amounts of time going door to door to convert people, or doing charity works to earn heavenly points, like the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Roman Catholics. Some of them put emphasis on marriage and exaltation to godhood for full redemption, like the Moonies and the Mormons.

- They embrace the faulty interpretation of their founder or leader.

EXPLANATION

The cults will almost always ignore the experts and scholars by arguing that “if Peter, who was a fisherman, did not have to go to a seminary, then why is there a need for further study?” They likely do not take into account that the prophets and the apostles were using their own native language, namely Hebrew and *Koine* Greek. If we in the present age do not study the languages, cultures, and practices that existed at the times the Bible was written, then we will surely end up with a faulty interpretation of the text.

- They strictly obey food and/or clothing standards.

EXPLANATION

The cults' dietary laws are always connected with Israel's eating customs. They prohibit themselves from eating food that is not freely prescribed for God's people in the Old Testament. It is common for these religious cult groups not to eat pork or blood delicacies, since they base their false understanding of prohibition from the book of Leviticus 11:3,7 and Acts 15:29. However, a careful study of the passages will reveal that the practices and customs are only meant for the Israelites, not for the non-Israelites.

- They believe religious membership can save them.

EXPLANATION

This practice is common among many cults because of their understanding that they alone know the truth.

- They produce their own religious books in addendum to the Scripture.

EXPLANATION

Cults consider the literature of their founders as authoritative in addition to the Scripture. A number of cult groups have released several pieces of literature, such as the *Book of Mormon* of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the *Divine Principles* of the Unification Church, the *Pasugo* of the *Iglesia ni Cristo*, *The Great Controversy* of the Seventh-day Adventist, and the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

- They deny the teaching of a literal hell fire.

EXPLANATION

A number of cults do not believe in a literal hell or eternal condemnation. They usually hold to the belief of *annihilationism*, which is the complete destruction of wicked people as a result of judgment. This was brought about as a response to the hard-to-accept teaching of a loving God who could throw somebody into eternal hell fire, condemning him for eternity.

The Jehovah's Witnesses

EXPLANATION

The term *Jehovah's Witness* is not the name of a religious movement, but a group of people who spread the teachings of **Charles Taze Russell**.

The movement began under the leadership of Russell, who considered himself a Laodicean messenger. Russell was born in February 16, 1852. He had been a member of the Presbyterian Church, but had then left to join the Congregational Church. It was at this time that he had started to question his theological foundation, especially in relation to the doctrine of hell.

Russell became the founder and president of the **Watch Tower and Bible Tract Society** (formerly Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society). After becoming a skeptic at the age of sixteen, Russell renewed his interest in spirituality once again with Adventism at the age of seventeen. He was attracted by the teaching of Nelson H. Barbour, an Adventist, that Christ had already come; not physically, but invisibly, in 1874. Russell later did some reinterpretation, moving the date to 1914. He was twenty-four years old at this time.

Russell wrote a number of reading materials like *The Herald of the Morning* that developed into *The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom*. He also wrote and published a controversial book titled *Studies in the Scriptures* (formerly *Millennial Dawn*) where he stated,

"If the six volumes of 'Scripture Studies' are practically the Bible topically arranged, with Bible proof-texts given, we might not improperly name the volumes – 'The Bible' in an arranged form. That is to say, they are not merely comments on the Bible, but they are practically the Bible itself...Furthermore, not only do we find that people cannot see the divine plan in studying the Bible itself, but we see also that if anyone lays the 'Scripture Studies' ... after he has read them for 10 years – if he then lays them aside and ignores them and goes to the Bible alone... our experience shows that within two years he goes into darkness. On the other hand, if he has merely read the 'Scripture Studies' with their references, and had not read a page of the Bible, as such, he would be in the light at the end of the two years." – Watchtower, Sept 15, 1910

Upon Russell's death, several leaders of the Watch Tower movement contributed to the success of the movement. It was under **Joseph F. Rutherford's** leadership that they divided the Witnesses into two classes: the elected, who are part of the 144,000, and those who are part of the great crowd, or the unelected ones. The birth of the New World Translation (NWT) came under the leadership of **Nathan Knorr**. Then **Frederick W. Franz** contributed a great deal of literature within a span of thirty-four years.

Meanwhile, **Milton Henschel** tried his best to provide a solution to the prophetic teaching of Russell and Rutherford regarding the 144,000 who would see the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ even before they died. They originally believed that those born in 1914 who were part of the 144,000 would witness the end of the world. The problem was that those elected were probably all dead by now – or else they would be over a hundred years old. Henschel thus had to cast a "new light" in November 1995 by reinterpreting the passage.

The Jehovah's Witnesses are continually growing in number under the leadership of **Don Adams**. In 2014, there were 8,201,545 publishers promoting the literature of the Jehovah's Witness Governing Body around the world.

1. The doctrines of the Jehovah's Witnesses:

- They deny the doctrine of the Trinity⁽⁷⁾.

EXPLANATION

They believe this is a pagan belief that has a connection with the pagan triads of Egypt and Babylon. They also falsely understand that this doctrine was invented in the Council of Nicea with Emperor Constantine presiding theologically, as if he really could engage doctrinally with the Western and Eastern bishops.

- They reject the deity⁽⁸⁾ of Jesus Christ.

EXPLANATION

Jehovah's Witnesses maintain the Father as the only Almighty God named Jehovah, while Jesus, the Mighty God, was inferiorly created by His Father. They believe that Jesus, being the Archangel Michael, was created by Jehovah His Father. This Archangel Michael was incarnated to be in the flesh and to die on a stake, not on a cross. He is not called by the divine name "Jehovah" like His Father.

- They deny the deity and personality of the Holy Spirit⁽⁹⁾.

EXPLANATION

They believe the Holy Spirit is a mere impersonal force sent by Jehovah God, nothing more. They always present the Holy Spirit in lower case letters (holy spirit) to express their belief of an impersonal force.

- They deny the existence of hell⁽¹⁰⁾. All non-Witnesses are annihilated immediately after death.

EXPLANATION

This was the most dreadful doctrine for Charles Russell. He could not imagine how a loving God could allow the wicked to be tormented forever. Russell's view of hell was likely influenced by his contact with Adventism.

- They deny grace⁽¹¹⁾.

EXPLANATION

The Jehovah's Witnesses believe in salvation by works. The man-hours spent through their door-to-door visits are believed to be very crucial for their eternal future. It has been reported that a Jehovah's Witness devotes 34 million man-hours visiting door-to-

door and standing on street corners, just presenting the Watchtower literature to possible converts.

2. They believe that the Watchtower⁽¹²⁾ Bible and Tract Society is the sole channel for the truth and should be accepted without question.

EXPLANATION

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that the **Governing Body** is the sole channel for the truth and should be accepted without question. The Governing Body is composed of those in charge of presenting the teachings in all Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society literature circulated around the world.

They had formerly held a belief that the members of the Governing Body must be part of the 144,000 bound for heaven. However, since a number of them had turned away from the faith, they had had to be replaced by Witnesses who were allowed to join the Governing Body despite their younger age. It is also noteworthy that those who composed the New World Translation (NWT) were part of the former Governing Body, which had no formal academic background in biblical languages.

The Mormons (The Latter Day Saints)

EXPLANATION

Today, Mormonism as a movement has almost 16 million members worldwide.¹ The term Mormon is not the name of their religion. It was Joseph Smith, Jr. who first introduced this odd name. According to their concocted history, Mormon was a prophet-historian who quoted and abridged the words of the many ancient prophets that were written on golden plates. Mormons prefer to be called the LDS (short for Latter-Day Saints) or simply the Saints. They come in pairs, wearing, for men, a nice suit and a long tie; and modest dresses for women. They seem to have a truth to tell to the whole world. It is surprising that these mission-oriented youthful individuals devote two years of their lives just to reach out to people even in the third world countries. How did it all start?

This religious cult movement started with Joseph Smith, Jr. who was born on December 23, 1805, in Sharon, Vermont. He became a treasure hunter, a "peep stone" gazer, and a "seer." At the age of fourteen, while he was in the woods, he prayed and asked God which religious group he should join. Afterwards, he saw an alleged vision where two

¹ See Worldwide Statistics: <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/facts-and-statistics>

personages (the Father and the Son) were in front of him. He was told by the one claiming to be the Son not to join any of the religious sects because their teachings were an abomination to him. The alleged Son added that all of these sects were corrupt and hypocrite.

Four years later, at the age of eighteen, Smith claimed a second vision while praying. His room became so bright that he saw at his bedside an angel whom he called Moroni standing in the air. He was visited by this alleged heavenly messenger three times before the messenger finally ascended. This personage and messenger told Smith that God had something for him to do. He was to unearth a breastplate, the Urim and Thummim stones, and the book written on golden plates deposited in a stone box at the Hill Cumorah, Palmyra, New York.²

After another four years, at age twenty-two, Smith was able to retrieve the contents of the stone box. As a result of this, the Book of Mormon was born.³ This Book of Mormon purports to be a recorded account of the Jaredites who came out of the diaspora of the Tower of Babel and a Jewish family who left Jerusalem because of impending judgment in 2250-2300BC and 600BC respectively (Mormonism's reckoning). Smith believed the Book of Mormon to be the Word of God, while the Bible is also the Word of God as far as it is correctly translated.⁴

Seventeen years after Smith's claim of a visitation, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was founded. In addition to the Book of Mormon, another set of literatures were added as authoritative, namely the Doctrines and Covenants and The Pearl of Great Price.

1. The Book of Mormon⁽¹³⁾ tells the story of a band of righteous Jews who escaped Jerusalem before it was destroyed in 586 BC and migrated to America.

EXPLANATION

The book claims that the Jaredites from the *Tower of Babel* and the family of Lehi and his wife along with his four sons Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and Nephi, who eventually got married to the daughters of Ishmael, left Jerusalem with their families to travel to Central America, which they considered the promised land. Conflict grew between the Nephites and the Lamanites, eventually wiping out the Nephite clan. The Lamanites are considered by many scholars of Mormonism to be the descendants of Laman and Lemuel and the ancestors of the indigenous natives in Central America.

² Although many Mormons are contesting that the real Hill Cumorah is located in Cerro Vigia in Mexico.

³ The 1830 Edition of the Book of Mormon has 3,913 changes based on the research of Jerald and Sandra Tanner who were both former Mormon members. (Please check the Utah Lighthouse Ministry: <http://www.utlm.org/>)

⁴ See Article 8 from The Articles of Faith of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, History of the Church, Vol. 4, pp. 535-541

- The book contains material lifted directly from the King James Bible, authored in 1611, 1100 years after the Book of Mormon was supposedly written.

EXPLANATION

It is very obvious how Joseph Smith, Jr. plagiarized a number of chapters and verses from the Authorized King James Version of the Bible. Joseph Smith, Jr. even copied the word/words from the KJV 1611 that are not literally found in the actual manuscript but were added by the translators for smooth grammatical purposes. Some of the Book of Mormon passages below can be compared with those of the KJV 1611.⁵

Book of Mormon	Authorized King James Version
Moroni 10	1 Corinthians 12:1-11
Nephi 14	Isaiah 4
Mosiah 14	Isaiah 53
3 Nephi 11:27	1 John 5:7; John 14:11; 10:30
3 Nephi 24:10	Malachi 3:10

Many defenders of the Mormonism movement will argue that even Jesus Christ quoted the Old Testament. They do not bother to think that Jesus and the apostles had been quoting the Old Testament manuscripts that existed in their time, while Smith was plagiarizing the *translators* of the King James Version.

- There have been over 2,000 changes made to the book since it was first introduced as the “inspired” word of God.

EXPLANATION

Former members of the Mormonism movement, namely **Jerald and Sandra Tanner**, documented at least 3,913 changes in the Book of Mormon since it was first published by Joseph Smith, Jr. The first edition states that Joseph Smith, Jr. was the “author and proprietor” of the book. In the next edition, it was changed to “translator”. According to the Tanners,

"In this study we will show that there have been at least 3,913 changes made in the Book of Mormon from the time it was first published in 1830. In making this study we

⁵ See Walter R. Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*, Bethany House Publishers,

obtained photocopies of an original 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon from the University of Utah Library. This copy was donated to the library by the Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe. After comparing the first edition of the Book of Mormon with the 1964 edition we marked the changes on the photocopies of the 1830 edition."⁶

2. Besides the Book of Mormon, the church accepts three other works: *Doctrine and Covenants*, *The Pearl of Great Price* (both written by Joseph Smith), and the Bible.

EXPLANATION

Doctrine and Covenants – This book is considered to be the word of God by many members of the Mormonism movement. Smith also plagiarized a number of verses from the King James Version into this book.⁷ The book talks about eternal families, which is why the Latter Day Saints believe that marriages are still possible in the next life. It also maintains three degrees of glory awaiting their members, namely celestial, terrestrial, and telestial. Lastly, it talks about the organization of the Mormonism movement. It also promotes the doctrine of how to reach godhood.⁸ As a result, the members of this religious movement hope to attain divinity in the next life with endless sexual intimacy to produce numerous spirit children that will be embodied in this life. In addition, *Doctrine and Covenants* commends polygamy, while the Book of Mormon condemns it.⁹

Pearl of Great Price – This book is part of the Mormon canonical literature that contains five sections: Selection from the Book of Moses, The Book of Abraham, Joseph Smith—Matthew, Joseph Smith—History, and The Articles of Faith of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In this last section, one will find the views of every Mormon with regards to the Scripture as stated:

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

As seen, members of Mormonism are careful to construct their words to place the Book of Mormon in high regard in comparison to the Bible. Once any passage of the Bible contradicts the beliefs of Mormonism, it is considered as a mistranslation. Mormons use this reasoning to justify their theology.

⁶ Introduction to the book 3,913 Changes in the Book of Mormon: A Photo Reprint of the Original 1830 Edition of the Book of Mormon with all the Changes Marked by Jerald and Sandra Tanner.

⁷ An example of plagiarism can be seen in D&C Section 27:15-18 which was lifted from Eph. 6:11-17 of the King James Version 1611.

⁸ See D&C 132:20.

⁹ See D&C 132:38; Jacob 1:15.

3. The doctrines of the Mormons:

- God is an exalted man⁽¹⁴⁾.

EXPLANATION

As one of the past leaders of the LDS movement said: "As man is, God once was; as God is, man may become."¹⁰ They believe that all members of the Mormonism movement can reach godhood. Although many members are not aware of this, the LDS leaders believe that they are "gods in embryo."¹¹ One day these "gods" will also inhabit their own planet where they will be worshipped by their constituents.¹²

"You are my witnesses," declares the Lord, "and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me." (Isaiah 43:10)

- Every person existed⁽¹⁵⁾ as a spirit in heaven before he or she was born on the earth.

EXPLANATION

The leaders of the Mormonism movement believe that they already existed before the world was created. This is one reason why the members of Mormonism believe they should have many children: so the spirit beings can be given physical bodies on earth.¹³

- By rigid obedience⁽¹⁶⁾ to Mormon teaching, a person can progress toward godhood.

EXPLANATION

A member of the Mormonism movement will surely attain godhood or exaltation if the Mormon ordinances are followed carefully.

- Christ was not born of a virgin⁽¹⁷⁾.

¹⁰ This was the popular statement of Lorenzo Snow, the fifth president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saint in June 1830.

¹¹ Bill McKeever & Eric Johnson, "Answering Mormons' Questions: Ready Responses for Inquiring Latter-Day Saints," (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2012)

¹² Please read Thelma "Granny" Geer's "Mormonism, Mama, and Me," Moody Publishers Edition, 1986.

¹³ Dennis Kirkland, "Mormons and Muslims: A Case of Matching Fingerprints," (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press Publishing, 2008).

EXPLANATION

The leaders of the Mormonism movement believe that Jesus (Jehovah) was one of the offspring of the Father (Elohim) and Mary as a result of sexual relationship. They also believe that Jesus was the polygamous husband of Mary, Martha, and Mary Magdalene.

- The Church went into apostasy⁽¹⁸⁾ after the first century.

EXPLANATION

According to Joseph Smith, Jr.'s testimony, all the church denominations are in error. Also according to this, Joseph Smith, Jr. is about to be used to restore the true Church which is to be named later as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We will now look at the cults in the Philippines.

Philippine Cults

Members Church of God International (*Ang Dating Daan*)

1. *Ang Dating Daan* was started by Eliseo Soriano⁽¹⁹⁾.

2. The doctrines of *Ang Dating Daan*:

- They believe the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not equal⁽²⁰⁾ in power and authority. The Father is higher by nature than the Son and the Holy Spirit.

- They have no clear stand⁽²¹⁾ on the Holy Spirit.

- They deny⁽²²⁾ the full humanity of Jesus Christ.

- They believe religion⁽²³⁾ and good works are essential for salvation.

Iglesia ni Cristo

1. *Iglesia ni Cristo* was founded by Felix Manalo⁽²⁴⁾ and was formally registered in 1914.

- His teachings are authoritative⁽²⁵⁾—they believe that to question them is to go against the truth.

- They believe that Felix Manalo is the messenger⁽²⁶⁾ from the Far East (referring to the Philippines) in these last days.

- He is believed to be the one prophesied in the Scripture as the “ravenous bird” in Isaiah 46:11, instead of understanding the passage as pointing to Cyrus.

2. The doctrines of *Iglesia ni Cristo*:

- They believe the Father alone⁽²⁷⁾ is God, while the Son is a creature created by His Father.
- The Holy Spirit for them is an impersonal⁽²⁸⁾ force.
- They deny⁽²⁹⁾ the Trinity doctrine.
- They believe that church membership⁽³⁰⁾ can save them and good works must be done in the context of their church.

Pentecostal Missionaries Church of Christ (PMCC 4th Watch)

1. PMCC 4th Watch was established by Arsenio Ferriol⁽³¹⁾ in 1972 who claimed to be **the** apostle in this generation. He came from an Orthodox Church denomination before he formed his own religious group.

2. The doctrines of PMCC 4th Watch:

- The founder has the authority ⁽³²⁾ to interpret and understand Scripture.

- They believe the Father is God and the Son is God, but they are two separate ⁽³³⁾ Gods.

- Their teaching on the Holy Spirit is unclear.

- They deny the Trinity doctrine.

- They believe water baptism is essential for salvation.

ACTIVITY

1. Why do you think leaders of cults believe that they are the only ones who can understand and interpret Scripture? Why do you think people believe such a claim?
2. Why do you think that all cults accept the Bible? Why is it necessary for them to have other books to help interpret the Bible? What is the most effective way to communicate with someone who says he or she believes the Bible but then uses other books to adjust what it says?
3. In witnessing to a cult member, do you think it is better to focus the conversation on the fallacies within the cult, or to look for the underlying reason(s) that person joined the cult? Which approach is easier? Which will have better results? Why?
4. Select a group member to pretend to be either a member of *Ang Dating Daan*, *Iglesia ni Cristo*, or PMCC 4th Watch. Select another group member to try to win that person to Christ. Have the other group members analyze the exchange and offer suggestions.

ASSIGNMENT

Read Supplement #5 – “The History of Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormons.”
Commit to memorize two or three ideas, facts, or quotes that will help you when you present the gospel.

Read Supplement #6 – "How to Witness to People who are Part of a Cult."

SESSION 6 – HANDLING COMMON OBJECTIONS

INTRODUCTION

Principles for Handling Objections

1. We must discern between an honest⁽¹⁾ objection and a diversion.

EXPLANATION

Most of the questions and objections that people present are mere diversions to avoid facing the truth.

“We cannot pander to a man’s intellectual arrogance, but we must cater to his intellectual integrity.”³⁶

2. We must never let objections deter us from the focus⁽²⁾ of proclaiming the Gospel.

EXPLANATION

A sincere question requires a sincere response. However, answers should be brief and to the point, followed by a quick return to the plain presentation of the gospel.

Following are some objections that may be presented against the gospel:

Objection # 1: The Problem of Evil

EXPLANATION

The problem of evil is a theological problem that arises for any religious view that affirms the following propositions: (1) God is all-powerful, (2) God is perfectly good, and (3) evil exists. If evil exists, it seems either that God wants to obliterate evil and is not able to, or that God is able to obliterate evil but does not want to. Vedanta Hinduism, Christian Science, and Stoicism have sought to solve the problem by denying the existence of evil. They affirm that evil is mere appearance or is imaginary. The philosopher William James attempted to solve the problem by denying the almightiness of God. He regarded God as having great but limited power and as being perfectly good. Orthodox

³⁶ John Stott, quoted in Paul Little, Know Why You Believe, p. 29

Christianity, however, has generally chosen to live with the tension involved in affirming all three propositions.³⁷

1. If God is all-powerful⁽³⁾ and all-loving, then how can evil exist in the world?

EXPLANATION

C.S. Lewis once said about the existence of evil in the world, “The history of the human race is largely a record of crime, war, disease, and terror, with just enough happiness thrown in to give us an agonizing fear of losing it, and when it is lost, the painful misery of remembering.”³⁸

2. Because evil⁽⁴⁾ exists, skeptics say, one of three things must be true: God is not all powerful and cannot stop evil; God is not all loving and does not want to stop evil; or God does not exist.

EXPLANATION

Two examples of ideas about God and evil:

Rabbi Harold Kushner is the best-selling author of *Why Bad Things Happen to Good People*. He wrote the book after losing his teenage son to a rare disease, an experience that challenged his faith in God. He said, “If God existed and was fair, loving, and just, how could He do this to me? Even if I could convince myself that I deserve this punishment for some sin I was not aware of, on what grounds did Aaron have to suffer?” Kushner agonized long over what he thought was the logical inconsistency between a loving, all-powerful God and the persistence of evil. He decided that if he had to let go of either God’s goodness or His power, he would rather hold on to His goodness. He concluded that evil exists in the world because God is powerless to stop it.

Elie Wiesel (1928) is a Romanian-born Jewish author, whose work deals with the experiences of Jews who suffered in Nazi concentration camps during World War II. He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986 for his work in promoting human rights. Wiesel’s first book, *Night*, describes his experience at Auschwitz and some of his feelings regarding the problem of evil and the existence of God: “Never shall I forget that night, the first night in camp, which has turned my life into one long night, seven times cursed and seven times sealed. Never shall I forget that smoke. Never shall I forget the little faces of the children, whose bodies I saw turned into wreaths of smoke beneath a silent

³⁷ Evil, Problem of, Encyclopedia Britannica

³⁸ C.S. Lewis, The Problem of Pain, Chapter One

blue sky. Never shall I forget those flames which consumed my faith forever. Never shall I forget that nocturnal silence which deprived me, for all eternity, of the desire to live. Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust. Never shall I forget these things, even if I am condemned to live as long as God Himself. Never.”³⁹

3. The following clues provide possible answers to the problem:

- The world is fallen⁽⁵⁾ (Romans 5:12).

EXPLANATION

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned . . . (Romans 5:12)

Philip Yancey said, “The existence of suffering is a scream to us that something is wrong . . . that the entire human condition is out of whack.”

- Man has the freedom to choose⁽⁶⁾ (Deuteronomy 30:19).

EXPLANATION

“I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.” (Deuteronomy 30:19)

God’s original desire was that people would love Him of their own accord. He was not interested in robots that would do only what they were programmed for.

- All choices have consequences⁽⁷⁾ (Ecclesiastes 7:29).

EXPLANATION

God made mankind upright, but men have gone in search of many schemes. (Ecclesiastes 7:29)

God has given man the freedom of choice but not the freedom of consequences. Many people blame God for their problems, but everyone makes their own choices. So many of man’s choices have gone awry and produced much of the evil and suffering that constantly surrounds us. These wrong choices are what the Bible calls ‘sin.’

³⁹ Elie Wiesel, Night, p. 32

- There is an evil being⁽⁸⁾ in the universe bent on destroying God's creation (John 10:10).

The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly. (John 10:10)

- God has a master plan⁽⁹⁾ and His ultimate goal is not man's immediate happiness (Jeremiah 29:11).

EXPLANATION

For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. (Jeremiah 29:11)

There is a purpose in suffering that our finite minds cannot comprehend. Like the Olympic athlete who sees the Gold medal as worth all the sacrifice it requires, so too the person who endures sufferings for its eternal reward.

"From heaven, the most miserable earthly life will look like one bad night in an inconvenient hotel."⁴⁰

Victor Frankl, who suffered in a Nazi prison camp, said, "If there is a meaning in life at all then there must be a meaning in suffering for suffering is a part of life."⁴¹

- God is sovereign⁽¹⁰⁾ and His ways are sometimes a mystery (Romans 11:33).

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments, and His paths beyond tracing out! (Romans 11:33)

4. God has made Himself infinitely worthy⁽¹¹⁾ of our trust in the Incarnation (Isaiah 53:3).

⁴⁰ Mother Teresa, Quoted in Peter Kreeft, What is God's Answer to Human Suffering? www.peterkreeft.com/topics/suffering.htm

⁴¹ Victor Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning

EXPLANATION

He was a man of sorrows, fully acquainted with suffering . . . (Isaiah 53:3)

Through His suffering and death on the cross, Jesus bore the burden and responsibility for all of man's wrong choices. In that one sacrificial act, He swallowed up the consequences of every man's sin and severed the root cause of all his suffering. And He forever vindicated His Father from every railing accusation of injustice.

Objection # 2: Evolution

1. Darwinian⁽¹²⁾ evolution maintains that the universe is a result of time and chance, natural law is sufficient to explain the complexity of life, and all organisms have evolved from common ancestors by random mutation and natural selection.

EXPLANATION

Evolution is one of the biggest obstacles to the gospel in the modern world.

The theory of Evolution was not new with Darwin. Speculation about Evolution can be documented as far back as the Greek philosopher Anaximander (circa 611-c. 547 BC), who believed that the Earth first was entirely water and that humans started as aquatic beings who left the water when they could survive sufficiently on land. The uniqueness of Darwin's idea was his completely naturalistic mechanism (Natural selection) that required no God or spiritual force to explain all of life. As Richard Dawkins said, "Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist."⁴²

Stephen Jay Gould (1941-2002, geology professor, paleontologist, philosopher of science, and author of books on evolution), said, "Wind life's tape back to the dawn of time and let it play again – and you will never get humans a second time."⁴³

Jacques Monod (1910-1976, French biochemist and Nobel laureate), said, "Man's number came up in a Monte Carlo game, a game of pure chance."⁴⁴

Natural Selection: Various environmental factors such as temperature and available food and water produce a struggle for existence in nature. Therefore, the organisms best adapted to the environment from each species will tend to survive longer (survival of the fittest). The organism that survives the longest will also breed the most and pass on their survival adaptations to subsequent generations.

⁴² Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker*, p. 6

⁴³ Stephen Jay Gould, *Life Magazine*, December 1988

⁴⁴ Jacques Monod, *Chance and Necessity* p.146

The essence of Darwin's theory has not changed since *The Origin of Species* was published in 1859, but the mechanisms have.

Natural selection proved to be an insufficient mechanism to explain the vast diversity of life. In 1901, the Dutch botanist Hugo de Vries (who had re-discovered Mendel's laws) published a book called *The Mutation Theory*, challenging Darwin's concept of gradual changes over long periods. In 1972, the American paleontologists Stephen Jay Gould and Niles Eldredge proposed the theory of "punctuated equilibria," a theory based on the fact that very few transitional forms are found in the fossil record. Unlike the gradualist theory, which would have species evolve gradually over long periods of time, the theory of punctuated equilibria holds that the evolution of a species consists of rapid changes in small, relatively isolated populations, followed by long periods of stability.⁴⁵

Because of the failure to find an absolute mechanism to explain Evolution, a number of scientists have always been skeptical.

"Biological Evolution does not stand up to an objective, in-depth criticism." – Pierre Grasse, *The Evolution of Living Organisms*

"The Darwinian Theory of Evolution is no more nor less than the greatest cosmogenic myth of the twentieth century." – Michael Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*

"The attempt to explain all living forms in terms of Evolution is not supported by present day evidence." – G.A. Kerkut, *The Implications of Evolution*

Many scientists are even recognizing the religious aspects of Evolution.

"Belief in the Theory of Evolution is exactly parallel to belief in Special Creation. Both are concepts which believers know to be true, but neither has been capable of proof." – L. Harrison Matthews, *Introduction to Origin of Species*

There are at least three main avenues to challenge the doctrine of Evolution: Micro vs. Macro Evolution, the Fossil Record, and Statistical Probability.

2. Microevolution vs. Macroevolution

- Microevolution: Minor⁽¹³⁾ changes can take place at the species level.

EXPLANATION

In a population of a given species, different individuals have different sets of genes. Some combinations of genes give certain individuals a greater chance to survive until they can reproduce. For instance, some individuals might be faster or stronger or have

⁴⁵ Natural Selection, Microsoft Encarta

coloration that allows them to more easily hide from prey. Since those individuals have more offspring, their genes become more common in the population, while the other genes become less common. These changes in the relative numbers of genes cause the overall population to change slightly over time, thus causing microevolution.

A common example cited in textbooks of microevolution is that of the Peppered Moths in England. When the trees in England grew darker because of the pollution, the darker moths could more easily hide on the tree trunks. The lighter colored moths were eaten by birds and other predators, so the genes that promoted darker color became more numerous. Over time the population of moths grew darker.

However, Micro Evolution is known to be very limited, since the genetic variety in a population of a given species only exists for genes that relate to minor changes, such as hair color or size. The genes that direct the overall structure of a species, such as the structure of the heart or brain, are the same for all the members. Therefore, only minor changes can take place, regardless of the time frame. As a clear example, all of the dramatically different breeds of dogs originally came from wolves that were cross bred over thousands of years. However, cross breeding dogs has never produced a cow or an elephant, since the genetic difference in dogs only relate to minor differences traits such as size, ear shape, or temperament. All dogs have dog genes, so cross breeding dogs will only produce dogs.

- Macroevolution: Small changes accumulate ⁽¹⁴⁾ over millions of years to produce dramatic, innovative changes.

- Evolutionists claim that mutations ⁽¹⁵⁾ in the genes can produce the additional genetic variety that would allow more dramatic changes. However, no significant beneficial mutation has ever been found in any member of any species.

EXPLANATION

Some benefic mutations have been found in bacteria, which cause anti-biotic resistance, and some have been found in larger animals, such as some enzymes changing slightly to better digest some type of food. However, none has ever been observed that improved any vital structure, such as altering the heart or lung. No mutation has ever been observed that could produce truly innovative changes and eventually lead to an entirely new species. Considering the large number of animal and plant species existing in the world today (8.74 million), many such mutations should be observed every year.

The reason for the absence of such mutations is that structures, such as organs, in living organisms operate like highly integrated machines. If any piece is even slightly altered, that piece no longer fits with the other pieces. As an example, small beneficial changes can take place with a car, such as moving the seat forward or adjusting the rear view mirror, much like the beneficial mutations seen in bacteria. However, if someone tried to turn a car into an airplane by making a series of small changes, as soon as some vital component of the car was changed, such as misaligning the spark plug or changing the position of a hose, the car would break down, long before becoming an airplane.

“The central question of the Chicago convention was whether the mechanics underlying Micro Evolution can be used to explain Macro Evolution. The answer is a clear ‘NO.’” – Roger Lewin, *Evolutionary Theory Under Fire*

Michael Denton: “Darwin observed changes within species and immediately jumped to the conclusion that it was responsible for the transformation of one species into another. The facts just do not support the theory.”

Also challenging the theory of evolution:

3. The Fossil Record

- Darwin realized that the only documentation ⁽¹⁶⁾ that evolution had actually taken place was the fossil record.

EXPLANATION

Evolutionists believe that all species are part of an evolutionary tree. The major branches of the tree represent the ancestors of the major groupings of species in nature, such as the animal kingdom or the vertebrate phylum. The small branches represent the more minor groupings, such as the cat family. The species that exist today represent the leaves on the smallest branches. Evolutionists believe that going back in time, all species should look more and more like each other until they converged at the bottom of the tree with the first cell, which is the universal common ancestor of all of life. However, the fossil record shows that all species seemed to have appeared suddenly and then never changed. No series of thousands of intermediate species were ever found, which would link different species together on an evolutionary tree. Not one series of fossils shows any major innovative changes in any species.

- Major gaps ⁽¹⁷⁾ exist in the fossil record, and no significant gap has ever been filled with new fossils.

EXPLANATION

For instance, the differences between fish and amphibians (the gap) are dramatic. Yet, numerous half-fish/half-amphibian creatures, which would fill that gap, do not exist.

Evolutionists believe that the similarities in nature are the result of common ancestry. For instance, the reason that all mammals have hair and have a similar limb structure is because all mammals evolved from a common ancestor, who was like a mouse or shrew. However, the similarities can just as easily be explained by a common designer.

The fact that many similarities exist in nature in very different creatures, such as the similarities between the eyes of an octopus and those of humans, is much better explained by a common designer. Humans and octopi are so far apart on the theoretical evolutionary tree, evolutionists actually claim they evolved independently. However, their similarity is easily explained by the fact that God gave both eyes, since He knew eyes were quite useful for seeing.

“Geology does not reveal any gradual changes, and this is the most obvious objection that can be raised against any theory of Evolution.” – Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*

“We are now about 120 years after Darwin and knowledge of the fossil record has been greatly expanded. Ironically we have even fewer examples of evolutionary transition than we did in Darwin’s time.” – David Raup, *Conflicts Between Darwin and Paleontology*

“The extreme rarity of transitional forms is the trade secret of paleontology.” – Stephen J. Gould, *Evolution’s Erratic Pace*

“If man evolved from an ape-like creature, he did so without leaving a trace in the fossil record.” – S. Zuckerman, *Beyond the Ivory Tower*

4. Statistical Probability

- Statistical probability refers to the mathematical chances⁽¹⁸⁾ of evolution happening.
- The odds of a single protein⁽¹⁹⁾ evolving by chance are the same odds of solving the Rubik’s Cube blindfolded. Making one turn per second would enable you to eventually solve the puzzle in 1,350,000,000,000 years!

EXPLANATION

In the context of the origin of life, the first cell would require over 2000 proteins that perform the essential functions of cellular metabolism. The odds of all of them forming by chance are 1 times 10 with 40,000 zeros – the same odds as rolling 50,000 straight

sixes! These are the same odds of a hurricane passing through a junkyard resulting in a 747!

The problems for the formation of the first cell are even more severe. A living cell requires highly complex molecules and highly ordered arrangements of pieces. However, nature causes systems to go from states of order to states of disorder, a law known as The Second Law of Thermodynamics. As an analogy, keeping an organized room or desk requires intelligent effort. When people randomly put different objects down in different places, disorder (a mess) quickly forms. In the same way, a cell is like an ordered room, while randomly arranged chemicals are like a messy room. Without intelligent direction, the laws of nature would cause anything even close to a cell to quickly degenerate into simpler disorganized chemicals, just as when a cell dies today. In other words, the undirected formation of life violates every known law of physics and chemistry.

In the context of modern species, many structures in biology have many different pieces, which are all required at once for the system to function. For the system to evolve into existence, every piece would have to form at once and then position itself perfectly to work with the other pieces.

Common examples include the blood clotting system, the immunity system, and cellular machines, such as the bacterial flagellum. For instance, the bacterial flagellum operates like an outboard motor on a boat. It consists of some 40 different parts, all of which are essential. The statistical probability for all of the pieces to form and position themselves in the right order are astronomically small.

“To suppose that the eye could have been formed by Natural Selection seems absurd in the highest degree. The eye to this day – gives me a cold shudder.”

As a final note, many scientists claim that attempting to identify design in nature today is unscientific, because one is simply giving up on trying to identify a natural explanation. However, scientists are always attempting to identify design, such as with archaeology, the search of extraterrestrial intelligence (SETI), and forensics. The same methodologies that such researchers use to identify intelligent causes in the formation of an arrow head found in an archaeological dig or with a signal from space in the movie Contact, when applied to living creatures, also reveal design. For instance, if someone saw a heart drawn on the beach with the words “Harry loves Sally” that person would recognize that the pattern was produced by an intelligent source, since it contained purposeful information. In the same way the arrangements of nucleotides in DNA also contain purposeful information, and that information is as much a product of an intelligent mind as the arrangement of ink in a book to form words and sentences.

Objection # 3: Relativism

1. Relativism comes in several forms in the modern world.

- Cultural ⁽²⁰⁾ relativism: The values of a society are conditioned by the social environment.

EXPLANATION

An important corollary of this view is: no one culture is inherently better than another.

Margaret Mead (1901-78), anthropologist and author, was one of the influential proponents of **cultural relativism**. Her book, *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928), created a sensation after its publication. In it, she chronicled the sexual behavior of Samoan adolescents. She said, "Masturbation, homosexuality, statistically unusual forms of heterosexual practice are not banned . . . this prevents the development of obsessions of guilt which are so frequent a cause of maladjustment among us . . . this provides a cultural atmosphere in which frigidity and impotence do not occur and in which a satisfactory sex adjustment in marriage can always be established." The effect of Mead's work was to shatter the Western assumption that our cultural values were superior to other 'less developed' cultures. It went a long way toward establishing cultural relativism as the accepted view of the educated class.

Mead's work in Samoa was later proven wrong. E. Michael Jones, in his book *Degenerate Moderns*, documents Mead's sexual involvement with two men and one woman before her trip to Samoa, and suggests that her conclusion about sexuality in Samoa was her attempt to rationalize her own sexual misbehavior.

- Moral ⁽²¹⁾ relativism: There are no universal absolutes of right and wrong; individuals must decide for themselves.

EXPLANATION

"**Moral relativism** has been the cardinal sin of the twentieth century, the reason why it has been such a desperately unhappy and destructive epoch in human history . . . moral relativism is a great evil because it makes possible so many other evils."

Paul Johnson, in his book, *Modern Times*, says concerning Einstein's theory of relativity, "Mistakenly but perhaps inevitably, relativity became confused with relativism. The public response to relativity was one of the principle formative influences on 20th century history. It formed a knife to help cut society adrift from its traditional moorings in the faith and morals of Judeo-Christian culture."

- Religious ⁽²²⁾ relativism: All religions teach the same essential things and all paths ultimately lead to God.

2. If there are no absolutes ⁽²³⁾, then nothing is right or wrong and all laws are superfluous and pointless.

- Relativists usually become absolutists ⁽²⁴⁾ when they are the victims of a crime. “What they did to me was wrong.”

- The best response ⁽²⁵⁾ to relativism is to bring up a recent heinous crime or atrocity and ask if the person who perpetrated the crime sincerely believed that what he was doing was right. “Is it acceptable?”

EXPLANATION

The following are excerpts from a speech before Congress by Congressman Joe Pitts given after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

“How do we know that murder is wrong? In a more innocent time, say fifty years ago, the answer would have seemed obvious: Because God said so. To many, however, that answer does not seem very satisfying anymore. It seems arbitrary and unsophisticated. They believe, in fact, that standards of right and wrong are merely social conventions with no basis in truth. They go further, denying that there is such a thing as truth at all and claiming that everything is a matter of opinion. These people are usually called ‘postmodernists’ or ‘relativists.’ They are suddenly quite unpopular.

Edward Rothstein, in a recent issue of the New York Times, said, ‘Such assertions seem peculiar when trying to account for the recent attack. This destruction seems to cry out for a transcendent ethical perspective. And even mild relativism seems troubling in contrast.’

New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani put it in plainer terms when he spoke to the United Nations. He said, ‘We are right and they are wrong. It is as simple as that. . . Let those who say that we must understand the reasons for terrorism come with me to the thousands of funerals we are having in New York City and explain those insane maniacal reasons to the children who will grow up without fathers and mothers and to the parents who have had their children ripped from them for no reason at all. . . There is no excuse for mass murder, just as there is no excuse for genocide. The era of moral relativism between those who practice or condone terrorism and those nations who

stand up against it must end. Moral relativism does not have a place in this discussion and debate. There is no moral way to sympathize with grossly immoral actions. And by so doing, and by trying to do that, unfortunately, a fertile field has been created in which terrorism has grown.'

September 11th reminded America that good and evil do in fact exist, and that they are absolute. The attack itself was absolutely evil. The heroic acts of the passengers on Flight 93 and the emergency workers in New York were absolutely good. All ideas are not equal, and it is the duty of good people to fight against evil ones. On September 11, good people everywhere were reminded that evil is very much alive. They were reminded that if they do not fight it, it will triumph. Postmodernists and relativists may continue telling us that there is no way to prove that something is evil. But for the rest of us, we know that what we saw on television September 11th was evil."

ACTIVITY

1. What are some of the ways you can tell an honest objection and a diversion? Why do you think people use diversions so often?
2. Of the six clues offered to help understand the problem of evil, which do you think is the most difficult for people to accept? Why? How can you help people accept it more readily?
3. What are some of the underlying spiritual reasons people find evolution so easy to accept? How can you use your knowledge of those underlying reasons to present the gospel to someone who sees evolution as an obstacle to faith?
4. Select a group member to defend the position of relativism. Select another group member to try to win that person to Christ. Have the other group members analyze the exchange and offer suggestions.

ASSIGNMENT

Read Supplement #7 – "Essential Facts Concerning Evolution." Commit to memorize two or three ideas, facts, or quotes that will help you when you present the gospel.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Animism. The belief that spiritual beings or forces inhabit the world and everything in it.

Apologetics. The branch of theology that is concerned with defending or proving the truth of Christian doctrines.

Bibliographical Test. An examination of the quantity of manuscripts, the quality of manuscripts, the number of corroborating sources, and the time lapsed between original and extant manuscripts.

Cult. Any group that claims to be Christian but distorts the central message of Christianity by exchanging a fundamental tenet of the faith with a secondary matter, or by adding an additional revelation.

Cultural relativism. The idea that the values of a society are conditioned by the specific social environment of that place and no one culture is inherently better than another.

Eightfold Path. Buddhist doctrine that desire is abolished by following the eight steps of perfected view, intentions, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and concentration.

Evidentialist Approach. The presentation of scientific and historical evidences for the Christian faith in an attempt to persuade the unbeliever of the truth of Christianity.

Four Noble Truths. The primary doctrines of Buddhism developed by Siddhartha Gautama.

Hallucination Theory. One of the false views of the resurrection. It states that the disciples, in a state of spiritual fervor, genuinely believed they saw the resurrected Christ but it was just a figment of their overworked imagination.

Historical Test. A test to determine if the manuscript contradicts that which is already known about its historical time frame.

Imago Dei. Latin for the Image of God. It consists of man's religious motivation, moral sensibility, and creativity.

Internal Evidence Test. A test to determine if a manuscript which is reliable is also credible, and to what extent.

Jihad. The Arabic word for struggle or Holy War.

Karma. The Hindu doctrine that there is a system of good deeds that one must do in each incarnation in order to be liberated from that existence.

Kismet. The Islamic doctrine that Allah is in control, and that human effort cannot change the predestined course of events.

Macroevolution. The idea that the small changes of Microevolution accumulate over millions of years to produce dramatic, innovative changes.

Maya. The Hindu doctrine that what is called reality is real only in the same way a dream is real. It exists, but it does not describe ultimate reality or truth.

Microevolution. The idea that minor changes can take place at the species level.

Moksha. The Hindu doctrine that liberation from *Samsara* comes from the weary, punishing cycle of existence.

Moral Relativism. The idea that there are no universal absolute standards of right and wrong, but individuals must decide for themselves.

Myth Theory. One of the false views of the resurrection. It states that the resurrection was a myth: not true historically but true spiritually or symbolically.

Natural Theology. The body of knowledge that may be obtained by human reason alone without the aid of revelation.

Religious relativism. The idea that all religions teach the same essential things and all paths ultimately lead to God.

Samsara. The Hindu doctrine that the soul travels through a series of lives, human or non-human.

Shia. The minority Islamic party. They believe succession should remain in the family of the prophet.

Sunni. The majority Islamic party. They believe the successor to Muhammad should be a male of his tribe.

Swoon Theory. One of the false views of the resurrection. It states that Jesus did not die on the cross but merely swooned and was resuscitated later.

Yoga. The Hindu doctrine that practicing Yoga will enable them to merge with Brahman, the ultimate nothingness of reality.

Supplement #1

The Reliability of the Bible

1. There are three tests commonly used to measure the reliability of ancient manuscripts: the Bibliographical Test, the Internal Evidence Test, and the Historical Test.

These three tests are generally applied to all ancient documents, whether the book of Isaiah or Thucydides' History of the Peloponnesian War. The Bible not only passes all these tests, but also far exceeds any other ancient document.

2. The Bibliographical Test examines the quantity of manuscripts, the quality of manuscripts, the number of corroborating sources, and the time lapsed between original and extant manuscripts.

The Bible has more manuscript evidence of authenticity than any ten pieces of classical literature and is superior to all classical texts in all four areas.

- Quantity of manuscripts: There are 24,000 portions of the New Testament in existence: 5,300 Greek manuscripts, 10,000 Latin manuscripts, and 9,300 other manuscripts. Homer's Iliad is second with only 643 extant manuscripts.

Furthermore, the number of extant manuscripts is far greater for the New Testament than for any other classical work. For other ancient works, manuscript attestation is poor in comparison. For example, of the seven surviving plays of Sophocles, four manuscripts exist that are of any value, the earliest being written in the eleventh century, 1,400 years after the poet's death. For Plato, eleven manuscripts exist, the earliest being written about 1,250 years after his death. The History of Thucydides has eight manuscripts, the earliest being from the tenth century, 1,300 years after his death. Herodotus has eight manuscripts, the earliest being from the tenth century, 1,300 years after his death. Yet there is no classical scholar who will doubt the authenticity of these works, despite the paucity of extant manuscripts and despite the gap of over 1,000 years between the time of authorship and the time the earliest extant manuscript was written.

- Quality of manuscripts: Only forty lines of the New Testament (about 400 words) are in doubt, or, one-half of 1 percent. Homer's Iliad (one of the most attested works of antiquity) has 5 percent textual discrepancy. The few textual questions do not touch one area of significant doctrine.

"To be skeptical of the text of the New Testament is to allow all classical antiquity to slip into obscurity, for no documents of the ancient period are as well attested bibliographically as the New Testament."

—John Warwick Montgomery

Montgomery is the former professor of law and humanities at the University of Luton, England. He is the author of more than 140 books and journal articles.

- Number of corroborating sources: If the New Testament was lost or destroyed by the end of the third century, it could have been collected together again from the 36,000 specific references in the writings of the church fathers of the second and third centuries.
 - There are at least seventeen writings from non-Christian sources that refer to Jesus and the early church. These sources detail at least fifty facts concerning Christ, his life, death and resurrection, and were written between twenty to 150 years after Christ's death.

“The student of the history of Jesus is, from the point of view of textual criticism, on vastly safer ground than the student of the life of Julius Caesar or indeed of any other figure of ancient history.”

—R. T. France

- Time elapsed between the original and the extant copy: The average gap in classical literature between the original composition and the earliest copy is over 1,000 years. The New Testament, however, has a fragment within one generation from its original composition, whole books within about 100 years, most of the New Testament in less than 200 years, and the entire New Testament within 250 years from the date of its completion.

“ . . . that last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and integrity of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established.”

—Sir Frederic Kenyon

Kenyon was a classical scholar and the former director and principal librarian of the British Museum.

The Bibliographical Test proves incontrovertibly that the New Testament we have today is essentially what was originally written.

3. The Internal Evidence Test determines if a manuscript which is reliable is also credible, and to what extent.

- Did the authors have the ability to tell the truth? Were they in a position geographically and chronologically to give an accurate report? In the New Testament accounts the answer is a resounding ‘yes.’

1 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, 2 just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, 3 it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

LUKE 1:1-4

For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

2 PETER 1:16

. . . we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you . . .

1 JOHN 1:3

- Did the authors deliberately spread falsehoods? The New Testament authors did not because:
 - They were confronted with other followers of Jesus who would challenge their accounts if they were not accurate.
 - They were confronted with hostile opponents who would challenge every detail of their accounts and use any falsehood to disparage their testimony.

“It was not only friendly eyewitnesses that the early preachers had to reckon with; there were others less well disposed who were also conversant with the main facts of the life and death of Jesus. The disciples could not risk inaccuracies or willful manipulations which would at once be exposed. On the contrary, one of the strong points in the original apostolic preaching is the confident appeal to the knowledge of the hearers; they not only said, ‘we are witnesses of these things,’ but also, ‘As you yourselves know.’”

—F.F. Bruce

“Despite the prejudices and theological preconceptions of the evangelists, they recorded many incidents that mere inventors would have concealed—the competition of the apostles for the high places in the kingdom, their flight after Jesus’ arrest, Peter’s denial, the failure of Christ to work miracles in Galilee, the references of some of His listeners to His possible insanity, His despairing cry on the cross; no one reading these scenes can doubt the reality of the figure behind them. That a few simple men should in one generation have invented so powerful and appealing a personality, so lofty an ethic, and so inspiring a vision of human brotherhood, would be a miracle far more incredible than any recorded in the gospels. After two centuries of higher criticism the outlines of the life, character, and teaching of Christ remain reasonably clear, and constitute the most fascinating feature in the history of Western man.”

—Will Durant

Will Durant (1885-1981), was an American historian and philosopher, author of *The Story of Philosophy* and *The Story of Civilization*. Many consider him one of the greatest historians of the twentieth century. Durant was trained by Jesuits and studied for the priesthood; but after reading Darwin, Huxley and Spencer, he grew skeptical and, in 1905, exchanged his faith for Socialism. Although he never renounced his basic skepticism, he did later moderate his atheistic views and become more open to the ameliorating influences of all the world religions. His quote on the influence and character of Christ is all the more remarkable given his religious presuppositions.

The Internal Evidence Test proves incontrovertibly that the New Testament is a reliable account of what actually happened.

4. The Historical Test determines if the manuscript contradicts that which is already known about its historical time frame.

“For the Acts of the Apostles, the confirmation of history is overwhelming and any attempt to reject its basic historicity even in matters of detail must now appear absurd.”

—A.N. Sherwin-White

Many facts once disputed in Luke or Acts have now been proven by historical and archeological research. Examples:

- The Census. (Luke 2:1) Critics argued for years that there was no census, but recent archeological discoveries have shown that the Romans held a regular census of all taxpayers every fourteen years and that it began in the reign of Augustus.
- Quirinius. (Luke 2:2) Quirinius was known to be the governor of Syria in AD 6, but not during Christ’s birth as Luke states. However, it was later discovered that he was governor not once but twice—confirming Luke’s account.
- Politarchs. (Acts 17:8) Luke uses this term to denote the leaders in Thessalonica. Since there was no term in the classical writing using that word, Luke was thought to have gotten it wrong. Since then, archeologists have found nineteen inscriptions for that title, including five of them referencing Thessalonica.

“Luke’s history is unsurpassed in respect of its trustworthiness. He is an historian of the first rank; this author should be placed among the very greatest of historians.”

—Sir William Ramsay

Sir William Mitchell Ramsay (1851-1939) was a classical scholar and archaeologist and the foremost authority of his day on the topography, antiquities, and history of Asia Minor in ancient times. The value of his New Testament studies is enhanced by the fact that he approached the subject, not as a theologian, but as a historian versed in the working of Roman institutions in the provinces and possessing an intimate knowledge of the country which figured so prominently in the early history of the church. When he began his research of Luke’s historical acumen, he was skeptical of the accuracy of his writings. But he became convinced through his exhaustive study of the facts.

The Historical Test proves incontrovertibly that the New Testament is a historically reliable document that can be trusted.

The reliability of the Bible is confirmed in the fulfillment of prophecy. The following are two examples from Scripture.

1. Isaiah's prediction concerning Cyrus (Isaiah 44:28-45:6).

Cyrus the Great (600-530 BC) became king of Persia in 550 BC and reigned for twenty years. After Cyrus, the Persian Empire remained the most powerful state in the world until its conquest two centuries later by Alexander. Cyrus was an able and merciful ruler. Significant among his deeds was his granting of permission to the Jews to return from their exile in Babylon to their native Israel to rebuild the Temple of Solomon.

“ . . . who says of Cyrus, ‘He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose’; saying of Jerusalem, ‘She shall be built,’ and of the temple, ‘Your foundation shall be laid.’ ”

ISAIAH 44:28

1 Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed: 2 *“I will go before you and level the exalted places, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron, 3 I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the Lord, the God of Israel, who call you by your name. 4 For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I name you, though you do not know me. 5 I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, 6 that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the Lord, and there is no other.*

ISAIAH 45:1-6

Although Cyrus was an uncircumcised, pagan king, God called him, ‘My shepherd.’ This is a testimony to God’s sovereignty in the earth. He raises up whomever He wills, and puts down whomever He chooses. Another pagan king, Nebuchadnezzar, found that out the hard way! While walking on his roof one day and contemplating his power and glory, a voice from heaven sentenced him to seven years of dementia until he acknowledged that, “the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whomever He wishes.” At the end of the prescribed period Nebuchadnezzar testified, “I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His

will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, ‘What hast Thou done?’”

- Isaiah wrote this prophecy around 700 BC. At that time the Temple was still standing and Jerusalem was fully built.
- Over 100 years later (586 BC), the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem and destroyed the temple.
- In 539, the Babylonians were conquered by the Persians. The next year, the Persian king Cyrus gave the decree to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem—160 years after the prophecy of Isaiah.

2. Ezekiel’s prediction concerning Tyre (Ezekiel 26:3-14).

3 “. . . *therefore thus says the Lord God: Behold, I am against you, O Tyre, and will bring up many nations against you, as the sea brings up its waves. 4 They shall destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers, and I will scrape her soil from her and make her a bare rock. 5 She shall be in the midst of the sea a place for the spreading of nets, for I have spoken, declares the Lord God. And she shall become plunder for the nations, 6 and her daughters on the mainland shall be killed by the sword. Then they will know that I am the Lord. 7 “For thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will bring against Tyre from the north Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, king of kings, with horses and chariots, and with horsemen and a host of many soldiers. 8 He will kill with the sword your daughters on the mainland. He will set up a siege wall against you and throw up a mound against you, and raise a roof of shields against you. 9 He will direct the shock of his battering rams against your walls, and with his axes he will break down your towers. 10 His horses will be so many that their dust will cover you. Your walls will shake at the noise of the horsemen and wagons and chariots, when he enters your gates as men enter a city that has been breached. 11 With the hoofs of his horses he will trample all your streets. He will kill your people with the sword, and your mighty pillars will fall to the ground. 12 They will plunder your riches and loot your merchandise. They will break down your walls and destroy your pleasant houses. Your stones and timber and soil they will cast into the midst of the waters. 13 And I will stop the music of your songs, and the sound of your lyres shall be heard no more. 14 I will make you a bare rock. You shall be a place for the spreading of nets. You shall never be rebuilt, for I am the Lord; I have spoken, declares the Lord God.”*

EZEKIEL 26:3-14

There are five predictions against Tyre in this passage. Prediction #1: Nebuchadnezzar will destroy the mainland city. Prediction #2: Many nations will come against Tyre as the sea brings up its waves. Prediction #3: Tyre will become a bare rock where fisherman spread their nets. Prediction #4: The debris of the city will be thrown in the water. Prediction #5: It will never be rebuilt.

- In 573 BC, approximately sixteen years after the prophecy, Nebuchadnezzar broke the gates of Tyre and destroyed the mainland city while the majority of the inhabitants escaped to the island city. (Prediction #1)
- In 333 BC, Alexander the Great attacked the island city. He demolished the old city and used the debris to form a 200 ft. stone wall in the sea to lay siege to the city. (Prediction #4)
- The island city countered with an attack with its many sea vessels. Alexander needed ships to defeat the city and so he called for them from nine other nations. (Prediction #2)
- The site of the once great city is now a bare rock—a place where the fishermen who still frequent the spot spread their nets to dry. (Prediction #3)
- After many different conquerors, at last Tyre was abandoned (even though there are springs of fresh water that empty 10,000,000 gallons of water daily— plenty for a large modern city), and was never rebuilt. (Prediction #5)

Supplement #3 The Resurrection

1. The fact of the resurrection is the foundation upon which the entire Christian faith rests.

And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.
1 CORINTHIANS 15:17

“Christ Himself deliberately staked His whole claim to the credit of men upon His resurrection. When asked for a sign He pointed to this sign as His single and sufficient credential.”

—B.B. Warfield, The Risen Jesus

Every evangelistic sermon preached by every believer in the New Testament centers on the resurrection. “The resurrection is either one of the most wicked hoaxes ever foisted upon people, or it is the most important fact of history.”

—Josh McDowell, A Ready Defense

Christianity is a historic religion. That means that the primary events related to it really happened at an empirically verifiable location to actual historical people.

“The doctrines of Christianity are doctrines only because they are facts.”

—B.B. Warfield, The Journal of Christian Philosophy

2. History testifies to the truth of the resurrection.

“Taking all the evidence together, it is not too much to say that there is no historic event better or more variously supported than the resurrection of Christ.”

—Brooke Foss Wescott, *The Gospel of the Resurrection*

Dr. Simon Greenleaf, the royal professor of Law at Harvard University and author of the classic forensic textbook, *A Treatise on the Laws of Evidence*, examined the resurrection of Jesus applying the principles of his work. His conclusion was that, according to the laws of legal evidence used in law courts, there is more evidence for the historical fact of the resurrection than just about any other event in history.

3. The empty tomb testifies to the truth of the resurrection.

The disciples began to preach the resurrection in the one place where it was the easiest to discount their assertions: Jerusalem. All their opponents would have to do is produce the dead body of Christ and all preaching would have ended.

The Jews' explanation that the disciples had stolen the body was an admission that the tomb really was empty.

4. Living witnesses testify to the truth of the resurrection.

The accuracy of a document about a historical event is based on how many witnesses are available to confirm or deny the document.

Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:6

Paul claims that of the more than 500 disciples to whom Christ appeared at the same time, most were still alive at the time he wrote—only twenty-five years after the resurrection. William Lillie, head of the Department of Biblical Study at the University of Aberdeen, said: “What gives a special authority to the list in 1 Corinthians 15:6 as historical evidence is the reference to ‘most of the 500 brethren being still alive.’ St. Paul says in effect, ‘If you do not believe me, you can ask them.’ Such a statement in an admittedly genuine letter written within thirty years after the event is almost as strong evidence as one could hope to get for something that happened nearly 2,000 years ago.”

It is significant that the first witnesses of the resurrection were women. According to Jewish principles of legal evidence, women were invalid witnesses. No one attempting to manufacture a resurrection story would ever include women in the story and certainly not as the first witnesses.

“It is difficult to explain how a story that grew up late and took shape merely in accord with the supposed demands of apologetic came to be framed in terms almost exclusively of women witnesses, who, as such, were notoriously invalid witnesses according to Jewish principles of evidence.”

—C. F. D. Moule, *The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection for Faith in Jesus Christ*

5. Changed lives testify to the truth of the resurrection.

What could have changed fearful, selfish, and unlearned men into bold, heroic preachers and martyrs?

6. There are only five possible explanations for the overwhelming evidence that the resurrection actually happened.

#1: Swoon Theory: Jesus did not die on the cross but merely swooned and was resuscitated later.

No one survived Roman crucifixion, especially when it was preceded by a Roman flogging.

A half-dead, staggering sick man in need of medical attention is not generally worshiped as a divine savior.

Heinrich Paulus in his *Life of Jesus* (1828) suggested that Jesus was not dead when taken from the cross. The coolness of the tomb revived Him. After exchanging His grave wrappings for the gardener's clothes, Jesus spoke to His disciples for forty days and then walked into a cloud on a mountain and went off somewhere to die. The implausibility of this reconstruction was recognized by Strauss, who wrote: “It is impossible that one who had just come forth from the grave half dead, who crept about weak and ill, who stood in need of medical treatment, and who at last succumbed to suffering, could ever have given to the disciples that impression that He was a conqueror over death and the grave.”

—Wilbur Smith, *The Supernaturalness of Christ*

If Jesus awoke from a swoon, where did He go? Why did He disappear from history? The Swoon Theory turns into the Conspiracy Theory because the disciples testified that Jesus rose from the dead.

#2: Conspiracy Theory: The disciples stole the body and fabricated the entire resurrection story.

They willingly died for their “Conspiracy.”

Conspiracies are always advanced for some selfish gain. What did the disciples get but scorn, persecution, exile, and ill-treatment?

#3: Hallucination Theory: The disciples, in a state of spiritual fervor, genuinely believed they saw the resurrected Christ, but it was just a figment of their overworked imagination.

There were too many witnesses: 500 saw Christ together.

If they had a hallucination what happened to the body in the tomb?

“Any theory of hallucination breaks down on the fact (and if it is invention it is the oddest invention that ever entered the mind of man) that on three separate occasions this hallucination was not immediately recognized as Jesus: Luke 24:13-31; John 20:15, 21:4.”

—C.S. Lewis, *Miracles*

#4: Myth Theory: The resurrection was a myth: not true historically but true spiritually or symbolically.

“If the bones of the dead Jesus were discovered tomorrow in a Palestinian tomb, all the essentials of Christianity would remain unchanged.”

—Rudolph Bultmann, Quoted in, Kreeft & Tacelli, *Handbook of Christian Apologetics*

“It has become common in circles that find the supernatural aspects of the resurrection incredible to place an existential interpretation on the Easter event. According to Rudolph Bultmann, ‘Jesus ist auferstanden ins Kerygma’ - Jesus arose in the faith and the preaching of the disciples. For Emil Brunner the resurrection is not an event that ‘can be fitted into the succession of historical events’; it is a fact only if it has taken place ‘for us.’”

—Quoted in Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Easter: Myth, Hallucination, or History?*

The eyewitnesses specifically claimed they were testifying to actual historical events and not myths.

For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

2 PETER 1:16

#5: Christianity is the only remaining possibility: Jesus was crucified, buried, and raised from the dead on the third day.

3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures . . .

1 CORINTHIANS 15:3,4

Supplement #4

How to Witness to Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus

General Guidelines

1. Ask a lot of questions.
2. Listen carefully.
3. Develop a friendship with them.
4. Do not invite them to church until they are ready.
5. Let them see your changed life.
6. Do not engage in a theological argument with them.
7. Use personal stories about sin, forgiveness, and the love of God.
8. Be patient and pray for them.
9. Always aim for the heart and not just the mind.
10. Trust the Holy Spirit to touch their heart with God's Word.

Specific Guidelines for Witnessing to a Muslim

1. Emphasize that Christianity is a relationship with God and not just a religion.
2. Do not mock their prophet, Muhammad, or their holy book, the Koran.
3. Be careful in referring to Jesus as the Son of God. Muslims do not believe Allah has a son, and so the reference can be very offensive to them.
4. The Koran states (Surah 11:90), "Ask pardon of your Lord and then turn unto Him. Lo! My Lord is merciful, loving." You can use this verse as a starting point to introduce the love of God and the need for repentance.
5. Define the term "Trinity." Muslims are strict monotheists and are offended by the idea of a "Trinity" because they think it means three gods.
6. Be aware that there are different types of Islam. The majority of Muslims are Sunni (90 percent). They believe the successor to Muhammad should be a male of his tribe. The minority party is the Shia. They believe succession should remain in the family of the prophet. There is also Sufism, a mystical version of Islam.

Specific Guidelines for Witnessing to a Hindu

1. Avoid desecrating animals in front of them. (In other words, do not invite them to lunch at McDonalds!)
2. Hindus believe that the god Vishnu was incarnated into a human being. Tell them about the real incarnation of God in the person of Christ.
3. Clarify your use of the term "born again"—for Hindus, it refers to reincarnation.

4. Engage in spiritual warfare against the spirit of idolatry.
5. Be informed that there are a number of Hindu organizations such as Ananda Marga Yoga Society, International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Maharishi Vedic University, Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, and Self-Realization Fellowship.

Specific Guidelines for Witnessing to a Buddhist

1. Avoid theological terms such as justification, sanctification, or atonement, which might lead to their confusion. Buddhists do not necessarily believe in the existence of God.
2. Clarify your use of the term “born again”—for Buddhists it refers to reincarnation.
3. Be informed that there are two primary branches of Buddhism: Theravada Buddhism (Sanskrit for Lesser Vehicle), and Mahayana Buddhism (Sanskrit for Greater Vehicle).

Suggested Readings

1. Norman L. Geisler, Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics
2. Dean C. Halverson, The Compact Guide to World Religions
3. Walter Martin, The Kingdom of the Cults
4. J. Isamu Yamamoto, Hinduism, TM, and Hare Krishna
5. J. Isamu Yamamoto, Buddhism, Taoism, and Other Far Eastern Religions

Supplement #5

The History of the Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormons

1. The history of the Jehovah’s Witnesses:
 - Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916) was the founder of the Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916) founded the International Bible Students Association, which later became known as Jehovah’s Witnesses. Russell rejected orthodox Protestantism early in his life, but later became intrigued by the possibility of the imminent return of Christ. He published a book in 1872 stating Jesus would return secretly in 1874 and the world would end in 1914. He was forced to adjust his prediction in 1914. His later predictions were also all proved false.

- “Judge” Joseph F. Rutherford succeeded Russell in 1916 and reigned until 1942. Under his leadership, many new doctrinal and scriptural reinterpretations took place.

- Nathan Knorr assumed leadership of the Jehovah's Witnesses after Rutherford's death. His organizational skills grew the Witnesses from 115,000 in 1942, to over 2,000,000 when he died in 1977.
- Frederick W. Franz (term: 1977-1992), the fourth president of the Jehovah's Witnesses was the principle translator of the New World translation of the Bible.

"He was the molder and shaper of Watchtower theology for more than 70 years," says ex-Jehovah's Witnesses Paul Blizzard.

2. The history of the Mormons:

- 1805 Joseph Smith was born in upstate New York.
- 1820 God the Father and God the Son appeared to Smith, informing him that all churches and doctrines are wrong, and appointing him to restore the original church of Jesus Christ.

Smith wrote of this encounter, "I asked the personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects were right and which should I join. I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and all their creeds were an abomination in his sight."

—Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation

- 1823. The angel Moroni appeared to Smith and revealed to him that there's a book inscribed on gold plates that tells the story of the true gospel.
- 1827. Smith found the plates (written in 'Reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics') and began translating them with the help of a 'seer stone.'
- 1830. Smith published his translation as the Book of Mormon and on April 6, he organized his church.
- 1839. Fleeing persecution, the Mormons established a community in Nauvoo, Illinois.
- The population of Nauvoo soon reached 20,000, making it the largest city in Illinois.
- 1844. Smith and his brother were arrested on charges of treason and conspiracy. A vigilante mob of 200 citizens attacked the jail and killed Smith and his brother.

- 1847. Brigham Young, the second prophet of the Mormon Church, led a migration to Salt Lake City in the Utah territory.
- 1852. The doctrine of polygamy became openly acknowledged by the Mormons, and for the next thirty-eight years, the United States government waged a legislative and judicial battle with the church.
- 1890. Polygamy was officially renounced (although still practiced by a determined minority), and the Mormons began the process of integration into the American mainstream.

Supplement #6

How to Witness to People Who are Part of a Cult

1. Equip yourself with the basic foundation of the Christian faith. You have to know why you believe what you believe. This will help explain your beliefs carefully to them with clarity.
2. Never engage without being familiar at least with their doctrine. An encounter with any of the cult groups will be an opportunity to bring them an inch towards a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
3. Get to know them personally. It will be good if they see your friendly motive. They will surely appreciate if they see that you are not there just to engage them in a doctrinal discussion.
4. Always be patient and believe the Holy Spirit to convert that person not you.
5. Give them the time to talk and think. This will help you know where they are coming from. It will also make you understand why they left their previous faith.

Encourage them before you end your discussion by offering to pray for them. Pray for them personally and their family. Remember, there is another day to set a meeting with that person. Many times, they are attracted by your testimony and attitude.

Supplement #7

Essential Facts Concerning Evolution

1. Darwinian evolution maintains that the universe is a result of time and chance, natural law is sufficient to explain the complexity of life, and all organisms have evolved from common ancestors by random mutation and natural selection.

The theory of evolution was not new with Darwin. Speculation about evolution can be documented as far back as the Greek philosopher Anaximander (circa

611-c. 547 BC), who believed that the earth first was entirely water and that humans started as aquatic beings who left the water when they could survive sufficiently on land. The uniqueness of Darwin's idea was his completely naturalistic mechanism (natural selection) that required no God or spiritual force to explain all of life.

"Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist."
—Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker*

Stephen Jay Gould (1941-2002, geology professor, paleontologist, philosopher of science, and author of books on evolution), said, "Wind life's tape back to the dawn of time and let it play again—and you will never get humans a second time."

Jacques Monod (1910-1976, French biochemist and Nobel laureate), said, "Man's number came up in a Monte Carlo game, a game of pure chance."
—Jacques Monod, *Chance and Necessity*

Natural selection: Various environmental factors such as temperature and available food and water produce a struggle for existence in nature. Therefore, the organisms best adapted to the environment from each species will tend to survive longer (survival of the fittest). The organism that survives the longest will also breed the most and pass on their survival adaptations to subsequent generations.

The essence of Darwin's theory has not changed since *The Origin of Species* was published in 1859, but the mechanisms have.

Natural selection proved to be an insufficient mechanism to explain the vast diversity of life. In 1901, the Dutch botanist Hugo de Vries (who had re-discovered Mendel's laws), published a book called *The Mutation Theory*, challenging Darwin's concept of gradual changes over long periods.

In 1972, the American paleontologists Stephen Jay Gould and Niles Eldredge proposed the theory of "punctuated equilibria," a theory based on the fact that very few transitional forms are found in the fossil record. Unlike the gradualist theory, which would have species evolve gradually over long periods of time, the theory of punctuated equilibria holds that the evolution of a species consists of rapid changes in small, relatively isolated populations, followed by long periods of stability.

—Natural Selection, Microsoft Encarta

Because of the failure to find an absolute mechanism to explain evolution, a number of scientists have always been skeptical.

"Biological Evolution does not stand up to an objective, in-depth criticism."

—Pierre Grasse, *The Evolution of Living Organisms*

“The Darwinian Theory of Evolution is no more nor less than the greatest cosmogenic myth of the twentieth century.”

—Michael Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*

“The attempt to explain all living forms in terms of Evolution is not supported by present day evidence.”

—G.A. Kerkut, *The Implications of Evolution*

Many scientists are even recognizing the religious aspects of evolution.

“Belief in the Theory of Evolution is exactly parallel to belief in Special Creation. Both are concepts which believers know to be true, but neither has been capable of proof.”

—L. Harrison Matthews, *Introduction to Origin of Species*

There are at least three main avenues to challenge the doctrine of evolution: Micro vs. Macro Evolution, the Fossil Record, and Statistical Probability.

2. Microevolution vs. Macroevolution

- Microevolution: minor changes can take place at the species level.

In a population of a given species, different individuals have different sets of genes. Some combinations of genes give certain individuals a greater chance to survive until they can reproduce.

For instance, some individuals might be faster or stronger or have coloration that allows them to more easily hide from prey. Since those individuals have more offspring, their genes become more common in the population, while the other genes become less common. These changes in the relative numbers of genes cause the overall population to change slightly over time, thus causing micro evolution.

A common example cited in text books of micro evolution is that of the Peppered Moths in England. When the trees in England grew darker because of the pollution, the darker moths could more easily hide on the tree trunks. The lighter colored moths were eaten by birds and other predators, so the genes that promoted darker color became more numerous. Over time the population of moths grew darker.

However, Microevolution is known to be very limited, since the genetic variety in a population of a given species only exists for genes that relate to minor changes, such as hair color or size. The genes that direct the overall structure of a species, such as the structure of the heart or brain, are the same for all

the members. Therefore, only minor changes can take place, regardless of the time frame.

As a clear example, all of the dramatically different breeds of dogs originally came from wolves that were cross bred over thousands of years. However, cross breeding dogs has never produced a cow or an elephant, since the genetic difference in dogs only relate to minor differences traits such as size, ear shape, or temperament. All dogs have dog genes, so cross breeding dogs will only produce dogs.

- Macroevolution: small changes accumulate over millions of years to produce dramatic, innovative changes.
- Evolutionists claim that mutations in the genes can produce the additional genetic variety that would allow more dramatic changes. However, no significant beneficial mutation has ever been found in any member of any species.

Some benefic mutations have been found in bacteria, which cause anti-biotic resistance, and some have been found in larger animals, such as some enzyme changing slightly to better digest some type of food. However, none has ever been observed that improved any vital structure, such as altering the heart or lung.

No mutation has ever been observed that could produce truly innovative changes and eventually lead to an entirely new species. Considering the large number of species existing in the world today (six million?), many such mutations should be observed every year.

The reason for the absence of such mutations is that structures, such as organs, in living organisms operate like highly integrated machines. If any piece is even slightly altered, that piece no longer fits with the other pieces.

As an example, small beneficial changes can take place with a car, such as moving the seat forward or adjusting the rear view mirror, much like the beneficial mutations seen in bacteria. However, if someone tried to turn a car into an airplane by making a series of small changes, as soon as some vital component of the car was changed, such as misaligning the spark plug or changing the position of a hose, the car would break down, long before becoming an airplane.

“The central question of the Chicago convention [of evolutionary scientists] was whether the mechanics underlying Microevolution can be used to explain Macroevolution. The answer is a clear ‘NO.’”

—Roger Lewin, Evolutionary Theory Under Fire

“Darwin observed changes within species and immediately jumped to the conclusion that it was responsible for the transformation of one species into another. The facts just do not support the theory.”

3. The Fossil Record

- Darwin realized that the only documentation that evolution had actually taken place was the fossil record.

Evolutionists believe that all species are all part of an evolutionary tree. The major branches of the tree represent the ancestors of the major groupings of species in nature, such as the animal kingdom or the vertebrate phylum. The small branches represent the more minor groupings, such as the cat family. The species that exist today represent the leaves on the smallest branches.

Evolutionists believe that going back in time, all species should look more and more like each other until they converged at the bottom of the tree with the first cell, which is the universal common ancestor of all of life. However, the fossil record shows that all species seemed to have appeared suddenly and then never changed. No series of thousands of intermediate species were ever found, which would link different species together on an evolutionary tree. Not one series of fossils shows any major innovative changes in any species.

- Major gaps exist in the fossil record, and no significant gap has ever been filled with new fossils.

For instance, the differences between fish and amphibians (the gap) are dramatic. Yet, numerous half-fish/half-amphibian creatures, which would fill that gap, do not exist.

Evolutionists believe that the similarities in nature are the result of common ancestry. For instance, the reason that all mammals have hair and have a similar limb structure is because all mammals evolved from a common ancestor, who was like a mouse or shrew. However, the similarities can just as easily be explained by a common designer.

The fact that many similarities exist in nature in very different creatures, such as the similarities between the eyes of an octopus and those of humans, is much better explained by a common designer. Humans and octopi are so far apart on the theoretical evolutionary tree, evolutionists actually claim they evolved independently. However, their similarity is easily explained by the fact that God gave both eyes, since He knew eyes were quite useful for seeing.

“Geology does not reveal any gradual changes, and this is the most obvious objection that can be raised against any theory of Evolution.”

—Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*

“We are now about 120 years after Darwin and knowledge of the fossil record has been greatly expanded. Ironically we have even fewer examples of evolutionary transition than we did in Darwin’s time.”

—David Raup, *Conflicts Between Darwin and Paleontology*

“The extreme rarity of transitional forms is the trade secret of paleontology.”

—Stephen J. Gould, *Evolution’s Erratic Pace*

“If man evolved from an ape-like creature, he did so without leaving a trace in the fossil record.”

—S. Zuckerman, *Beyond the Ivory Tower*

4. Statistical Probability

Statistical Probability refers to the mathematical chances of evolution happening.

The odds of a single protein evolving by chance are the same odds of solving the Rubik’s Cube blindfolded. Making one turn per second you would eventually solve the puzzle in 1,350,000,000,000 years!

—Fred Hoyle, *The Intelligent Universe*

“In the context of the origin of life, the first cell would require over 2000 proteins that perform the essential functions of cellular metabolism. The odds of all of them forming by chance are 1 times 10 with 40,000 zeros—the same odds as rolling 50,000 straight sixes! These are the same odds of a hurricane passing through a junkyard resulting in a 747!”

—Fred Hoyle, *Evolution From Space*

The problems for the formation of the first cell are even more severe. A living cell requires highly complex molecules and highly ordered arrangements of pieces. However, nature causes systems to go from states of order to states of disorder, a law known as The Second Law of Thermodynamics. As an analogy, keeping an organized room or desk requires intelligent effort. When people randomly put different objects down in different places, disorder (a mess) quickly forms. In the same way, a cell is like an ordered room, while randomly arranged chemicals are like a messy room. Without intelligent direction, the laws of nature would cause anything even close to a cell to quickly degenerate into simpler disorganized chemicals, just as when a cell dies today. In other words, the undirected formation of life violates every known law of physics and chemistry.

In the context of modern species, many structures in biology have many different pieces, which are all required at once for the system to function. For the system to evolve into existence, every piece would have to form at once and then position itself perfectly to work with the other pieces.

—Behe, Michael, *Darwin's Black Box* and Dembski, William, *No Free Lunch*

Common examples include the blood clotting system, the immunity system, and cellular machines, such as the bacterial flagellum. For instance, the bacterial flagellum operates like an outboard motor on a boat. It consists of some forty different parts, all of which are essential. The statistical probability for all of the pieces to form and position themselves in the right order are astronomically small.

“To suppose that the eye could have been formed by Natural Selection seems absurd in the highest degree. The eye to this day—gives me a cold shudder.”

—Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*

As a final note, many scientists claim that attempting to identify design in nature today is unscientific, because one is simply giving up on trying to identify a natural explanation. However, scientists are always attempting to identify design, such as with archaeology, the search of extraterrestrial intelligence (SETI), and forensics. The same methodologies that such researchers use to identify intelligent causes in the formation of an arrow head found in an archaeological dig or with a signal from space in the movie *Contact*, when applied to living creatures also reveal design. For instance, if someone saw a heart drawn on the beach with the words “Harry loves Sally” that person would recognize that the pattern was produce by an intelligent source, since it contained purposeful information. In the same way the arrangements of nucleotides in DNA also contains purposeful information, and that information is as much a produce of an intelligent mind as the arrangement of ink in a book to form words and sentences.